



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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1. Aims

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 \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the government guidance 2024 [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s 2015 statutory guidance on [School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures](#). These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Children Act 1989](#)

- [The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Sentencing Act 2020](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Information about Individual Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendments\) Regulations 2024](#)

The DfE's guidance on the [school census](#) explains the persistent absence threshold.

It also refers to:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The local governing body (LGB)

The local governing body is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils 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 keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, 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 pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most, through regular reporting at each LGB meeting
- 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 pupils 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, including with teachers from across the Trust, as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers

- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the trust and providing regular opportunities for staff from different schools to come together, learn from each other and share resources
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Trust Board only: Identifying and monitoring attendance patterns across the trust's schools to identify common issues and barriers, and share effective practice between schools

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary and/or authorising the school's attendance officer to be able to do so
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.3 The Trust Attendance Champion

The Trust Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Driving attendance improvement across the trust
- Working more intensively with schools who require support to improve attendance
- Acting as a central contact point for schools with attendance queries
- Liaising with the DfE's regional teams for advice about wider support programmes

The Trust Attendance Champion is: Vicky Dupras, Director of School Improvement

3.4 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Emily Omell

3.5 The school attendance officer

The school attendance officer at each school is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Emily Omell

3.6 Class teachers

All class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office. In The Partnership Trust, attendance is recorded via Bromcom.

3.7 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Refer parents/carers to the designated senior leader where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.8 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent¹, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)
- Parents are expected to:
 - Make sure their child attends every day, on time

¹ In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.00 am 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
- Keep to any attendance contracts or action plans that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school and working with the designated senior leader for attendance

3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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

The school day starts at 8.30am and ends at 3.00pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 8.40am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.10pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office.

- Office staff will investigate any unexpected absences before 09.50am and feedback to the DSL/Head Teacher if there is no response from home or the second and third contacts.
- If no response by 12.00pm, Head Teacher/DSL (or DDSL) with another member of staff will carry out a home visit to check all is ok. If no one answers, a letter will be left asking the parent/carer to contact the school urgently or else a police welfare check may be requested.
- Office Staff will inform the AWSO, if a child remains absent from school for 48 hours without any communication from the parents or carers.
- Office Staff will endeavour to find out the reason for any absence so that attendance marks are not kept as 'N' for more than 2 weeks. If no reason for an absence has been established after 2 weeks it will be marked as unauthorised.
- Office Staff will provide attendance statistics for monitoring purposes, including DfE requirements, pupil reports and the annual report to parents.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

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.

On occasion, a child's attendance becomes so low that the school cannot authorise any absences without seeing medical evidence, such as a prescription or a GP appointment text. If your child's attendance is below 90% schools may ask for medical evidence to be provided until attendance returns to an acceptable level.

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.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents will complete a request for absence form that are available in the office foyer and hand it in to the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Arriving at school on time and ready for the start of the day is crucial for all children.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Where issues arise with punctuality, the designated senior leader will aim to offer to work with the parents or carers and support them to ensure their child(ren) attends school on time every day.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may carry out a home visit and potentially contact the police as detailed above.
- 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 pupil 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 the Education Welfare Service of the local Authority within which the school sits:
 - [Bath and North East Somerset Attendance And Welfare Support Service](#)
 - [Somerset's Education Engagement Services \(ESS\) Support Services for Education](#)
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance, which may include an absence action plan or medical absence action plan that will be generated by the class teacher and the parent concerned.
- Identify whether the pupil 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 (see section 5.3 below), as appropriate

4.6 Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with the law. A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 is given. The school will follow Local Authority guidance and make CME and Pupil Tracking referrals as appropriate. The school will seek advice from the Local Authority if unsure about any individual cases:

[BANES Children Missing Education](#)

[Somerset Children Missing Education](#)

4.7 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.8 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels during parent's meetings and the end of year report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil 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

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The Partnership Trust's definition of 'exceptional circumstances' can be found in Appendix 2

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is extremely 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 two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school's website or the office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong (s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

5.2 Sanctions

All Trust schools will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age², who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

Therefore, it is deemed a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child.³

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for consideration that could result in legal action unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance. Before requesting a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

² A child becomes of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.

³ Education law defines parents as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who has care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child. In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

1. A penalty notice. The penalty is £80 per parent per child payable within 21 days, or £160 per parent per child if paid between 22 and 28 days.
 a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.
2. If a **second** penalty notice is issued within a rolling 3 year period, to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the penalty is £160 per parent , per child if paid within 28 days.
3. Prosecution

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Failure to pay a penalty notice will result in prosecution.

Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or up to 3 months imprisonment. (See DfE’s statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) for more information and the Local Authority’s Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.)

The BANES Code of conduct can be found in Appendix 4.

The Somerset Code of Conduct can be found here:

[Somerset Penalty Notice Protocol](#)

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil’s attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn’t improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

There is the expectation for schools, trusts and local authorities to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

The range of legal interventions are:

- Parenting contracts

- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

At Paulton Infant School we celebrate good attendance in Head Teacher assemblies and share these results in the school's newsletter. Families with improved attendance will also receive a letter home to congratulate them on their improvements and the school will also ensure that it shares the importance of good attendance during new pupil tours, Open Days and New Starter evenings for the upcoming Reception Cohort.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We support children who have complex barriers to attendance. As an Infant School, this means working closely with families to help understand individual complex barriers to attendance. The Head Teacher may offer informal attendance meetings so that clarification on what these complex needs are and how the school can support individual families. Examples might be, a short-term period of late start times, alternative entries to school, work with external agencies such as the School Nurse, key adults, early morning alternative activities (Thrive, settling activities), work with parents to settle child on arrival.

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Some children due to their individual SEND require extra support with regards to attendance. We will work closely with families to understand how SEND impacts their child's attendance and will clarify what adjustments the school may make, and the additional support we will provide. Examples might include adjustments and adaptations to the curriculum, alternative groupings, key adults, Thrive or similar activities, regular breaks if needed, staggered start and end of days, entry through the office foyer.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

We will work closely with parents, supporting pupils back into school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence. When we meet with parents we will identify support strategies that will support a smooth transition back into school, which could for example be: reintegration plans, working with key adults, short term adapted timetables to resettle, adaptations and adjustments to the curriculum.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data, including punctuality, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

All Trust schools have granted the DfE access to their management information system, so that the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

The Trust Attendance Champion will benchmark attendance data at school, Trust, regional and national levels and share with the Trust Standards Board.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

The Trust Attendance Champion will identify patterns across the Trust to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Produce regular attendance reports to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and for the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the Trust's and the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)
- Ensure that parents are kept fully informed of a dip in their child’s attendance data by sending a letter to explain what is happening, why maintaining good attendance is important and what might happen if the attendance rate continues to decrease.

8.5 Sharing attendance information with the Local Authority

Schools of all types, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to the pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familial harms). Local authorities and schools (of all types) are expected to have regular Targeting Support Meetings. Further, to facilitate timely collaborative working across partners, all schools are also legally required to share information from their registers with the local authority. As a minimum this includes:

- New Pupil and Deletion returns: notifying the local authority when a pupil’s name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times.
- Attendance returns: providing the local authority with the names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised (G, N, O, and/or U). Local authorities must agree the frequency that attendance returns are to be provided with all schools in their area. This should be no less frequently than once per calendar month.
- Sickness returns: providing the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. Only one sickness return is required for a continuous period of sickness in a school year. This is to help the school and local authority to agree any provision needed to ensure continuity of education for pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance on education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Reduced Timetable policy

11. Guidance Documents (include but are not limited to):

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE 2024):

[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance-19-august-2024.pdf)

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE December 2015):

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions-3)

Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school (DfE January 2013):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

Mental Health issues affecting a pupil's attendance (DfE February 2023):

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupil-s-attendance-guidance-for-schools)

Arranging education for children with who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE December 2023):

[Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/arranging-education-for-children-who-cannot-attend-school-because-of-health-needs.pdf)

Keeping children safe in education (DfE September 2022):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

School attendance parental responsibility measures (DfE January 2015):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

School census guidance and regulation:

<https://www.gov.uk/education/school-censuses-and-slasc>

School suspensions and permanent exclusions:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

Home to school travel and transport guidance (DfE July 2014):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a

		public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a ‘mobile child’ who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)

Y5	Criminal justice detention	<p>Pupil is unable to attend as they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: The Partnership Trust's definition of 'exceptional circumstances'

Exceptional circumstances

This information seeks to help clarify the meaning of 'exceptional circumstances' and outline some guiding principles to aid the head teacher's decision-making process while giving parents a consistent and fair approach to requests for any term-time absence.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

Guiding principles

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The head teacher will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.

If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event, for example:

- holidays or other travel, including as a result of parental work commitments, are therefore not considered exceptional circumstances;
- leave which is taken because of the availability of cheaper fares or other costs is not regarded as exceptional circumstances;
- claims of illness as a reason for a delayed return, particularly after normal school holidays will not be considered unless accompanied by travel tickets dated before the school opens or other agreed dates. Medical documentation from abroad will not normally be accepted unless accompanied by travel documents indicating travel dates prior to school reopening.

Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for a bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service and travelling time only, not for extended leave. Absence will only be authorised if the head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.

Absences to attend parents' own wedding may be exceptional if the head teacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.

In difficult family situations the headteacher may use their discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering the overall welfare of the child.

Absences for important religious observances are often considered, but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.

The needs of the families of service personnel will be considered if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.

Reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be made and may result in a leave being granted as an exceptional circumstance.

Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis, including where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.

When making absence-related decisions, the head teacher will consider:

- A pupil's record of attendance for the current and previous academic years;
- Time of absence being taken in the school year. If the request is made to extend the beginning or end of a school holiday period, it is unlikely to be considered exceptional

The head teacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether a particular absence is authorised.

The following factors may also help the head teacher to reach a decision:

- The number of school days being missed;
- Any exceptional term-time leave requested and/or taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose;
- Whether alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent to limit the time away from school;
- Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family, for example, family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEND;
- The potential impact that the absence will have on the child;
- Whether the absence falls within any key stage national tests or exams.

How to tell the school about exceptional circumstances:

- A parent or carer should complete a request for a leave of absence form in good time. The parent with whom the pupil normally resides must make the application.
- Leave may only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given.
- Tickets and/or other travel arrangements should not be booked prior to discussion with and agreement of the school.
- **Parents/carers should not confuse telling the school with having permission.**
- Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine.
- Extended absences may put your child's school place at risk.
- In the event of an emergency when you have to take leave urgently, taking children, then you should inform the school or have the school informed immediately. Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively and evidence other than your word may be asked for.