Attendance Guidelines

Version number	6
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Ratified by	Welfare Committee
Review cycle	Annual
Last review	Autumn 2026
Next review	Autumn 2027

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Introduction

For a pupil to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to education law and guidance and our school attendance policy is written to reflect this legislation and the guidance. For information relating to this legislation and guidance, see Appendix 2.

The legislation makes provision for a school day which is to be divided into two sessions with a lunch break in the middle and to be available for 190 days in any school year. Registration will take place at the start of the morning session and following the last lunch period.

Promoting attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents, carers and pupils.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them, both now and in the future; we will offer reward schemes for individual learners, classes and year groups who have high levels of school attendance, no unauthorised absence and/or have shown to significantly improve their attendance rates.

We will use a variety of strategies to intervene at an early stage to encourage improved attendance of individual pupils and assist to overcome any barriers that may be preventing the expected level of attendance. These strategies may be school-based, or may be implemented jointly with other partners to ensure the most appropriate support for the individual and their family.

The home school agreement commits to how we will work with parents and carers to ensure pupils' achieve good attendance. These expectations and potential consequences of not meeting the expectations will be regularly communicated to parents throughout the academic year in various ways such as text messages, the school website, newsletters and at parents' consultations.

School procedures

Any pupil who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period will have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the head teacher, or a member of staff acting on their behalf, can authorise absence.

If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unexplained (N code) and promptly followed up by the school as part

of its early intervention and safeguarding strategies. This will be in the form of a text message, telephone call or letter to the parent or carer to enquire about the whereabouts of the pupil. If no reason is given by the end of 5 school days or the reason given is not reasonable, the pupil will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (O code).

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education as in Appendix 1.

Punctuality

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:50am. The registers will remain open for a maximum of 30 minutes from this start time, in accordance with Government guidance. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U code) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In addition, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered (M code in this instance).

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the 30 minute registration period will be coded as late (L code).

Afternoon registration will be at 1:30pm and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as present but late (L code) if they arrive within 30 minutes, or an unauthorised absence (U code) if they arrive more than 30 minutes after the start of the afternoon session.

In the event of <u>three</u> late arrivals, the school will contact the parent by letter to inform them of the impact on their child's attendance and subsequent attainment. Should the pupil continue to arrive late for registration after being issued with this letter, the school will issue a second letter inviting the parent or carer to a meeting to discuss the barriers that are preventing punctual arrival and offer support where appropriate. Following this meeting, if the pupil is late again, parents and carers will be invited to a meeting with the head teacher, DH teacher or attendance lead to discuss the matter and possibly take further action.

Parents and carers are reminded that the local authority may issue a fixed penalty notice for unauthorised lateness after the close of the register in accordance with the local authority's Code of Conduct for the Issuing of Fixed penalty Notice for Non-School Attendance, if the number of unauthorised absences or lates (O or U codes) is 10 sessions or greater in 10 weeks.

First day absence

Parents and carers are reminded that they should contact the school by 8:50am if their child is not able to attend school on that day. Parents and carers must state the **full** reason for the child's non-attendance (not just "feeling unwell") and indicate the likely date they will return to school. If illness lasts more than 48 hours, then it is your responsibility to provide medical evidence and provide this to the school. Parents/carers should be prepared for members of the school staff to ask questions about the pupil's condition, the patterns or trends in their absences and any treatment they may be receiving.

If a parent or carer does not contact the school, staff will endeavour to ascertain the specific reason for non-attendance as soon as possible on the first day of absence, after both morning and afternoon registration. This may include a telephone call, texting service, a home visit from a member of school staff or an Education Welfare Officer. Once the specific information is received, the register will be amended to reflect the appropriate absence code (see Appendix 1 for the types of code).

Priority will be given to children who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, e.g. those known to Children's Services or are looked after (LAC). The local authority's Education Welfare Service will be notified of unexplained absences of five days or more, which will be reduced to only 24 hours if the pupil is on the child protection register, who may conduct an unscheduled home visit to determine if the pupil is safe and well.

Any learner may be subject to a visit from the Education Welfare Service where the school has any concern around attendance, or lack of contact from parents. These visits are intended to offer the right support to overcome any barriers to attending schools.

Absence notes and supporting evidence

Notes received from parents explaining the reason for the absence will be kept on files in line with school retention policies. Parents and carers are aware that only the head teacher or their representative can authorise an absence and that further information such as a letter/appointment card from a GP or consultant may be required to support reasons given for absence.

Medical and illness absences

The school appreciates that there are times a pupil has to attend a medical appointment during the school day. In these instances, a copy of the hospital appointment letter should be provided to the school **prior** to appointment date to inform the school of the set scheduled time. This, however, does not apply to routine GP or dental appointments, which wherever possible should be arranged for times outside of the school day.

If a pupil is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request supporting evidence that the pupil is receiving the necessary medical treatment. An appointment card, consultant letter, photograph of prescription medication, would all suffice as medical evidence. Without the necessary evidence, the school may notify the parent or carer that all future absences will be unauthorised until the necessary medical evidence has been provided, and a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.

Continuing and frequent absence

Within the school it is the responsibility of the class teacher or attendance officer to be aware of and bring attention to the head teacher (or person to whom they have delegated responsibility for attendance), any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. This may involve inviting the parents/ carers and the pupil into school for a meeting. However, should this absence persist a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service when the attendance drops below 90% for the preceding six school weeks.

For unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in a 10-week period (there are two sessions in a day, morning and afternoon), you may issue a fixed penalty notice in accordance.

Persistent absence

The Department of Education defines persistent absence as pupils whose absence level is more than 10% (less than 90% attendance). These pupils will be subject to the attendance plan to support their return to full attendance. This plan may include a referral to the Education Welfare Service for additional support for the pupil and their family.

If the pupil and family do not engage with the action plan, court action may be taken against the main parent(s) or carer(s) via the Education Welfare Service.

Leave of absence/holidays in term time

Leave of absence during term time is actively discouraged as it negatively impacts on the pupil's ability to engage with the full curriculum. Parents and carers do not have the automatic right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday and will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.

The school will consider any application for leave of absence for exceptional circumstance; parents and carers must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence. Forms to request a leave of absence can be obtained from the school, in paper copy from the school office. The head teacher will consider the request in consultation with the EWO and respond in writing within 7 school days to inform the parent or carer whether the request has been authorised. Subsequently, a parent or carer can make an informed decision whether they wish to pursue the absence in the knowledge of any potential consequences.

Parents and carers are advised that a fixed penalty notice may be issued when permission for leave of absence has not been authorised by the school.

Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance at School

The school may issue a fixed penalty notice where a parent/carer has failed to secure their child's regular attendance at school. A penalty notice can be issued against one of the following criteria:

1. Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period (these do not need to be consecutive) which includes pupils who are persistently arriving after the close of the registration period.

2. Where a parent(s)/carer(s) refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;

3. Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised.

The Local Authority can issue a fixed penalty notice if:

1. Parents are intentionally and deliberately, taking leave at the same time every academic year or purposefully taking under the threshold of 10 sessions to avoid a fixed penalty notice.

Each pupil's absence will be considered on its own merits and if appropriate, a fixed penalty notice may be requested to encourage improved future attendance. If a pupil's attendance is significantly low, a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be considered as an alternative to requesting a penalty notice.

Roles and responsibilities

A key part of any successful working relationship is a clear understanding of each person's role and responsibilities, and as such the following sets out to clarify the roles and responsibilities for those people engaged with tackling absence issues.

The Parent/Carer

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent/carer is responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by elective home education (the parent can choose to provide education for their child).

A pupil's punctuality is also a legal requirement and parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late (after the close of the register) can also face legal proceedings. Sometimes, there are situations at home that may make it difficult for a pupil to arrive on time and as such due consideration is given to any help or assistance a family may need in these circumstances.

The School

Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to take an attendance register twice a day; at the **start** of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important in order to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

The school has the responsibility to monitor individual attendance rates at least weekly and use their own intervention methods to tackle individual pupil attendance issues where the pupil's attendance rate is 91% and above. A referral to the Education Welfare Service should be made by the school when an individual's attendance falls to 90% or below over a six-week

period and there is no exceptional reason for this (i.e. the majority of the absence is unauthorised).

Head Teachers will be responsible for the strategic management of attendance across the school. They will scrutinise the data on a weekly basis, monitor trends and patterns across cohort of pupils, and evaluate interventions for their impact and effectiveness and direct resources for the best possible outcome. The Head Teacher will present the data to the Governing Body on a termly basis for scrutiny.

Class Teachers will be responsible for completing the session registers fully and accurately during every registration. This practice ensures good safeguarding processes, enabling the school to know where every pupil is at the start of all sessions and for school clerks/office managers to commence the 'first day response' process if the pupil is not present. SIMS notes fields should be used to ensure that the additional details relating to the absence are captured and retained on file.

Attendance Officer will be responsible for the daily operational attendance duties. They will ensure that all registers have been completed by the classroom teachers on a daily basis and if not will escalate this to the Head Teacher for action. They will undertake the 'first day response' on each morning for those pupils whose families have not made contact. They will collate the supporting evidence, and chase any outstanding forms, absence notes, holiday request forms etc. The officers will compile the data in preparation for analysis by the Head Teacher and make the referrals to the Education Welfare Service.

In order to request a fixed penalty notice, the school will monitor the individual attendance patterns of their pupils. If trends are identified that match the criteria stated in the local authority's Code of Conduct, a school has the opportunity to make a formal request to the local authority to issue a penalty notice.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The principal function of the Education Welfare Service is to improve attendance in all schools and alternative education provisions across the local authority by supporting pupils and their families to overcome their barriers to engagement.

The service provides support to schools, pupils and their families to ensure regular attendance and address any difficulties relating to absenteeism. The Education Welfare Service works collaboratively with a range of support services and agencies and provides an essential link between home and school to ensure that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

The service acts on behalf of the authority in its statutory enforcement capacity and is responsible for a number of related duties that include:

- the regulating and issuing of child employment and performance licenses for school age children and young people, and their chaperones;

- to investigate, locate and track children who are referred as "Children Missing from Education and Children Missing from School";

- to oversee the education needs of vulnerable pupils e.g. Gypsy Traveller families;

- to work in partnership with the Police in the arrangement and coordination of formal truancy operations in accordance with Crime and Disorder legislation.

Attendance initiatives

The school and local authority will work closely together to raise the awareness of school attendance, promote good attendance and tackle unauthorised absence.

The school will use a series of assemblies to discuss the importance of attendance. We will also give the pupils certificates termly if they have managed 100% attendance or have shown an improvement in their attendance. Pupils who have achieved 100% with authorised absences for illness or appointments will also receive certificates. We will also regularly discuss attendance in newsletters, so parents and pupils understand what is expected of them.

Categorisation of absence

All pupils who are on role but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

- Authorised Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Approved Educational Activity

Unauthorised absence

These codes are for those sessions where pupils were absent and no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

Authorised absence

These codes are for those sessions where pupils are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid. Evidence may be requested to support the reason given (e.g. medical evidence, appointment cards, etc.)

Approved educational activity

These codes cover types of supervised educational activity undertaken off the school site but with the approval of the school and/or the LA, where the session has been supervised by an approved tutor.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education at another venue
- Education arranged by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
    - (CAMHS)

Retention of records

Computer registers are preserved as electronic back-up copies. Attendance regulations stipulate that attendance records should be retained for at least three years; however it is good practice to extend this period in line with the education record retention schedule.

Register checks

The local authority will formally check the school registers on a termly basis to ensure there is compliance with the national legislation. It should be noted that registers are legal documents, and it is an offence not to maintain accurate records.

Strategic Action Plan

The school will produce an action plan to show how the school will set about achieving its attendance targets. This will include the school's aims for its vulnerable groups of learners, how it intends to close the gaps between the FSM and non-FSM pupils' attendance, the operational management of attendance, the strategic management of attendance including the evaluation of impact of interventions etc.

This action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be used to inform the School Improvement Plan.

APPENDIX 1 The registration system

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

Attending the school	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
Absent – Leave of absence	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Absent – unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure

APPENDIX 2 Legislation and guidance

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude and
(b) to any special needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent means natural parents and includes any person who has parental responsibility or has day to day care of the child.

Section 444 1, 1(a) contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school or alternative provision arranged by the Local Authority.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the framework for the operation of the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme.

The Equalities Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (England) Regulations 2011

Registers and admission.

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (Education) Regulations 2024

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APPENDIX 3 – Fixed Penalty Notice Fines (FPN)

The school may issue a fixed penalty notice where a parent/carer has failed to secure their child's regular attendance at school. A penalty notice can be issued against one of the following criteria:

1. Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period (these do not need to be consecutive) which includes pupils who are persistently arriving after the close of the registration period.
2. Where a parent(s)/carer(s) refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;
3. Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised.

The Local Authority can issue a fixed penalty notice if:

2. Parents are intentionally and deliberately, taking leave at the same time every academic year or purposefully taking under the threshold of 10 sessions to avoid a fixed penalty notice.

Such fines are referred to the Educational Welfare Team who may impose a fixed penalty fine:

First offence
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave of absence or unauthorised absence the amount will be:

- **£160** per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
- Reduced to **£80** per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second offence (within 3 years)

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

- **£160** per parent, per child within 28 days
- There is no reduced sum available in this instance.

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice.

Payment after the deadline may be accepted in exceptional circumstances. In this situation, the higher amount of £160 is usually payable and must be paid immediately and in full.

When paying a penalty notice fine, parents are essentially agreeing to an out of court settlement in respect of the unauthorised absences to which the notice refers. Payment in full against the penalty notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted for that period.

Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.

- Prosecution can result in criminal records and fines up to **£2.500.00**
- Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

Per parent, per child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 (Section 576 of the Education Act 1996) states that, in relation to a child or young person, a 'parent' includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility for or care of the child.

Parent refers to a person who typically has care of a child or young person if the child lives with them either full or part time and they look after them, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child