

Attendance Policy

2025-26

Ellingham C of E Primary:

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Introduction

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. We know that regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential as there is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. This can, in turn, impact negatively upon the life chances of those pupils with low attendance.

Pele Trust schools believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally and socially resilient, confident and responsible. This will support them to achieve well and make a positive contribution to their community.

Regular attendance is also important in safeguarding children as it enables potential risks to be identified and support provided. Regular absence, particularly unexplained, can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns.

We value all of our children, pupils and students. As set out in this policy, Embleton Vincent Edwards Ce Primary School will work in partnership with families to identify barriers to attendance and support to resolve any difficulties.

We believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the school, parents/carers and the local community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

Key Contacts:

Attendance officer	Kathy Davies	kathy.davies@elloingham.school.uk
Senior leader responsible for attendance	Diane Lakey	diane.lakey@ellinghamschool.uk

In the event your child will not be in school for the start of the school day for any reason (absence or lateness) please notify us on 01665 589233 or admin@ellinghamschool.uk by 9.00am.

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regard school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance, 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
- Setting out the statutory and legal responsibilities of school staff and parents/carers
- 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

Principles

The following important principles underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Pupils and parents/carers will understand the school's expectations and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- All school staff, including Academy Committee members, administrative and support staff will understand the expectations and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- Clear procedures to support good attendance are reviewed annually
- The importance of good attendance is regularly reinforced through our pastoral system and the curriculum
- Parents/carers and pupils have the opportunity to raise concerns and share in addressing those concerns
- We will allocate appropriate resources, e.g. time, people and space to support good attendance
- We will recognise and reward good attendance and those who strive to improve their attendance
- We will be proactive in identifying patterns of absence and intervene early
- We know that patterns of attendance are established early in a school career
- Children who miss significant amounts of their education in primary school are more likely to truant in secondary school
- We will analyse data to identify individual pupils, cohorts and groups across the school
- Pele Trust schools will work together using data to identify students early
- Appropriate sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance are fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers.

Attendance expectations

We want all pupils to attend school every day. We aim to develop a culture where all pupils can and want to be in school, enjoying and benefiting from their learning and other enrichment and extracurricular activities.

To do this, all schools in Pele Trust will:

- Create a positive and welcoming learning environment where pupils feel safe and able to learn effectively.
- Implement an ambitious and broad curriculum that develops skills and knowledge, enabling the achievement of strong qualifications and preparing pupils for life beyond school.
- Regularly communicate the importance of strong attendance and reward pupils whose attendance is high or improving rapidly.
- Monitor attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) so that intervention can be timely and effective.
- Listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with pupils and parents/carers to overcome difficulties, involving external agencies where appropriate.
- Where necessary, work with the local authority to enforce attendance through legal interventions

Pele Trust defines key levels of attendance as:

Attendance	Description
98 -100%	Excellent
95-97.9%	Good
92-94.9%	Caution
90- 91.9%	Cause for concern
89.9% or below	Persistent Absence Serious Concern

NB: Attendance percentages are not like test results. While a score of 90% in a test would be a good result, 90% attendance means that a child will have missed around 100 lessons and nearly 4 weeks of education over a school year.

Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility involving school staff, Academy Committee members, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

The Academy Committee will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality are promoted to pupils and their parents/carers
- Have a named senior manager / senior attendance champion to lead on attendance
- Ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the Attendance Policy
- Identify a member of the Academy Committee to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure compliance with the statutory duties of School Attendance, Pupil Registration Regulations, England, 2024 and Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 and other attendance-related legislation
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through the headteacher's termly reporting to the Academy Committee
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department for Education as required and on time
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood, used to drive interventions and that interventions are evaluated

The Headteacher will:

- Implement this policy and a whole school approach and strategy that promotes good school attendance and punctuality
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to pupils and their parents/carers
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and their responsibilities within it.
- Ensure adequate training to support staff
- Ensure that the School Attendance, Pupil Registration Regulations, England, 2024 and Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 and other attendance-related legislation are complied with
- Ensure accurate completion of admission and attendance registers.
- Have a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resources to this role.

The Senior Leader responsible for attendance will:

- Lead, champion and improve attendance across the school
- Ensure that the Attendance Policy and the associated practices are implemented effectively and that robust day-to-day processes are in place, making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Have systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Build close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Work with the SENCo and parents/carers 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
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Academy Committee and on a half-termly basis to the Academy Committee Link person for attendance
- Ensure that interventions used are documented to a standard required by the Local Authority, should legal proceedings need to be instigated.

The attendance office will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to pupils and parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Monitor, identify and follow up on any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to understand why and when the pupil will return.
- Carry out robust first day calling procedures, including priority routines for vulnerable students.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify patterns of absence.
- Work with the senior leader responsible for attendance to maintain an up-to-date attendance risk register and punctuality risk register of high-risk pupils
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss Attendance, engagement and support
- Identify students who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.

- Work with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies, as appropriate, to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Undertake home visits in line with safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority, should legal proceedings need to be instigated.
- Implementing children missing education (CME) procedures when appropriate

Class Teachers will:

- Ensure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Provide good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve well as a positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance
- Ensure that completion of the statutory attendance register using the school's MIS system at the start of the first session of the school day and at the start of the afternoon session.

Parents/Carers will:

- Ensure that, whenever possible, their child attends and stays at school every day on time
- Instil the importance of education and value of regular school attendance within the home
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences; wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask for help if their child is experiencing difficulties attending school and work in partnership with the school to resolve any issues
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home about the importance of good attendance
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on family holidays during term-time.

Pupils will:

- Attend school punctually, on every day that it is open.
- Attend school prepared for the day with appropriate equipment.
- Report to the school office if they arrive to school late
- Engage positively with staff to improve their attendance if they are experiencing difficulties

- Be on time for every lesson
- Report any difficulties they are having in attending school.

Recording and categorising attendance and absence

The 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

Registers close 30 minutes after they open. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:30pm.

Absence from school

The Education Act 2006 sets out that parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means the child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. When a child is absent and no reason has been provided by the parent or carer, contact will be made by the attendance team. All available emergency contacts may be called. This is to ensure that the child is safe and to offer or signpost support if required. Home visits may be carried out for safeguarding checks and/ or to offer support.

Schools must record whether each pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school using the appropriate national attendance and absence code from the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 (see Appendix 1).

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent / carer 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.

Absence due to illness

- Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.
- On each day of any continued absence, parents/carers must contact school before the morning registration period begins

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 a pupil is placed in an attendance intervention stage, or where a pupil is classed as persistently or severely absent, medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of a doctor's note, appointment card, prescription or other appropriate evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents / carers will be notified of this.

Unexplained absences:

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

- Call the parent/carer in the morning on the first day of the unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- If staff are unable to reach any of the emergency contacts, we may visit the pupil's home
- 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.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure appropriate safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- If absence continues, the school may involve other agencies

Please note, unexplained absences will always be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the school will report the absence to the local authority. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause.

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/carers are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should aim to attend school for part of the day.
- For other types of planned absence, parents/carers should apply as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence is categorised according to those set out in the School Attendance Pupil Registration Regulations (England) 2024, Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 (summary of [Registration Codes](#) can be found in Appendix 1):

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness)
- 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) / carer(s) belong(s).
 - Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent due to religious observance.
 - If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
 - In the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school, our reasonable approach is that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year.
- Parents / carers travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) absence. Absence may be authorised only when a family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Approval for term-time absence:

Any absence interrupts the continuity of learning and should be avoided. The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

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 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.
 - As a guiding principle, the Headteacher may consider 'exceptional circumstances' if the reasons given for requesting leave are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

The government guidance states that '*generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance*'. Holidays in term time will therefore not be authorised and could lead to a penalty notice being issued.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. All decisions in relation to whether leave of absence is granted (authorised) or not (unauthorised) should be applied consistently and equitably. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Where a leave of absence is not granted or where the child fails to return to school by the agreed date following approval of leave of absence, then the Headteacher will pass on the details to the local authority in line with the duty around reporting children missing education.

The Headteacher may request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for each child for absence from school.

If a pupil fails to return for ten days after a Leave of Absence and contact with the parents/carers has not been made or received, despite significant effort to do so, then the school, after notifying the local authority, may remove the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with Working Together to Improve Attendance, 2024. This means that the child will lose their school place.

Leave of Absence Application Process

- A parent/carer requesting a leave of absence for their child during term time should make an application in writing, as far in advance as possible, explaining the specific reasons for the absence.
- School may request further information or contact the parent/carer to discuss the reasons for the application and the impact the absence may have on the child's education
- The school will reply to all requests promptly.
- A formal approval is necessary for the absence to be considered authorised.
- If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated, including the date the child is expected to return to school, including possible consequences if the child fails to return on that date
- If a parent /carer removes their child from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the headteacher and the school requires the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice, then the parent will be informed that a request to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice is being made.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted as such by the school or been granted leave of absence by the Headteacher.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include (but are not limited to):

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping trips
- Childcare/babysitting
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for staff training (or other) purposes
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of school

Absence from lessons

It is crucial that pupils attend all timetabled lessons when they are in school. Pupils will be supported, as needed, if they have any specific attendance issues.

Lateness and punctuality:

It is essential that pupils arrive punctually for both morning and afternoon registration and to all lessons. We appreciate that there may be occasional instances where lateness may occur due to circumstances outside of the pupil's control. Should this be the case, parents / carers should inform the school.

Registers close 30 minutes after they open. A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L).
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

Any child arriving into a morning or afternoon session more than 30 minutes late will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless a suitable reason is provided

Morning registration begins at 8.40am.

- Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L).
- The register will close thirty minutes after the start of the session at 9.10am.
- Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, having arrived after registration (U); this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

Afternoon registration begins at 1.00pm.

- Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time
- The afternoon register will close thirty minutes after the start of the session at 1.30pm.
- Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, having arrived after registration (U); this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

Absence will only be **authorised** if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, evidence of attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late.

Persistent lateness may be referred to the Local Authority, who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

Using Attendance Data

Collecting and monitoring data:

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 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.
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence.
- Conduct a 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
- Inform whole school/Trust strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Using data

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 facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the Academy Committee 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 to modify them and inform future strategies.

Sharing data:

Pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with parents termly. Attendance data will be shared in a way that makes it easy to understand, e.g. number of sessions/days missed against possible total attendance.

Attendance data may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

The school will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the Local Authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

Supporting and improving attendance

Encouraging and celebrating good attendance

There is evidence to show that good attendance is significantly correlated with higher performance and outcomes in examinations. It is important that all our pupils attend school as much as possible to ensure that they are able to fully succeed with their learning and the opportunities presented to them. We will celebrate the success of our pupils in many ways including (but not limited to) attendance awards and certificates.

Support and intervention:

Pele Trust recognises that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to difficulties at home and/or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse etc. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is important to ensure that poor attendance is identified and addressed early to avoid absence becoming a habit.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils classed as Disadvantaged, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with additional physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include (see Appendices 2 and 3):

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Attendance Contracts (see Appendix 3)
- Attendance / punctuality report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors/pastoral support staff
- Pupil voice activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Reward systems
- Time-limited part-time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

The proposed support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion with both parents/carers and pupils. For further information and documentation, see Appendix 2: [Cracking Attendance](#).

Persistent and Severe Absence

Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored to identify children who are persistently absent (PA), or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified, we will initiate interventions as outlined in our policy.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil is defined as persistently absent (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Over a full academic year, this would be equivalent to 19 school days (38 sessions).

Where pupils are PA, referrals may also be made to the local authority and external agencies for targeted support. An attendance improvement plan will be developed with bespoke strategies to ensure attendance improves during the course of the monitoring period.

Severe Absence (SA)

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent' (SA). This is equivalent to 95 school days or 19 weeks of education over an academic year. Missing so much school can severely impact a child's ability to develop both academically and socially. Pupils within this cohort are likely to have more complex barriers to attending school and will need more intensive support from school and external agencies.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Communicate regularly with the parents / carers 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

Where a student is absent for 15 or more days within an academic year due to illness (either mental or physical), a Section 19 referral may be made to the Local Authority requesting that alternative provision is made for the pupil.

Before the Section 19 referral can be made, the school must be able to demonstrate that appropriate support has been offered to the family. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Attendance letters.
- Records of phone calls.
- Attendance meetings.
- Attendance action plans.
- Referrals to other agencies.

Legal interventions

In the majority of cases, the school and the Local Authority will provide support to help you improve your child's attendance. If your child continues to miss school without a good reason, the Local Authority may use various legal sanctions.

Penalty Notice:

A penalty notice (otherwise known as a 'fine') is issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school. Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school.

The national threshold for penalty notices is:

- A pupil misses 10 unauthorised sessions (the equivalent of 5 days) in a 10-week period
 - This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes, all within 10 school weeks).
 - These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
 - Can be for persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has been closed;
 - The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).
- An unauthorised holiday is taken in term time

The fine for school absences across the country is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions like a parenting order, an Education Supervision Order or prosecution will be considered.

Before referring a case to the Local Authority, 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).
- A penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil.
- Further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution.
- Any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

Notices to improve

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

Other legal interventions

Where all voluntary support has been exhausted, the Local Authority will work with the school and other agencies to enforce school attendance. This includes parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecution through the courts. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or be imprisoned for up to three months.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures.

The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025

- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Appendix 1

Appendix - Registration Codes

See pages 76-91 of [Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024](#) for full details.

1 ATTENDANCE: These codes denote the pupil is present:

Code	Meaning	Definition
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late but before register has closed (i.e. within 30 minutes of the start of the session)
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
K	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the local authority
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school. The school is responsible for the pupil's welfare.
V	Educational trip or Visit	Pupil is on an educational trip or visit organised, or approved, by the school. The school is responsible for the pupil's welfare.
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

2 ABSENCE: These codes denote the pupil is absent:

Code	Meaning	Definition
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Leave of absence	The pupil is performing in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence: part-time timetable	For compulsory school-aged pupil who is on an agreed part-time table
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Pupil has been suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
J1	Leave of absence	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer / admission to another educational institution
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a mobile child due to the parent travelling from place to place for business or trade
Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements made by the local authority
Y1	Unable to attend due to lack of transport	Where the school or local authority normally provides transport which is not available, and the school is beyond reasonable walking distance (<i>i.e. 3 miles for 8+yo and 2 miles for 7yo and below</i>)
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school being unexpectedly closed	Where the whole school was planned to be open but remain closed unexpectedly

Authorised absence (cont.)		
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	If the pupil is in police detention or on remand to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Pupil travel to, or attendance at, the school would be contrary to restrictions set by the secretary of state for health
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not the parent
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on holiday that was not granted by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason; (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code "O" if no reason for absence is provided)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	The pupil arrived late, and after 30 minutes from the start of the session (discretion can be used for a valid reason)
Other codes (these codes do not affect either absence or attendance figures)		
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age, who is not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole/partial school closure due to half-term/bank hols/INSET day

Appendix 2: CRACKING ATTENDANCE - an overview

- 1) Develop a strong **School Culture** where children want to be:
 - See [Improving Attendance](#) points 1-4
- 2) Develop robust **School Systems** to support children and families
 - See [Improving Attendance](#) points 5-8

3) Cracking Attendance documents

Leadership and Management

1. School staff - [Attendance responsibilities](#)
2. School staff - [New registration codes](#)
3. Pastoral team - [3 Steps for Analysing Attendance and Absence Data](#)
4. Pastoral team - [Attendance triggers](#)

Recording Forms and Student Plans

1. Initial Form tutor / Pastoral conversation with student
 - Document: [Listening and Understanding Record](#)
2. Pastoral Lead / SLT formal meeting with parent and student
 - Document: [Barriers to attendance meeting](#)
 - See [Worked example of Barriers to Attendance meeting](#)
3. Pastoral Lead / SLT development of student attendance plan
 - Document: [Attendance Improvement Plan](#)
 - See [Worked example of Attendance Improvement Plan](#)
 - Document: [Strategies and Incentives](#)
4. Pastoral team to keep updates of attendance work and impact with pupils
 - Document: [Attendance spreadsheet](#)

See also DfE document:

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

Appendix 3

ATTENDANCE CONTRACT

Name of Child			
Date of Birth		Year Group	
Home Address			
Parent / Carer (1)			
Name			
Address			
Parent / Carer (2)			
Name			
Address			

CONTRACT

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from his/her education it is vital that he/she attends regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT?

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect his/her learning and levels of achievement.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE

Every half day of absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school using sanctions and/or legal proceedings involving the Local Authority. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences that have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after registration has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed as exceptional

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is not acceptable to cover up his/her absence or to give in to pressure to excuse him/her from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. If your child's attendance at school is affected by persistent illness the school will not authorise the absence until we are satisfied the absence is valid.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEE (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year 'for whatever reason'. Absence at this level damages your child's educational prospects and we need your full support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. If your child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark you will be informed of this immediately.

PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send an email/note into school on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence and the dates of the absence – you should do this even if you have already telephoned. Or ...
- You can call in to school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you

If your child's attendance deteriorates we will:

- Write to you
- Invite you to school if absences persist so that we can discuss the situation
- Refer you to the Education Welfare Service

CONTACT DETAILS

There are times when the school and Education Welfare team may need to contact you so we need to have your contact details. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date phone number and email address – if we don't, then something important may be missed.

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together; this is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, Education Welfare will become involved. The service will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve your child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, then sanctions such as Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court will be used. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Education Welfare Service/ Local Authority.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day he/she can miss:

- School work
- Time with his/her class teacher
- Receiving vital information and news for the day

Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and therefore the learning of others; it can be embarrassing for the child and this can lead to unnecessary absence.

The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked twice a day and your child will receive a late mark if he/she is not punctual.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after the close of registration he/she will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with staff in school to resolve the problem, but you can approach staff at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time

LEAVE OF ABSENCE (in term time).

Any applications for leave must be made in advance and are at the discretion of the Headteacher. In making a decision, the Headteacher will consider the exceptional circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave or absence in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may generate sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the School Attendance Contract.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Carer)

_____ (Print Name)

Date: _____