



THE DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD
ACADEMIES TRUST

TRUST ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Date: September 2024

1. AIMS

In order for our pupils to maximise all learning opportunities provided and to reach their full potential, consistently good attendance is vital. As a Trust, we are committed to meeting our obligations with regard to school attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Identifying and acting promptly to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the right support in place to ensure they attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending school.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the DfE document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (May 2022) and refers to the DfE statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures (January 2015). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and responsibilities 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, 2016, 2023 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2024
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024
- Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's Attendance: Guidance for Schools (February 2023)

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Executive Headteacher/Head of School

NB: The Executive Headteacher may delegate duties linked to attendance to the head of School, and quality assure this work regularly. Responsibilities include:

- Acting as or appointing a member of the SLT as Senior Attendance Champion
- Implementing the attendance policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and sharing this information with the local school board in the Headteacher's Termly Report.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed penalty notices where necessary
- Having an oversight of data analysis regarding attendance using Arbor and/or FFT.

3.2 Class teachers

- Complete registers accurately and promptly.
- Have regular discussions with pupils about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Liaise with other school staff and respond to attendance issues promptly.
- Support the Trust/whole school ethos of promoting good attendance.

3.3 Attendance Leads

Schools may appoint an attendance lead with delegated responsibilities, including:

- Development and review of the attendance policy
- Producing and distributing attendance information for parents/carers
- Setting and monitoring targets for improving attendance within the school, and evaluating targets with the senior leadership team
- Supporting all school staff in their work related to attendance
- Collating attendance data as required for senior leadership team, DfE, LA and LSB
- Identifying individual pupils with known punctuality/attendance issues, and ensuring these pupils are monitored closely
- Referring pupils to the DSAT EWO when attendance gives cause for concern, and liaising with the EWO to develop strategies to support these pupils/families.
- Liaising with other partner agencies and services towards improving and developing strategies to raise levels of attendance.

3.4 The Local School Board

- Will receive information from the Headteacher and/or EWO on attendance in the Headteacher's termly report.
- Will support the school in setting attendance targets.
- Will support the school in planning a response where attendance is a cause for concern.
- Will support the school in its efforts to raise attendance.
- May support the school by attending strategic meetings or attendance panels as appropriate.

3.5 Education Welfare Officer

The Trust has its own appointed Attendance Lead who will:

- Work with the CEO, Head of Business and Operations, Headteachers, School Business Managers, Learning Mentors and Attendance Leads to develop and evaluate processes, communication streams and efficient ways of working to support attendance.
- Have an up-to-date knowledge of legal proceedings and support schools in relation to statutory processes, and provide advice for schools and engage with pupils, parents and families to improve pupil attendance rates
- Arrange and carry out home visits or on-site visits, to explore and offer support to improve pupil attendance
- Work with other staff and agencies who support pupils, such as local authorities and multi agencies, including support for Early Help assessments and TAF meetings
- Take part in internal meetings to share information and provide guidance on Trust policy where necessary
- Where required participate in Child Protection procedures, including making an education contribution at case conferences and multi-agency meetings

4 STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

4.1 What our schools expects of pupils:

- To attend school every day, unless in exceptional circumstances.
- To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day
- To report to their class teacher for registration, or to the school office if late
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school

4.2 What our schools expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their statutory responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time.
- To ensure they contact the school as per reporting procedures if their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure their child arrives on time, and is well prepared for the day (equipment, homework completed, PE kit etc.)
- To contact the school (class teacher/headteacher/admin staff) in confidence whenever a problem arises that may keep their child from attending school.
- To inform the admin staff of any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, make appointments outside of the school day. Evidence of an appointment **must** be shown to the school office staff – without evidence, the absence for a full session will be logged as unauthorised. Parents collecting children early will also be asked to show evidence of the appointment.
- To take holidays in the school holiday period only; special leave in term time will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances – see appendix for list of absence codes.

4.3 What parents can expect of their school

- The encouragement and promotion of good attendance
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing prior notification
- Prompt action when any problems are identified
- Close liaison with the Trust Education Welfare Officer, LA Attendance Officers and Early Help Team to assist and support parents and pupils
- Notification to parents/carers of their child's attendance record through annual reports sent home (drawn from Arbor)

5 ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

5.1 Registration procedures

These will vary according to individual schools, and be detailed in their own specific policies.

5.2 Responding to lateness (punctuality)

Pupils who are regularly late for school will miss out on valuable learning time. Late arrival in school can not only disrupt the individual child's learning, but also that of their peers. Our schools will take active steps to address persistent lateness.

- Pupils arriving late after doors/gates close must report to the school office, where a record of their late arrival will be made with the time of arrival and reason for the lateness.
- Pupils arriving up to 30 minutes after doors closing will be deemed to be late, and given a late mark (L). Individual school policies will specify the time at which registers close.
- Pupils arriving after this designated time and the close of registers will be marked as 'U', and classed as unauthorised absence for that session.
- Staff will monitor lateness, and note persistent offenders. Arbor registers will be annotated with the number of minutes late.
- Where a pattern of repeated lateness is seen, the school will send the relevant 'Late' letter 1 to remind parents of the importance of good timekeeping.
- Where the problem persists, the school can ask the DSAT EWO to speak to parents by telephone to discuss their child's lateness and try to identify causes/seek remedies to the problem.
- If there is no subsequent improvement, school will send 'Late' letter 2, and parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and EWO.
- In the case of 'U' codes, these will be assessed against the latest DfE guidance on absences (10 in 10 rule).

5.3 The school's response to unexplained absence

Although parents are expected to contact the school if their child is to be absent due to illness or other unexpected reasons, there will be instances where this does not happen. In such cases, all schools will follow a 'first day call' procedure as outlined below:

- If no message has been received, teachers or office staff will note the absence as 'N' at the close of registers. This can be updated depending upon outcome of first day protocols.
- Some parents will message the class teacher via Dojo or send a message verbally – this should be checked in the first instance, though third-party information must be checked with the parent as per the actions below. Parents must be advised that the correct procedure is to ring the school office to report absence.
- The school office may send a text message as soon as registers are closed to the primary contact to check on the absence.
- If no contact has been received by 9:30am, the office staff will start to ring the contacts on the pupil's file.
- Should there be no response from any of the contacts on file, office staff should consult the SLT/safeguarding leads to ascertain whether a home visit should be made. This can be by school staff or the DSAT EWO, depending on staff availability.
- The school may choose to contact their Local Authority Safeguarding Hub if in person contact cannot be made with the family and there are concerns around the safety of the child(ren). This decision would be made following careful discussion between DSLs and SLT.

5.4 Safeguarding

Children may be at risk if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis is considered to be a safeguarding matter.

As part of first day call procedures outlined, schools may well make home visits to ascertain the well-being of pupils. In any instance, where a pupil has not attended and the school has not been contacted with what it deems an acceptable reason, then a home visit will be considered. The school will speak to their safeguarding leads for additional advice where necessary, and where appropriate DSLs contact their Local Authority Safeguarding Hub for support.

5.5 The school's response to attendance issues/following attendance pathways

- The school will identify and monitor pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. The Trust will set a target for attendance, to be reviewed each academic year.
- The Trust target for the academic year 2024-25 is 96%.
- **Pupils falling below 96% will be deemed to be of concern.** The attendance leads in school should review the attendance certificates, and make initial contact with the parent/carer to express their concerns and offer Early Help support. At this stage schools may send their first 'light touch' letter and monitor at 3-4 week intervals, sending letters 2 and 3 if there is no improvement. The Trust EWO may also make contact with parents at this stage for an informal discussion.
- **If attendance continues to fall to below 90%,** as defined by the DfE a child will be deemed to be 'Persistently Absent' (PA). Absence at this level is likely to cause considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and the school will need parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to address this. If not taken up already, Early Help support should be offered again. Parents will be invited to a formal attendance review panel in school with the Headteacher/Attendance Lead and Trust EWO.
- After a monitoring period of 3-4 weeks, if there is no sign of improvement the school may start the formal Local Authority attendance pathway, informing the LA Inclusion and Attendance team and beginning with letter 1.
- A support plan will be created for the family, and further professional help accessed if not already in place. Regular review meetings will be held in school to monitor progress.
- Children whose attendance continues to fall to below 50% are deemed to be Severely Absent (SA) and will need a specific targeted plan. This should be created in liaison with support from the Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance lead.
- Parents should be advised that failure to comply with the above interventions could eventually lead to the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices, or prosecution in court. The Local Authority will contact parents regarding the issuing of fines or any other legal action.

All absences will be assessed against current DfE guidance;

When a child receives 10 unauthorised absences in any rolling 10 week period, the school must consider the next steps. This could include unauthorised absence (O codes), unauthorised lateness (U codes), unauthorised term time leave (G codes) or a combination of these codes.

5.6 Leave of absence (including holidays in term time)

The law states that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for term time holidays. The Trust will not authorise holidays in term time. Our schools will refer any cases of unauthorised holiday absence that meet Local Authority thresholds for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Under new DfE Guidance, Local Authorities will only issue two fixed penalty notices in a rolling 3 year period. Fixed penalty notices are issued per parent, per child for any leave of absence of 5 days or more.

Offence 1 – FPN of £160 per parent/per child This FPN will be reduced to £80 per parent/per child if paid within 21 days.

Offence 2 – FPN of £160 per parent/per child. No reduction.

Offence 3 – LA will consider prosecution through magistrates' court.

If parents do decide to take their child out of school during term time, school should be notified by the completion of a leave of absence request form at least 20 days prior to the date of absence. Leave of absence request forms must be collected in person from the school office, and not given out by class teachers.

Where a leave of absence request is deemed to be due to very exceptional circumstances, the headteacher will consult with the Trust EWO on a case-by-case basis to ascertain whether the FPN can be waived or an 'authorised absence' code used as per new coding guidance.

Families requesting leave of absence for the purposes of Religious Observance should speak to their Head of School for guidance.

6. CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION/ABSENT FROM EDUCATION

Children/students who cannot be located, or their families contacted, will be considered missing from education. The LA Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with specific Local Authority procedures. If the family/ child is still deemed missing after 20 school days they may lose their school place and be removed from the school roll.

Similarly, schools will pay particular attention to those pupils whose persistent absence is impacting severely upon their education, and classed as 'absent from education'.

These cases will be discussed with SLT/Safeguarding leads and Trust EWO to ensure that appropriate and robust action is taken to address concerns.

KCSIE Sept 2024: *Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to Local Authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.*

These cases will be discussed with SLT/Safeguarding leads and Trust EWO to ensure that appropriate and robust action is taken to address concerns.

7. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Should, after careful consideration, a parent decide to educate their child at home, the school should ask for confirmation of this in writing. The school may then remove the child from the school roll immediately, informing Elective Home Education. The school is under no obligation to keep the child's place open.

Appendix 1 - ATTENDANCE FLOW CHART

EXPECT

School aspires to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents, and builds a culture where attendance is a priority and children want to be in school and ready to learn.
Target of 96% is set by the Trust.



MONITOR

Attendance champions/leads rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) and act as soon as possible before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is seen, or attendance falls below 96%;

~ Attendance lead/EWO to speak with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

When attendance continues to fall and is at risk of reaching 90% or below;

~ Remove barriers in school, and help pupils and parents to overcome the barriers outside of school through the offer of Early Help or other means of support.

~ Send out light touch letters 1 and 2 as necessary, with 3-4 week monitoring period between each letter and maintain regular contact with parents through attendance meetings.

~ If attendance improves, maintain regular monitoring.

~ If attendance/punctuality remains static or continues to decline, move to 'formalise support' and send letter 3.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Absence has fallen to below 90% and is now in category of PA.

~ Parents may not be engaging with voluntary support offered.

~ Parents will be invited to a formal attendance panel meeting with Head and Trust EWO to explain the consequences of this clearly, and to enable families to respond.

~ The school will contact their Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance Lead for support, and begin the relevant Local Authority Attendance Pathway.

~ Pathway letters are sent with a 3-4 week monitoring period between them.

~ An action plan or attendance contract may be put in place, with school/parents' agreement.



ENFORCE

Attendance continues to fall, and is in danger of reaching 50% and becoming 'severe absence'

~ Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

~ Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance Leads must be notified and support with this process.

APPENDIX 2 - SAMPLE LETTERS



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Poor Punctuality - Letter 1

Date:

Dear

I am writing to you because [name] has been late to school [n] times in [number of weeks/dates].

Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss of learning time, and can have a serious impact on your child's education. Arriving after the start of lessons can also be embarrassing and unsettling for your child.

The school day begins promptly at [time] and registration closes at [time].

Any child who arrives in school after [time] will be marked as 'late' in the register.

Any child who arrives after [time] will be marked as 'U' ('late after close of registration') and is classed as an unauthorised absence. This will impact on your child's overall attendance data for the year.

All late arrivals are logged and recorded on our systems, and reviewed regularly.

Please ensure that your child is in school and ready to learn at the above times. If you are experiencing any difficulties in getting your child into school, please do speak to the school office who will arrange for the relevant person to contact you to see if we can offer some support.

If there is no improvement, we will arrange a meeting in school with myself and our Education Welfare Officer.

By working together, we can ensure that your child achieves to their full potential.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

Poor Punctuality – Letter 2

Date:

Dear

I recently wrote to you about your child's punctuality, and the number of late marks on our registers. Unfortunately, there has been little improvement since we made contact.

[name] has been late to school a further [n] times since our last letter [dates/no of weeks].

We would like to remind you that the school day begins promptly at [time] and registration closes at [time]. Any child who arrives in school after [time] will be marked as 'late' in the register.

Any child who arrives after [time] will be marked as 'U' ('late after close of registration') and is classed as an unauthorised absence. This will impact on your child's overall attendance data for the year.

We are committed to working with families to make sure every child gets the support they need. We would therefore like to arrange a meeting with myself and our Trust Education Welfare Officer, to discuss how we can work together to improve [name's] punctuality.

A member of our office staff will contact you by telephone to arrange a suitable meeting time.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School



Date:

Absence From School Letter 1

Re: Attendance below 96%

Dear

I am writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

Their current attendance has fallen to [%]. Falling below our Trust target of 96% will likely have an impact on their academic achievement. Regular attendance also provides children with the essential social and life skills that are key to their development.

We aim to work closely with all our families to ensure the best possible outcomes for every child, and want to ensure that we support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking at ways in which we can develop their attendance at school.

Please note that, should attendance continue to fall, we may not authorise absences unless medical evidence is shown (appointment card/hospital letter etc.)

Please contact the school office as soon as you can, so that we can discuss this further.

By working together, we can ensure that your child achieves to their full potential.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School



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Date:

Absence From School Letter 2

Re: Attendance below 96%

Dear

Following our previous letter sent on [date] we are disappointed to see that there has been no significant improvement in [name's] attendance.

Our records show that [name's] attendance has now fallen to [%] which is in danger of falling into the category of Persistent Absentee. If there are no improvements, we may decide to start the Attendance Pathway process, which could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

Once again, we would like to remind you of the importance of regular attendance, to ensure that your child reaches their full potential.

We have passed your information on to our Trust Education Welfare Officer, who will be contacting you by telephone to discuss your child's absence, and offer support in relation to this.

Please note that any future absences will not be authorised unless supported by medical evidence, such as an appointment card or text, or hospital letter.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School



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Date:

Absence From School Letter 3

Re: Attendance below 90%

Dear

Our records show that [name's] attendance is [%] and is now in the category of Persistent Absence.

Please see the enclosed attendance certificate.

As stated in our previous letters, [name's] attendance has not improved and we therefore may have no other option but to refer this matter to the Local Authority and start the Attendance Pathway.

All absences without medical evidence will continue to be recorded as unauthorised.

We will be contacting you to invite you to a school attendance panel meeting with myself and our Trust EWO, where we can discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

APPENDIX 3 - UPDATED ATTENDANCE CODES 2024-25

Code	Meaning	Type
/ \	Present at the school / morning \ afternoon	Present Mark
B	Attending any other approved educational activity - Alternative Provision not arranged through the approved framework	Present Mark
C	Authorised Circumstance (see next page for breakdown)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registered at another school - Attending an Inclusion Centre - Attending Alternative Provision at another school site - Hospital education - Education at a secure / residential site - Off-site direction / managed move	Present Mark
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school or Term Time Leave not granted by the school	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Authorised Absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised Absence
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority - Home Tutoring - Approved Framework for Alternative Provision - Blended Learning	Present Mark
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed	Present Mark
M	Attended a medical appointment	Authorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised Mark
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised Absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Present Mark
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Not expected to attend
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school.	Authorised Absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.	Authorised Absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised Absence
V	Attending an Educational Trip or Visit	Present Mark
W	Attending Work Experience	Present Mark
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause (see next page for breakdown)	Not expected to attend
Z	Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register	Not expected to attend

Code	Meaning	Type
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend
The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.	Authorised Absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised Absence