

## Attendance Policy

<b>Review Date</b>	November 2024	<b>Next Review by Date</b>	November 2025
<b>Reviewed By</b>	Headteacher		
<b>Approved by Governing Body</b>	November 2024		

### Rationale

Our ethos is to provide young people, who have additional needs, with the opportunity to achieve academically, socially, emotionally and behaviourally and therefore attendance is not only crucial for a young person's development but also a protective factor for more vulnerable students. We will develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. We aim to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome and we are committed to providing a therapeutic, fulfilling and efficient education to all students. This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance - 19 August 2024](#).

### Aim

Our school culture and ethos ensures all staff, students and families acknowledge and understand the importance of good attendance. We aim to:

- Establish a high profile for good attendance and punctuality.
- Promote good attendance and the benefits of it
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school.
- Ensure consistent use of the systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise the efforts made by students to improve or consistently achieve a high level of attendance.
- Work in partnership with other agencies according to student's needs to support attendance. (All information exchanged will adhere to Data Protection requirements.)

We have high expectations for our children and aim to work towards a goal of as close to 100% attendance for all children, unless they are really not well enough to. We promote early intervention and prevention of poor attendance and therefore every opportunity will be used to convey to children and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance and the link this has to achievement, wellbeing and future work. The school will examine its attendance figures and review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that they are effective. We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all students, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

## **Legislation and Guidance**

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance - August 2024](#) and [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- The [Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016 and amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007 \(as amended in 2012, 2013 and 2024\)](#)

This school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills:

- Ofsted report: [Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence](#) (February 2022)
- Schools Bill: [School attendance factsheet](#) (May 2022)
- [Supporting students with medical conditions at school](#) (August 2017)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

This policy also complies with our school's funding contract and articles of association.

## **Safeguarding**

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all students as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a student's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any student who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the student's welfare. (Please see our school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for more information.)

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Governing Body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, students and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authorities
  - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keep/s them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
  - Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
  - Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
  - Making sure the school has high aspirations for all students, but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs
  - Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who need it most, through termly attendance reviews
  - Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
  - Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting students needs
  - Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
  - Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance

- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **Senior Leadership Team**

The SLT is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Working with the parents and families to develop specific support approaches for attendance, including where school transport is regularly being missed, or where students face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the Local Authority when a student has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's individual needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels
- Liaising with external agencies, where needed

### **Teachers and Support Staff**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to students and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families

- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- Ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue.
- Ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken twice daily, using AM and PM registers and at the beginning of each teaching period
- Contribute to strategy meetings and co-ordinate interventions where they are needed
- Work with external agencies to support students and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

### **Parents and Families**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/families:

- Engage with their child's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- Make sure their child attends every day/as per their timetable and on time
- Call /contact the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Sign the home–school agreement
- Seek support, where necessary

### **Students**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that students:

- Be aware of the school's attendance rules, and when they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents and the school timetable, including any transition or reintegration plans
- Speak to their Teacher, Teaching Assistant or Trusted Adult if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable
- Sign the home-school agreement

## **School Procedures**

### **Attendance Register**

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all students onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the school day (10.00 – 10.20am) and after lunch (1.30pm). It will be marked, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **Unplanned Absence**

When a student is unwell, parents are expected to contact the school by phone or email before 9am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If a student is absent due to vomiting and/or diarrhoea then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that they are sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to others at the school.

### **Planned Absence including medical / dental appointments**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and share evidence of the appointment with the school. However, every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. An appointment card or verification by the doctors/ dentist/hospital should be presented for medical appointments. If it is necessary for a student to be out of school for this reason, they should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

### **Reporting Absence (Flow chart in Appendix A)**

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as:

- Authorised
- Unauthorised
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances



Only the Headteacher 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 as 'no reason given' and a phone call made to the parents. This would trigger safeguarding response followed by a letter if a reason is still not obtained leading to a home visit. On the first day of absence parents should telephone the school to inform them why their child is unable to attend and how long they are expected to be absent. The school is then able to mark the register appropriately as either an authorised or unauthorised absence. The decision to authorise or not authorise the absence rests with the school. Parents are expected to inform the school, each day a student is absent. If a child is absent from school, he/she should not be on the school site during the day of the absence.

### **Lateness & Punctuality**

Registration and tutor time begins at 10am and ends at 10.20am. We take into consideration the fact that our students may have siblings who require drop-off in neighbouring boroughs and that some come from different boroughs via local authority transport. In order for our students not to feel penalised for things beyond their control and to understand punctuality we have a bigger window for arrival. We want our young people to get into the habit of arriving on time and achieve positive punctuality, a skill needed for them moving forward into adulthood. Any child arriving after close of registration (10.20am) will be marked as late. Afternoon registration will be at 1:30pm. Students who arrive after the registration period will be greeted at the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that students sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all students are accounted for.

### **Following up unexplained absence**

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may take additional measures, e.g., conduct a home visit, contact police or children's social care.

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the student was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving a local authority attendance officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the student and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the student needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention, as appropriate.

### **Approval of Term-time Absence**

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

There may be some exceptional instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement. Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours.

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is absent for. As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The

school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 3 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form accessible via the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

### **Personalised Timetables**

During the 'settling-in' period, students will be timetabled to be in at certain times, as agreed with parents/carers. Students will be given authorised absence under 'not required to be in school' as per the timetable.

Some of our students have not attended school for a number of years or may have trauma triggers attached to elements of school life. For these students, we will adopt personalised timetables and provide opportunities for therapeutic support to build on energy and engagement levels and their time onsite over a period of time. This may extend over and beyond one term. For those on personalised timetables, and if appropriate, we will adopt best practice by using a hybrid model approach in which students will link in remotely via Teams to the lesson and the teacher will provide work to be completed at home. These students will be given an authorised absence. On days students are not in and they have not accessed a remote session then they will receive a home visit by a member of staff, and if this is not possible for some reason i.e. lack of staff onsite due to illness, then a phone call home would be made by the teacher to check in with the student directly. In these circumstances, students would be given 'other authorised circumstances', this is likely to happen when a student's trauma has been triggered, possibly due to therapeutic intervention. On these occasions we will expect to speak to parent/carers to gain a full picture of what has happened and seek to see/speak to the young person directly so to reassure them. Our intention would be to work with the parents/carers and students to re-engage them with school life. In exceptional circumstances, if it has not been possible to engage with the student then the absence would be marked as 'unauthorised'.

Staff will complete home visit forms as appropriate.

## Ten Days Absence

For any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 days including, the SEN lead within the young person's Local Authority will be notified. We will submit a referral to the Education Welfare Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken. It is important to highlight that young people with medical conditions, who are absent for any extended period of time due to their condition, will not be penalised and will be supported in line with DfE guidance on 'Supporting students with medical conditions at school'. The IHCP will be updated and reviewed as needed.

## Persistent and Frequent Absence

Registers are monitored regularly by the Headteacher to identify any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a student begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem, depending on severity:

- Talking to the parent and student.
- An email or letter from the Headteacher.
- A meeting with the Headteacher.
- A referral to the SEN lead for the student's borough.

Due to the additional needs our students have, we will try to work hand in hand with them and their families to deal with any concerns or issues they may have that stops them from attending school. We understand that certain circumstances may stop a young person from wanting to come to school and we will pursue where possible and support regarding social issues relating to the young person and their family. We work in a trauma informed way and are aware that children who have experienced trauma require a lot of additional support. We will render the services of external therapeutic professionals to work with students who are persistently absent on a 1:1 basis.

Where attendance falls below 80%, the school may request additional evidence (and provide parents with guidance on acceptable examples of medical evidence) for all future illness absences. The school may also refer the child to the School Nurse or the Specialist nurse in the Education Welfare Service if there is a high level of absence for medical reasons. If medical evidence as requested is not

provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. A high level of unauthorised absence will result in a referral to the Education Welfare Officer who will issue a Penalty Notice warning. A monitoring period will then follow, and if attendance does not improve within the monitoring period, a Penalty Notice will be issued. For children with appropriately evidenced illness, the school will follow appropriate protocols to offer support.

### **A Welcome back**

It is important that, where appropriate, on return from an absence all children are made to feel welcome. This should include a discussion about the best way for the child to catch up on missed work where appropriate and be brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other children.

### **Absence notes**

The school will retain notes of evidence for absence from parents and/or record them in our School Management System explaining absence as per current protocol/legislation.

### **Moving Schools**

If a family are moving out of the area there are a number of things we require them to do:

- Notify us in writing at least 4 weeks in advance, including contact details for where they are moving to and if possible the details of the school their child will be attending
- Notify us in writing when the child has started their new school

We will also request an email from the new school to confirm when the young person started regardless of the country the new school is in. If we do not hear from the family about their young person's new school, we will contact the local authority where they have moved to

find out whether the young person is in school. If they are on the waiting list or have started school, we will request a confirmation email and off roll them after one week following this confirmation.

## **Policy Monitoring Arrangements**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The headteacher must also support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

## **Related Policies**

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour & Relationship Policy
- Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy