OLICAT Attendance Policy 2026/27

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

Following Jesus, The Good Shepherd, in all we say and do

Approved by:	Directors
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1. Context

Each pupil in our care has God given gifts and talents and by having high attendance levels pupils can develop their gifts and talents to the fullest. As Catholic schools our attendance policy is based on our Catholic ethos and guiding principles. As such it has the purpose of reflecting our approach to being places of safety and love in which our children are supported to be the best they can be. We believe that a large aspect of that is reliant on fostering full attendance for all children. We understand the significant impact that absence from school has on children's educational attainment, social development and life chances and, as such, strive to make every effort to support children and parents in overcoming any barriers there may be to attending school in every session.
It should be made clear that the fostering of belonging underpins our ethos and that attendance will be managed positively by ensuring that children and families feel loved and valued. They will receive positive messages about the contribution they have to make to the school and every effort will be made to ensure that our educational offer is attractive, engaging and inclusive and that children want to be in our school.

High levels of attendance to school are associated with benefits in the development of children:

- Safety and wellbeing and the access to the support of staff with these matters.
- Development of friendships with peers and supportive relationships with adults.
- Higher levels of achievement leading to access to further education, university, apprenticeships and careers.

To support high levels of attendance, school will ensure all pupils are welcomed and supported through our culture, policies, and practices. Leaders will ensure the School is a school where pupils want to attend. We will make reasonable adjustment for pupils with SEND or medical needs affecting attendance.

School values the opportunity to work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers with regards to attendance. School will seek the involvement of other agencies as appropriate to support pupils to have high levels of attendance.

2. 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, Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026), 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.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance, Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026), which applies in England to maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities.

It has regard to the legal powers and duties governing school attendance, including:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013, as amended
- It also refers to current Department for Education guidance including:
- Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026)
- Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (September 2025)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Current school census guidance and national attendance and absence codes
- Guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and other relevant attendance guidance.
- The school will also follow relevant Local Authority attendance procedures and the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Trust Board

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for:

- Ensuring the timely review of approval of the cross-trust attendance policy template
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation
- Recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across the trust ethos and policies

4.2 The Central Team

The central team of the Trust is responsible for:

- Regularly collecting and analysing attendance data from all schools within the MAT to identify trends, patterns, and areas of concern.
- Develop and implementing draft attendance policies and procedures that align with national guidelines and best practices.
- Preparing and presenting attendance reports to the MAT board, highlighting key issues and progress towards attendance targets.
- Ensuring all schools within the MAT comply with statutory attendance requirements and internal policies.
- Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of attendance policies and interventions, making improvements as necessary.

These responsibilities help ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and managed, contributing to better educational outcomes for all pupils within the MAT.

4.3 The Local Academy Committee (LAC)

The LAC 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 authority
    - 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
- 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 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
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

4.4 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 Senior Attendance Champion 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.

4.5 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') 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
- Oversight, monitoring and evaluation of absence data and attendance data
- 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
- Working with the Local Authority to tackle persistent absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Dominique Hawkins.

4.6 The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Running attendance reports
- Phoning home regarding attendance
- Sending attendance letters
- Organising meetings regarding attendance between parents and senior leaders
- Ensuring attendance registers are complete and absence codes are correct
- 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
- Advising the Headteacher/Senior Attendance Champion when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Una Auburn.

4.7 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1). Additional specific responsibilities will be managed by each school.

4.8 School office staff

School office staff will:

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

4.9 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, 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 timetabled session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 08:30am 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 that they make with the school and/or local authority

4.10 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session
- Be punctual to school and be fully prepared for the school day
- Be punctual for every timetabled lesson
- Register with their tutor group each morning
- Inform their Form Tutor, Raising Standards Leader or Deputy Raising Standards Leader if there is a problem that may lead to absences
- Following a period of absence, speak to their class teacher to identify areas of the curriculum which have been missed.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

To encourage high attendance, our school offers a variety of incentives and rewards designed to motivate pupils and recognise their commitment. These incentives include certificates of achievement, class rewards and celebration assembly acknowledgments. Additionally, pupils with exemplary attendance records may be eligible for special privileges, such as participation in exclusive school events or trips. By celebrating and rewarding high attendance, we aim to create a positive school culture where pupils feel valued and motivated to attend regularly.

6. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

6.1 Support for pupils returning to school

The school has a high aspiration for attendance and aims for attendance to be as close to 100% as possible. A target of 96% attendance may be used as an internal attendance aspiration and monitoring indicator. It is not a statutory threshold and does not determine whether absence is authorised or whether intervention is appropriate. The individual circumstances and barriers affecting each pupil will be considered.

Reduced or non-attendance at school by a child or young person is often rooted in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues. Non-attendance can include not attending entirely for prolonged periods or regularly missing whole days at school. It can also include:

- not going to their classroom
- not staying in class
- not attending some lessons
- avoiding some physical spaces or people.

In all of these instances the school will take a therapeutic approach to attendance and will work closely with the child and family to identify causes of absence and to put intervention in place to remove any barriers to attendance.

This may include strategies such as:

- Ensuring that all pupils have at least one adult at school who knows their strengths and concerns well - this is especially important at times of transition
- Building a school culture that recognises all emotional reactions as normal and helps pupils feel safe to express their emotions
- Supporting the child or young person in developing effective emotional regulation strategies
- Providing quiet or safe spaces for pupils to access if they are experiencing intense emotions
- Providing opportunities for pupils to contribute to decision-making in the school, helping them feel that their voices are valued and heard
- Working to reduce everyday stressors in the classroom for pupils who easily become overwhelmed
- Checking in regularly with pupils to see whether any agreed adaptations or strategies are working and useful and adjusting if not
- 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, and a multi-agency intervention will be facilitated to support an improvement in attendance.

6.2 Support for pupils with poor mental health

Our school is committed to supporting the attendance of pupils with mental health difficulties, including anxiety and depression. We recognise that these challenges can significantly impact a student's ability to attend school regularly. In response to this we:

- Create a supportive and inclusive school environment where pupils feel safe and understood
- Provide training for staff to recognise signs of mental health issues and to respond appropriately. Sometimes this response may be to refer to external agencies with more expertise
- Develop individual support plans in collaboration with parents and carers for pupils experiencing mental health difficulties. These plans may include flexible attendance arrangements, such as part-time schedules or gradual reintegration into the classroom, to accommodate the student's needs
- Maintain open communication with families to monitor progress and adjust support as necessary.

6.3 Support for pupils with SEND

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may face unique challenges that can significantly impact their school attendance. Research indicates that children with SEND are more likely to experience higher rates of absenteeism due to factors such as health issues, lack of appropriate support, and increased social vulnerability. To address these challenges and close the national attendance gaps, our school adopts a holistic and inclusive approach. This includes:

- Developing individual education plans (IEPs) tailored to each student's needs,
- Providing access to specialised support services, and
- Ensuring that all staff are trained to recognise and respond to the specific requirements of SEND pupils.

In instances in which pupils identified with a SEND need are not meeting attendance requirements, their IEP will strive to address these barriers and provide adequate support to remove these barriers.

6.4 Support for pupils with long-term health issues which prevent attendance

As a Trust, we are committed to supporting all children to access the education we provide, including during periods of challenge or disruption. We recognise that some pupils may be unable to attend mainstream provision for a sustained period due to chronic physical or mental health needs.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because of a health need, the school will work with the pupil, parents/carers, the Local Authority and relevant professionals to identify appropriate support. Remote education will not normally be used as a substitute for attendance and may only be considered as a last resort where appropriate, particularly as part of a plan to support continued education and/or reintegration into school.

Under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority holds the duty to arrange suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, due to illness, exclusion, or other circumstances, would not otherwise receive appropriate provision. This includes ensuring access to suitable full-time education for children unable to attend school due to health-related needs.

Where this duty applies, we will liaise with parents and the Local Authority to support the identification and implementation of appropriate alternative provision. Our aim is to ensure continuity of learning and wellbeing, even when direct attendance at school is not possible.

7. Attendance monitoring

Attendance is a school priority and is so closely linked with attainment and progress that the school has embedded systems to ensure it is systematically monitored. Attendance is tracked in real time and interventions for any unknown absence will be swift. Larger analysis of attendance data will be done, at least weekly through several different lenses to enable us to highlight any emerging trends relating to the attendance of a child, a group of children or absence linked with specific lessons, days or periods in the day.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality), regularly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so that 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.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence

The school will also monitor attendance across relevant cohorts, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, children who are looked after, children with social workers, young carers, pupils with significant medical or health needs and pupils experiencing safeguarding concerns.

- 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.

7.3 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
- Provide regular attendance reports to staff to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- 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.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence (PA) is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence (SA) is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. These thresholds are important indicators for monitoring and support, but they are not automatic escalation points. The school will consider individual circumstances, barriers to attendance, safeguarding concerns, SEND and health needs, previous support and the effectiveness of interventions.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- 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 including the possible offer of an EHA
- 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.

7.5 Children Missing in Education

A child missing education (CME) is a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

A pupil who is registered at the school but is persistently or severely absent is not automatically considered to be a child missing education. Such pupils will continue to be managed through the school's attendance and safeguarding procedures, with appropriate support and intervention.

Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown, or there are concerns that they may no longer be receiving suitable education, the school will make reasonable enquiries and take appropriate steps to establish the pupil's circumstances. This may include contacting parents/carers, making home visits and working with the Local Authority and other relevant agencies.

The school will follow the Local Authority's Children Missing Education procedures and share information where this is necessary and appropriate.

The school will maintain records of enquiries and actions taken in relation to suspected CME cases and will work jointly with the Local Authority where required.

A pupil will only be removed from the admission register where the relevant statutory conditions are met. Removal from the register will not be automatic simply because a pupil has been absent for a particular number of days.

Where a pupil has been absent continuously for 20 school days or more, the school will consider the circumstances carefully and follow the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Where relevant, the school and Local Authority will make reasonable efforts to establish the pupil's location and circumstances before removal from the admission register.

Any concerns relating to a pupil's whereabouts, education or safety will be considered alongside the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

Where there is an immediate or significant safeguarding concern, the school will take prompt action in accordance with its safeguarding procedures and may contact the police and/or children's social care.

Where a pupil is believed to have moved out of the area, the school will work with the Local Authority and use the appropriate information-sharing and pupil-tracking systems to establish whether the pupil is registered elsewhere.

Where appropriate, the school will refer suspected CME cases to the Local Authority within the timescales set by local procedures.

For the avoidance of doubt, the school's attendance intervention stages do not in themselves determine whether a pupil is CME.

This approach reflects the statutory Children Missing Education guidance, which requires schools and Local Authorities to work together to identify and support children missing education on a child-centred, case-by-case basis.

7.6 Attendance and Safeguarding

Regular school attendance is a crucial safeguarding measure, serving as a vital protective factor for children. Poor attendance can be an early indicator of various safeguarding concerns, necessitating prompt and thorough investigation.

Legal Framework and Safeguarding Responsibilities

The school adheres to the following legislation and guidance with specific focus on safeguarding:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest version)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004.

As per these documents, the school has specific safeguarding responsibilities related to attendance:

- Identify and respond to patterns of absence that may indicate wider safeguarding concerns
- Report children missing education (CME) to the local authority within agreed timescales
- Investigate unexplained absences promptly as a potential safeguarding issue
- Ensure robust procedures to identify and support pupils at risk of harm.

In these instances, processes in the School Safeguarding Policy will apply.

8. Recording attendance

8.1 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. The register will be taken at the same time for all pupils.

- 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 retain attendance register entries for the period required by current statutory and data protection requirements, currently six years from the date of the entry.

The school day starts at 08:45 and ends at 15:15.

Pupils must arrive in school by 08:45 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken by 08:55 and will be kept open until 09:25. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00 and will be kept open until 13:15.

8.2 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 08:30, by calling the school office, who can be contacted via the School Office absence line 01604 714399 and selecting Option 1 to leave a message.

We will normally record absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised where the explanation provided is credible and appropriate. Where there are genuine concerns about the authenticity or circumstances of the absence, the school may seek further information and support.

Where there are genuine and reasonable concerns about the authenticity, frequency or pattern of illness-related absence, the school may request appropriate supporting evidence. Any request will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be proportionate to the circumstances. The school will not apply a blanket requirement for medical evidence after a fixed number of days of absence.

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.

8.3 Planned absence

Medical or dental appointments may be recorded as authorised absence where the circumstances meet the relevant statutory requirements. Parents/carers should notify the school in advance wherever possible. Appointments should be arranged outside school hours where reasonably possible and absence should be limited to the minimum time necessary.

However, we encourage parents 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 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.

8.4 Lateness and punctuality

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.

8.5 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, by 09:30, of unexplained absence (and subsequent days as it deems appropriate) to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact a range of agencies to ensure the safety of the pupil, including the local authority and the police
- 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 appropriate safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer or the EIPT team.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- 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 the school will escalate through punitive and legal measures including the issuing of notices to improve, issuing of penalty notices or any other legal intervention as is appropriate as outlined in section 9 (below).

8.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents and carers about their child's attendance and absence levels and will work with parents to ensure that attendance of pupils is high.

9. Authorised and unauthorised absence

9.1 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 within the statutory framework, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. Requests will be considered on their individual merits; the school will not operate blanket policies where an individual assessment is required.

'Exceptional circumstances for school absence' refer to rare, significant, and unavoidable events that justify a student's absence from school. These circumstances are typically one-off events that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours. Examples include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care for a child looked after by the Local Authority, or a housing crisis that prevents attendance. Schools assess each request individually, and the decision to authorize an absence under exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the school principal or headteacher.

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

The headteacher may request appropriate evidence to support a request for leave of absence where this is reasonably necessary.

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- 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
- 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.

Our school will work in conjunction with the Local Authority to use the full range of appropriate attendance support and legal interventions. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices may be considered where a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised sessions of absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The threshold can be met through a combination of different types of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised holiday absence and occasions where a pupil arrives late after the register has closed.

Reaching the threshold does not mean that a penalty notice will automatically be issued. The school will consider the circumstances of the case, the support that has been offered, the reasons for absence and whether a penalty notice is appropriate and proportionate.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), the Local Authority or the police can issue a penalty notice in accordance with the statutory framework. The school will work with the Local Authority and follow the relevant Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

Before a penalty notice is issued, the school will consider, where relevant:

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 the pupil

Whether further support, a Notice to Improve or another legal intervention would be more appropriate

Whether any duties under the Equality Act 2010 or other relevant considerations make a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also be issued in other circumstances provided for by law, including where a parent allows their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a suspension or exclusion, where the statutory conditions are met.

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence may be issued with a penalty notice, subject to the statutory framework and Local Authority Code of Conduct.

The first penalty notice is currently £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. The second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil within the relevant three-year period is £160, with no reduction for early payment.

No more than two penalty notices will normally be issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil within a rolling three-year period. Where the national threshold is met for a third time within that period, alternative legal action may be considered instead.

Where appropriate, the Local Authority may consider prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or other legal intervention in accordance with the statutory framework.

Notices to Improve

Where the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents/carers do not engage with offers of support, a Notice to Improve may be used in

accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. A Notice to Improve is intended to provide a final opportunity to engage with support and improve attendance.

Where a Notice to Improve is used, it will include details of the pupil's attendance record and relevant offences, the benefits of regular attendance and parental duties, support provided so far, opportunities for further support, the expected improvement, and the circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued.

The improvement period will normally be between 3 and 6 weeks, in accordance with the statutory guidance and local code of conduct.

Legal intervention will be used proportionately and after consideration of the individual circumstances of the pupil and family.

10. Processes relating to absence

The school absence process, informed by research from the Children's Commissioner and other recent studies, emphasises early intervention and a proactive, supportive approach. When a student begins to show signs of frequent absenteeism, the school will promptly contact parents or guardians to discuss the issue and understand any underlying causes. If absences continue, a formal letter will be sent home, followed by a meeting with parents to develop a tailored support plan.

10.1 Absence management process

The attendance stages and thresholds below provide a framework for identifying pupils who may require additional support. They are not intended to operate as automatic or inflexible escalation points. The school will consider the individual circumstances of each pupil and family, including the reason and pattern of absence, barriers to attendance, safeguarding concerns, SEND and health needs, previous interventions and the effectiveness of support already offered. The school may intervene earlier or intensify support where circumstances require.

Primary

Trigger	School Action	Communication
Every day	Parent phone call by 08:30 to inform of absence via the school absence line 01604 714399 option 1. Admin update registers between 08:30 – 09:00 with all parental messages All teachers registers must be complete by 09:00 All children who are absent with no parental contact by 9:00am are subject to a phone call between 09:00 – 09:30 If there is no contact – attendance and safeguarding enquiries begin including home	

	visits; a CME referral will be made where appropriate and contact made to the emergency services.	
Day 3 equivalent	As day 1 process above if no contact has been made, plus a letter sent home highlighting concerns with falling attendance.	Letter 1
Day 6 equivalent	As day 1 process above if no contact has been made, plus a meeting with parents/carers with FSW in which barriers to attendance are ascertained and an EHA offered.	Letter 2 Letter 3 follows meeting
Day 10 equivalent	As day 1 process above if no contact has been made. plus a meeting with parents is facilitated with Senior Lead for Attendance in which an attendance contract is facilitated.	Letter 4 Letter 5 follows meeting Completed attendance contract
Review after 6 weeks		
If attendance is over 90% within the 6-week review period then there is no further escalation and process starts again as above. Letter 6	If attendance is below 90% within the 6-week review or if there is a significant period of absence which means 90% is now unattainable within that period then a further meeting is called in which parents are warned that there is likely to be a referral to EIPT and penalty notices instigated if there is no improvement. Letter 7	
	Review after a further 4-week period	
If attendance is over 90% for the 4-week review period above then no further escalation. Letter 8	If attendance is below 90% within the 4-week review or if there is a significant period of absence which means 90% is now unattainable within that period then a further meeting is called in which parents are Informed that they have been referred to EIPT or equivalent and penalty notices instigated if there is no improvement. Letter 9	

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, Local Authority procedures or the barriers affecting attendance within the school. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board. The policy will be published on the school website and made available to parents/carers. Parents/carers will be informed of the school's attendance expectations when their child joins the school and will be reminded at the beginning of each academic year and when significant changes are made. The school will seek and consider the views of pupils and parents/carers when reviewing its approach to attendance, where appropriate.

12. Links with other policies

Several school policies are closely linked with the attendance policy, ensuring a comprehensive approach to student wellbeing and academic success. These include:

1. **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**: Ensures the safety and wellbeing of pupils, addressing any issues that might affect attendance.
2. **Behaviour Policy**: Outlines expectations for student conduct, which can influence attendance and engagement.
3. **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy**: Provides support for pupils with mental health challenges, promoting regular attendance.
4. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy**: Ensures that pupils with additional needs receive appropriate support to attend school regularly.
5. **Anti-Bullying Policy**: Creates a safe and supportive school environment, reducing absenteeism due to bullying.
6. **Health and Safety Policy**: Ensures a safe school environment, which is essential for regular attendance.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes reflect the current Department for Education national attendance and absence codes. Staff must use the code that accurately reflects the circumstances of the individual session and should refer to current DfE guidance where there is any uncertainty.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Morning session – present at school when the attendance register begins to be taken	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Afternoon session – present at school when the attendance register begins to be taken	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending an approved educational activity not covered by another attendance code
C	Absent with leave for other circumstances	Leave of absence has been granted under the statutory framework for circumstances not covered by C1 or C2
C1	Absent with leave for a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad with the required approval
C2	Absent with leave because a compulsory school age pupil is subject to a temporary reduced timetable	Pupil is attending school part-time under an agreed, temporary and time-limited arrangement
D	Dual registered at another school	Pupil is attending a session at another school where they are also registered

E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Pupil is absent because of suspension/exclusion and no alternative provision has been made
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for a holiday that has not been authorised
I	Unable to attend because of sickness	Pupil is absent because of physical or mental illness; do not use for medical/dental appointments
J1	Attending an interview	Pupil is attending an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority	Pupil is attending provision arranged by the Local Authority
L	Late arrival before the register is closed	Pupil arrives after the register has opened but before it has closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Pupil is absent for a medical or dental appointment where the statutory requirements for authorised absence are met
N	Reason for absence not yet established	The reason has not been established before the register closes; this must be resolved promptly
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason has been established or the reason does not meet an authorised absence code
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
Q	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements	Pupil cannot attend because the relevant access arrangements have not been provided in circumstances covered by the regulations
R	Religious observance	Pupil is absent for a day set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave to study for a public examination
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil meets the statutory conditions for absence because their parent is travelling for occupational purposes
U	Arrived after registration closed	Pupil arrives late after the register has closed but before the end of the session

V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is attending an educational visit or trip organised or approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is attending an approved work experience placement
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend	Pupil is not required to attend school because they are below compulsory school age
Y1	Unable to attend because normally provided transport is not available	Normally provided transport is unavailable
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	A local, national or international emergency has caused widespread travel disruption
Y3	Unable to attend because part of the school premises is closed	Part of the premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil cannot practicably be accommodated elsewhere on site
Y4	Unable to attend because the whole school site is unexpectedly closed	The school was due to be open but has closed unexpectedly
Y5	Unable to attend because the pupil is in criminal justice detention	Pupil is in police detention, remanded/detained or subject to a sentence of detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Attendance or travel to school would be contrary to relevant public health guidance or prohibited by law concerning infection or disease
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	An emergency or other unavoidable cause affecting the pupil prevents attendance; the nature of the cause must be recorded
Z	Prospective pupil not on the admission register	Administrative code used where applicable before the pupil joins the school
#	Planned whole-school closure	The school is planned to be closed and no session takes place

Appendix 2: Attendance Triangle

