

Attendance Policy

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Introduction

The link between attainment, behaviour and attendance is very clear, and it is the responsibility of both parents/carers and the school to ensure that our students attend every day in order to maximise their learning opportunities. We follow government targets and ask that all students and parents aim for a minimum of **96% attendance**. Schools and Local Authorities strive to promote good attendance, reduce absence and ensure every student has access to full-time education. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage.

The Education Act states that:

‘Parents have the responsibility to ensure that their children receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’.

Aims

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from students, high levels of attendance and punctuality at school to enable them to maximise their learning opportunities.
- To make clear to all relevant stakeholders (students, parents/carers, governors, staff) the school's expectations over attendance and punctuality.
- To promote a consistent approach across the school for all attendance matters.
- To communicate to all relevant stakeholders the legal position with respect to attendance.
- To maintain and improve the close partnerships between home and school to achieve high attendance.

Why is good attendance important?

Good attendance helps students to make progress academically and socially, and feel part of our school community. Building positive relationships in school supports students in having good mental health and wellbeing. Students who are not in school on a regular basis are more likely to get involved with antisocial behaviour, either as a victim or a perpetrator. Attendance at school is important to build confidence and self esteem, to develop awareness of other cultures, religions and ethnicities. Students develop life skills to support them in having the best possible start in life.

Expected standard of attendance

The school day begins at 8.55am each day and the school day finishes at 3.05pm (with the exception for students studying specific GCSEs where a Period 6 lesson is timetabled, the day finishes at 4.05pm).

Whilst all students should aim to be in school 100% of the time, the school expects all students to maintain a minimum level of 96% attendance. A student who is absent for more than 8 days during an academic year will fall below the expected minimum standard.

The table below shows how a student's percentage attendance relates to the number of days and lessons missed. As you can see, 94% attendance may initially appear to be good however this translates to a student missing 55 hours of lessons over the course of a school year which will have a negative impact upon their progress.

Attendance % during one academic year	Equivalent number of days absent	Equivalent number of lessons missed
98%	4 days	20 lessons
96%	8 days	40 lessons
94%	11 days	55 lessons
92%	15 days	75 lessons
90%	19 days	95 lessons
85%	28 days	140 lessons
80%	38 days	190 lessons
75%	48 days	240 lessons
70%	57 days	285 lessons

Legislation and Guidance

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes clear, if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, his parent is guilty of an offence. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure parents fulfil their legal responsibility. The Local Authority has the authority to issue penalty notices and seek prosecution through the Magistrates' Court where parents fail to fulfil this obligation.

Government guidance defines a parent as

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child. The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular student when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day-to-day responsibility for a child.

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

Registers are taken and recorded during morning form tutor registration and sent to the Student Liaison Officer by 9.05am. Registers are taken during every lesson throughout the school day and sent to the Student Liaison Officer no later than 15 minutes into the lesson. Registers will mark whether the student is:

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

Amendments to registers will include:

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

Every entry in the attendance register will be kept for 3 years to the date on which the entry was made.

Authorised and Authorised Absences

Student absences are recorded within one of the following categories:

Authorised absence - An absence that is deemed valid, for example illness, urgent medical appointments, religious celebrations and exceptional circumstances which are beyond the control of the parent.

Unauthorised absence - Absences cannot be recorded as authorised where a reason for absence has not been provided by the parent, a family holiday that has not been agreed by the Headteacher, arriving at school after the registers have closed or where the school is not satisfied with the explanation.

Approved Educational Activity - supervised educational activity such as work experience, educational trips, sporting activity or other educational activity approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

See Appendix 1 for the DfE Attendance Codes

Guidance on decisions to authorise absences:

The decision to authorise an absence can only be taken by the Head teacher, or the person designated by the Head teacher to take this decision (The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended). If the school decides that the reason given is not valid and your child does not attend school, the absence will be unauthorised. Where attendance is causing a concern, the school will challenge patterns of absence and the matter may be referred to the Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team and legal action by the Local Authority may be considered.

It is important to note that it is for parents to satisfy the school as to the validity of absence, and an email, written note or telephone call in respect of a child's absence does not of itself oblige the school to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for the absence. In the case of absence due to medical reasons it is for parents to satisfy the school as to the validity of absence and to provide medical evidence to support the absence if requested. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Absence Procedures

Unexpected absence procedures:

If your child is unexpectedly absent from school for reasons such as illness or urgent medical appointments parents/carers must report the absence using ClassCharts before 8.45am each morning their child is unable to attend. Parents/carers must provide a specific reason for absence, the school will then decide whether the absence is authorised. If parents are unable to access ClassCharts they can call the Attendance Line on 0191 2588354, leaving a message stating the student's name, class, and reason for absence.

Absence due to illness will usually be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide evidence which confirms the student is unable to attend school, such evidence may include appointment cards, prescriptions, or other appropriate forms of evidence. We will not ask for evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If a student has not registered at school and the school has not received communication from the parent/carer to explain the reason for the absence, the school will send a text message to the first contact recorded on the school system. It is essential that parents/carers contact school to determine the whereabouts of the child. If no communication is received, the school may try to contact the parent/carer/other named contacts by telephone or make a home visit.

If no reason for absence is provided by parents within 5 working days the N code will be replaced with code "O" (unauthorised absence). If in any situation the school is not satisfied about the explanation for absence it will remain unauthorised and we will ask the parent for more information. If, after further investigation any doubt remains in respect of the explanation offered, then the absence will be marked as code "O" unauthorised.

Unexplained absences may be followed up by the relevant Head of Year and if necessary senior pastoral staff or the Family Support Worker.

Prolonged unexplained absences – Children Missing in Education

If a student is absent from school for 2 weeks or more and no contact has been established between home and school a referral will be made to the Attendance and Placement team following the guidance in the *Children Missing From Education Policy*.

Planned absence procedures (Routine Medical & Dental Appointments):

Where possible, all routine medical and dental appointments should be taken out of school time. If your child has a medical appointment during the school day parents need to inform the school before the absence can be authorised, this must be done by ClassCharts or telephone (0191 2588354). To assist us in ensuring medical or dental absences are authorised we request that parents/carers provide a copy of the appointment card or letter by attaching it to the ClassCharts absence report. Alternatively, if the parent is unable to access ClassCharts, they must call the Attendance Line (0191 2588354) prior to the appointment and the student can bring the letter to school and present it at Reception for our records to be updated. Depending upon the time of the appointment, students should attend school before and after the appointment time to minimise time spent out of school.

Applications for leave of absence.

Parents/carers can demonstrate their commitment to their child's education by not allowing their child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning that they have missed, which may ultimately have a detrimental effect on their future progress.

For example, a student who takes 10 days holiday during one academic year can only attain 94.7% attendance. A student who takes 10 days holiday in each academic year could lose the equivalent of 22 weeks (almost 6 months) during their formal school career.

Parents are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure their child attends school regularly. There is no automatic right to take a child out of school during term time. Amendments to DfE Attendance Regulations, state that from September 2013, Headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time (including family holidays), however Head teachers may consider individual requests to authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Head teachers can determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

If a parent wishes to take their child out of school during term time they must apply in writing by completing a **Leave of Absence Application** form (available on the school website) and submit to the Head teacher requesting leave of absence prior to any proposed absence. The school would appreciate the form to be submitted at least 2 weeks in advance of the requested date(s) of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request and the parent will be notified of the Head Teacher's decision by letter.

The Headteacher must be satisfied that the exceptional circumstances justify an authorised absence and it is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information and evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for an authorised leave of absence must be made in advance and the Headteacher may invite the parent into school to discuss the request before a decision is made.

If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the Headteacher, the expectation is that the student's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request. School staff may request that the child completes work missed during the absence, it is expected that the child will complete the work within a reasonable period of time.

If the request for a leave of absence is refused the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If the parent still takes their child out of school, the absence will not be authorised and the Headteacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued against you. The Headteacher will take into consideration your child's overall school attendance when making this decision.

Family holidays in term time are generally NOT considered exceptional circumstances and will not usually be authorised.

A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if the notice is paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence in a Magistrates Court to which the notice applies.

Where there is more than one child, each parent* may be issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of each child. There is no right to appeal against a Penalty Notice.

*See Appendix A for definition of parent.

Lateness and Punctuality

The school places high expectations on students in relation to punctuality. Students must be in school for the start of the school day at 8.55am each morning. Students who arrive late to school after 8.55am must enter the school through the main reception where they will register their attendance.

Registers will be closed at 9.35am. A student who arrives late but before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (Appendix 1). A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent for the full session using the appropriate code (Appendix 1). This absence will be recorded as unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence.

Students who are frequently late can expect.

- Detentions
- Letters sent to parents
- Parents to be invited into school for a meeting to discuss the concerns

Roles & Responsibilities

We expect that all students will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time throughout the day. To arrive at all lessons punctually and to be in Form or Assembly for 8.55am (at the latest) each morning.
- Tell a member of school staff about any problem which is having a negative impact upon their attendance or punctuality.

We expect that all parents will:

- Encourage their child to attend school every day and on time.
- Ensure that their child arrives fully prepared for school, including wearing appropriate uniform.
- Contact school to report their child's absence before 8.45am on the day of absence, and each subsequent day of absence providing a reason for the absence.
- Provide school with **at least two named contacts** with up to date mobile, home, work and emergency contact numbers.
- Inform the school about any problems which may affect their child's attendance, punctuality or behaviour.
- Ensure that, where possible, all appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Attend meetings with staff in school if requested.
- See Appendix C for Attendance Tips for Parents & Carers

Parents can expect the School Governors' will:

Promote the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos and make sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. They will regularly monitor, review and challenge attendance data.

Parents can expect the Headteacher, Mr D Watson, will:

Ensure that this policy is implemented consistently across the school and monitor school absence data and report it to school Governors

Parents can expect the Senior Lead responsible for Attendance, Mr M Henderson, will:

Oversee and support the overall attendance strategy and ensure that all staff are partners in promoting excellent attendance across the school.

Parents can expect the Designated Lead for Attendance, Mrs K Dixon, will:

Oversee and implement the attendance policy and strategy across the school. Ensure all available tools to track and monitor attendance data are used to their full potential to target specific cohorts where attendance falls below school expectations.

They will liaise with Heads of Year and other school staff to help parents overcome any barriers to their child attendance school.

Develop and oversee the implementation of targeted interventions to address attendance issues, and monitor the effectiveness of these interventions. In addition, they will develop and oversee the implementation of attendance rewards for students with excellent and/or improving attendance, and monitor the effectiveness of these interventions.

Refer any ongoing attendance concerns to the Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team for further support.

Parents can expect the Student Liaison Officer - Attendance, to:

Record all reasons provided for absence on student registers. They will scrutinise registers and identify students whose education is being affected due to poor school attendance and refer to Head of Year/Attendance Lead/Family Support Worker. They will contact parents when a reason for student absence has not been received to establish the reason for non-attendance. They will follow the guidance on completion of attendance registers outlined in DfE guidelines and appropriate codes will be entered for all students. (Please see Appendix B for attendance codes.)

Parents can expect the Family Support Worker to:

Liaise with parents and visit student homes to discuss attendance, punctuality and welfare issues to establish reasons for non-attendance and set up and implement Attendance Support Plans to facilitate and support a return to school. The Family Support Worker will work with school, families and partner agencies to deliver individualised and targeted support to ensure all students receive a suitable, full time education.

Parents can expect the Pastoral Team (including Head and Assistant Head of Year), to:

Support the whole-school approach to attendance by working with the Attendance Lead, Student Liaison Officer and Family Support Worker to identify and support attendance related concerns. They will liaise with families and partner agencies to encourage good attendance and set up and implement Attendance Support Plans where appropriate.

Parents can expect that Form Tutors and Subject Teachers will:

Record accurate attendance registers, using the correct codes, and submit the information on ClassCharts during morning registration, and during the first 15 minutes of each lesson. Welcome students to lesson and emphasise the importance of excellent attendance. Form tutors will also be responsible for reporting any attendance concerns to the Head of Year.

Monitoring attendance

The school has stringent procedures in place for identifying students with attendance concerns. Such students may be identified by:

- A* Attendance Software
- Attendance Lead
- Head and Assistant Head of Year
- Senior Leadership Team
- Family Support Worker
- Student Liaison Officer - Attendance
- Wider Pastoral Team
- Form Tutors

Persistent Absence

In September 2015, the Department for Education determined that a student becomes a persistent absentee when they have an attendance record of 90% or below. Any student who has an attendance of 90% or below will be added to the school's persistent absentee register and will be monitored on a regular basis.

To improve the attendance of each persistent absentee the school will contact the parents of students by letter, email or phone to discuss attendance concerns and highlight the importance of excellent attendance.

Strategies to improve individual/group attendance

The school continuously strives to maintain and improve attendance. Some of the strategies we use to promote are.

- ClassCharts app is used to share attendance data with parents and students, and incentivise good attendance.
- A-Star attendance will be used to monitor and track individual and group attendance.
- A-Star attendance will encourage parental engagement in relation to their child's school attendance by identifying students with attendance concerns early, and contacting parents by letter.
- Termly/yearly attendance data will be issued to tutors for each student on their register. Tutors speak to students and set individual targets to support improvement.
- Termly postcards will be issued to students who have achieved excellent attendance/improved attendance for the full term.
- Attendance assemblies to highlight the importance of excellent attendance.
- Draws for vouchers/tokens/prizes for students with excellent attendance and improved attendance over a given period will take place throughout the school year.
- Other additional initiatives

Targeted Groups

The school closely monitors specific groups of students, some of whom may need closer monitoring due to individual circumstances. Any concerns and trends to do with attendance will be picked up early and appropriate support given to these students. Such groups include.

- Students who have English as an additional language
- Students eligible for free school meals
- Looked after children
- Students eligible for Pupil Premium funding
- Students on Special Educational Needs and Disability register
- Students with medical conditions
- Year 7 students with attendance concerns from their primary schools
- Young carers
- Students who are deemed to be vulnerable for any other reason

Additional Support

There may be a range of reasons why a student may have attendance concerns. The school will offer relevant support to get to the bottom of any issues that affect attendance. Examples of support we can give may come from of some the following.

- Referral to Family Support Worker
- Referral to School counsellor
- Referral to pastoral mentors
- Referrals to outside agencies
- Home visits
- Referral to Young Carers support group
- Referral to academic mentor/Intervention groups
- SEND support

Children with health needs that cannot attend school

If a child is absent from school for a long term medical condition* the school requires the parents/carers to provide a medical letter from a medical consultant (not a GP) to authorise the absences and to access further supports. The school will work with parents/carers and the School Support Team at the Local Authority, CAMHS, NHS and other relevant services to deliver education for children with additional health needs. This may, or may not, depending upon the child's needs and the medical evidence available, include a referral to an alternative education provider or a referral for home and hospital tuition. School will work with parents and other services to set up an individually tailored reintegration plan for the child if appropriate.

*See Appendix A for definition of **long term medical condition**.

Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team

The school will endeavour to work with the student and parents/carers to improve attendance. Where the school is unable to secure an improvement in attendance through informal means the matter will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team for a period of monitoring. If there is no improvement in attendance Local Authority enforcement powers may be used. It should always be remembered that ultimately the Local Authority can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecute parents in a Magistrates Court for failing in their duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly if the student's absences are marked unauthorised.

The Education Act states that:

'If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence'.

Appendix A - Definitions

Definition of **Parent** under Education Law (section 576 of the Education Act 1996) a parent is defined as all natural parents, whether married or not and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has a responsibility for the care of the child. This means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in Education Law.

Absence is defined as 'not attending school for any reason'.

An **authorised absence** is defined as: an occasion when a student has not attended school and the school has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

An **unauthorised absence** is defined as an occasion when a student has not attended school and the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or no reasons have been given.

A **long term medical condition** is defined as a condition that has a detrimental affect on the child's attendance. This could be either multiple periods of absence over a long period of time or a single period of 15 days or more. A long term medical condition can be a mental or physical health condition.

Appendix B - Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from DfE's guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61222/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)

Present in school

Code	DfE Definition
/	Present in school AM
\	Present in school PM
L	Late before register has closed
B	Approved off-site educational activity
D	Dual registered at another establishment
J	At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience

Authorised absence from school

Code	DfE Definition
C	Absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Suspended/Excluded
H	Holiday authorised by Headteacher
I	Illness
M	Medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Gypsy, Roma or Traveller absence as agreed by school

Unauthorised Absence from school

Code	DfE Definition
G	Unauthorised holiday not agreed by Headteacher
N	Reason for absence not yet provided by parent
O	Absent from school without authorisation from school
U	Arrived in school after registration closed (9.35am)

Additional attendance codes

Code	DfE Definition
X	Not of compulsory school age
Y	Not able to attend due to exceptional circumstances, school site closed.
Z	Student not on admission register
#	Planned whole or partial school closure (holiday/bank holiday/INSET)

Appendix C – Attendance Tips for Parents and Carers

Let your child know that attendance is important

- Talk to your child about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. (For example if their attendance is 94% they would miss 55 hours of lessons during the academic year.)
- Show them you are interested in their school activities, school work and homework.
- Know your child's attendance target, and check ClassCharts regularly to see how they are doing.
- Attend parents' evenings and school events.
- Praise and reward your child's achievements at school.
- Do your best to arrange routine medical and dental appointments after school hours.
- Encourage resilience and do not let your child take time off for minor ailments.
- Arrange family holidays outside of term time.
- Regularly check ClassCharts messages, text messages and letters sent from school.
- Take truancy seriously. If your child is not attending school as you expect they may be putting themselves at risk – Who are they with? What are they doing?

Establish a routine

- Give yourself and your child enough time to get ready in the morning. Provide an alarm clock for your child rather than using a mobile phone alarm to ensure they arrive to school before 8.55am.
- Plan ahead the night before. Get uniform ready, encourage your child to pack their school bag and make sure all due homework is complete.
- Agree and insist upon an appropriate bedtime for your child in line with their age – and insist on a deadline for using a mobile phone / computer / TV.
- Don't allow children to keep their mobile phone in their bedroom overnight – it can be too tempting and can lead to poor sleep habits developing.

Keep open lines of communication with your child and school

- Let the school know in advance if your child is going to be absent or if you have concerns about your child's attendance.
- Report all absences to school, each day, by 8.45am using ClassCharts.
- If your child doesn't want to go to school, find out why and work with school to address concerns. It is better to intervene early, rather than letting issues build up.
- If you notice your child is avoiding a particular lesson or is having a difficult time in one subject area, discuss this with your child's Head of Year. Offer extra support at home. This will help prevent your child developing a behaviour of avoidance in school when things become difficult.
- Make sure your child knows you do not approve of him/her being late. Talk to your child about issues that may be making them late for school.
- Do not let your child persuade you into making an excuse for him/her. If they are well enough to attend but refusing please let school know.

Some students find it harder than others to attend school and therefore it is essential that schools and local authorities should work with students and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Improving attendance must be a concerted effort across all staff in school, the Local Authority, parents and students.

We are here to help you so do not hesitate to get in touch with the school if you have any specific concerns to do with attendance matters. Where the attendance of a student drops below a given level the school will contact parents with the aim of improving the attendance of the child. Our Family Support Worker can offer advice and support to individual students and families when attendance problems arise. We are very grateful for your support in these matters.

Appendix D - Attendance improvement procedure

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the following procedure will be followed to address attendance concerns.

