Pupil Attendance Policy 2025-26

[Heritage MAT]

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Contents

1. Aims 3
2. Legislation and guidance 3
3. Roles and responsibilities 3
4. Recording attendance 4
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence 6
6. Strategies for promoting attendance 8
7. Attendance monitoring 8
8. Monitoring arrangements 9
9. Links with other policies 9
Appendix 1
Attendance Codes 10
Appendix 2
Attendance Intervention Stages 13

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to Trust attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016 amendments).
- The Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Trust Board and CEO

The Trust Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the Trust schools on at least a termly basis. It also holds the CEO to account for the implementation of this policy. The CEO monitors the implementation of the policy attendance at each school through the school's KPI systems.

Attendance is also monitored at school level by relevant senior leads.

3.2 The Headteacher / Principal

The Headteacher / Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors and/or the local authority and/or the school attendance officer as appropriate.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Liaising with the local authority in respect of fixed-penalty notices (including for leave of absences taken in term time) and pursuing legal action, where all other attempts to improve attendance have failed.

3.3 The Attendance Lead

- The attendance lead is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.

3.4 The Trust Attendance Manager

The Trust Attendance Manager:

- Monitors attendance data (including Edulink) across the schools and at an individual pupil level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher / Principal and relevant school leads.
- Works with the school Attendance and Pupil Support Officer (APSO) to tackle persistent absence across the Trust.

3.5 The Attendance and Pupil Support Officer (APSO)

- Manages Attendance Contracts.
- Advises the Headteacher / Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices.
- Manages all formal letters linked to FPN and legal action.
- Maintains accurate folders of evidence, intervention and support for those pupils who have become persistently absent.
- Maintains a strategic but personalised approach to tackling poor attendance.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues.
- Organises evidence folders to pursue Fixed Penalty Notices and prepare prosecution cases as necessary.

3.6 Admin/office staff

School admin/office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

Each school will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 imposes new requirements on maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, academy schools and Alternative Provision (AP) academies to provide information about every pupil at the school to the Secretary of State (or person they specify) when requested

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 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 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.

Pupils must arrive in school by the published start time each school day. Two register sessions will take place each day.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents can notify school via telephone or by email.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness in line with the stages of our policy.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In such circumstances, the absence will remain unauthorised until medical evidence is provided.

In the event a parent requests that their child is declared medically unfit for school they would need to direct this request to a doctor to determine.

If parents/carers have concerns about their child's health or mental wellbeing they should seek support from the pupil's GP or the school can arrange a referral to the school nursing services for further input.

Parents/carers will be notified (where possible in advance) when an absence is not authorised.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. This can include a screenshot of the appointment letters or reminder messages

Parents can notify school via a note sent in with their child, telephone call or email

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

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

4.4 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.
- Appropriate sanctions may be applied by the school for late arrivals or repeated lateness.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not (including requesting medical evidence if needed).
- Identify the correct attendance code to use.
- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by 10am each day.

- Arrange with the parent/carer to ascertain how a return to school can be supported, where the pupil is absent for 10 consecutive days.
- Sending letters of concern to parent/carer where appropriate.
- Consider the appropriateness of arranging an Attendance meeting if the school continues to have significant concerns regarding non-attendance.
- Conduct welfare checks to the child at home where the school has concerns about non-attendance or feel the pupil may benefit from a visit. We may also request that the police conduct a formal Welfare Check if the school has significant concerns. Where possible, these may be arranged in advance to accommodate the need, but this may not always be the case and unannounced visits may be carried out.
- Signpost parents to appropriate services and make referrals to services where the school considers necessary, such as the school nurse.
- The school will implement individual intervention agreements in respect of each persistent non-attender and will endeavor to offer some education to children whilst they are not attending This could include worksheets or online educational materials as appropriate.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

When a pupil returns to school, after more than 5 days of absence due to illness or injury. A member of staff will ensure that they have all the necessary information for a successful reintegration back into lessons.

4.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance data is formally reported to parents. This is provided in appropriate documentation.

More frequent reporting to parents will occur where attendance has become a concern and the frequency will be determined on a case by case basis (see individual child's intervention agreement).

4.7 First day calling procedure

First day absence emails will be sent by 10.00am each day. Follow up texts and telephone calls start immediately afterwards and work from the youngest pupils upwards. These calls will continue until all absence has been verified.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher / Principal will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher / Principal's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an event which cannot reasonably be avoided.

Each school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. We will authorise up to 3 days a school year, in line with Kirklees guidance.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only

when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

- A funeral.
- Study leave coding may be used on an individual basis, particularly in relation to specific circumstances around public examinations for year 11's only. There is no formal period of study leave.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: This is where, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should be temporarily educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Each school has a clear procedure for supporting parents and pupils with attendance issues. The school also has a clear procedure to follow in order to encourage attendance where the child has significant periods of unauthorised absence. If the school continues to have concerns following the implementation of this policy the matter will be escalated to the local authority. It is important to stress that at each stage of challenge around absence, the family will be given reasonable opportunity to improve attendance and receive necessary support. There is no 'one size fits all' as everybody's circumstances are unique. The key is that genuine efforts are made to improve attendance (or alternative plans are in place) where it has become a cause for concern.

5.3 Legal sanctions

Each school can report unauthorised absence to the local authority. The local authority has a range of sanctions they can apply to parents who fail to ensure their child's school attendance. This includes, but is not limited to, fines or penalty notices, criminal records and imprisonment.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

- All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of Leave of absence 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 Leave of absence 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). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as leave of absence taken in term time without permission for the purpose of a Leave of absence. Parents who repeatedly take their children on unauthorised leave of absences may be directly prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty sanctions can include a fine of up to £2,500 (Level 4) and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against parents / carers for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, under section 444 of the Education Act, you may be fined up to £1,000 (Level 3).

If legal action is approved by the Kirklees Legal Intervention Panel, the matter is heard in Magistrates' Court for the offence of knowingly failing to ensure the child's regular school attendance (s444(1)(a) Education Act 1996). If found guilty, this carries a penalty of up to £2,500

(Level 4), and/or a community order or up to 3 months imprisonment and parents will receive a criminal record.

Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to £1,000 (Level 3).

5.4 Medical Evidence

Each school will authorise absence from school with medical evidence. School is able to obtain this evidence on a pupil's behalf by gaining authorisation from the parent/carer or from the child if they are 16 years old. This can be done through a standard form and template pack. Medical evidence is accepted from a GP and will last for the duration of the time if stated or 6 months if no time scale is given. For pro-longed absence, this medical evidence must be at Consultant level clearly stating they're not fit for school.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Pupils are rewarded for demonstrating sustained high levels of attendance. Parents receive communications and pupils receive rewards for exemplary attendance.

A clear system of support is also in place for poor attendance. This involves letters notifying parents of the issues, unauthorising absences without medical evidence, attendance agreements and meetings with key staff to try to resolve serious absence issues. See 4.5 above.

Each school works closely with parents to remove any barriers to attending an school in line with the 'Working to improve school attendance' document produced by the DFE.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Trust Attendance Manager monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Weekly analysis is also provided to senior leaders.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school every morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2), unless a specific return date is given.

An expected return should be established or, in the case of illness, a daily call should be made.

If a pupil's absence exceeds 5 consecutive days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence exceeds 10 consecutive days, the school will invite the parent/carer of the pupil to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the ongoing absence and the ways in which the school can support and encourage the pupil concerned to return to school if there are genuine reasons for the absence.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, the school will involve the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer (APSO).

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee during the year

Pupil-level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Trust Board and through the school's Key Performance Indicators, updated three times per year and issued at Trust Board meetings.

We use attendance data to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils, and year groups.
- Reward good attendance.
- Challenge poor attendance and support parents to improve the attendance of their child/ren.

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated. It will also be reviewed annually by The Trust Board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and Safeguarding Policy – if the school has any concerns in respect of a child's welfare the school will refer to the child protection and safeguarding policy and make any necessary referrals.
- Behaviour Policy.
- Prosecution and Fixed Penalty Notice Guidance.

Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
K	Education provision arranged by a council, rather than the school.	Pupil is attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by a local authority under section 19(1) of the 1996 Act(**12**) or section 42(2) or 61(1) of the 2014 Act.
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil is absent with leave because they are educated on a part-time basis, their timetable does not require them to attend.

E	Suspended	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness. If the child is ill for more than 10 days the assessment for illness and inability to attend school must be made by a clinician
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Pupils unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements for them
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a Leave of absence that was not approved 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 has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y1	Absence due to transport normally provided not being	Pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of the pupil’s home and the

	available	transport to and from school that is normally provided for the pupil by the proprietor or a local authority is not available.
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency.
Y3	For when part of a school is closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those who the proprietor thinks cannot practicably be accommodated in those parts of the premises that remain in use.
Y4	Unexpected whole school closure	Unexpected whole school closure (different from code # for planned closures)
Y5	Pupil in the criminal justice system	Pupil is unable to attend because they are in criminal justice detention
Y6	Absence due to public health guidance or law	The pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be— (a)contrary to any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care or any body or authority exercising equivalent functions in relation to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland; or (b)prohibited by any enactment relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease or any instrument made under such an enactment.
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	Pupil is unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Attendance Intervention Stages for pupils whose attendance falls below 95+%

Stage 1 Attendance Management

Pupils	Pupils with attendance between 94.9% - 90%
Staff Responsible	Attendance Manager / relevant school lead
Actions	1. Standard Attendance Letter 1

Stage 2 Attendance Management

Pupils classed as Persistent Absentee (PA)

Pupils	Those with no improvement following SAL1 / Pupils who have dropped below 90% attendance
Staff Responsible	Attendance Manager / Relevant school lead
Actions	1. Phone Call Home 2. Standard Attendance Letter 2

Stage 3 Attendance Management

Pupils	Those with no improvement following SAL2 / Pupils who have dropped below 79.9% attendance
Staff Responsible	APSO / relevant school lead
Actions	1. Standard Attendance Letter 3 inviting parent in for a meeting and to discuss an attendance improvement contract 2. Meeting in School to discuss barriers. Legal process shared. Copy of Flowchart for Parent given and discussed with parent. 3. Referral to Early Support (if accepted by parent) as an intervention. 4. Attendance reviewed and analysed by APSO 5. Notice to Improve Letter 6. Legal Referral for Penalty Notice (Fines) for 10 Unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period (not consecutive) 7. Further Legal Referral for Penalty Notice (Fines) for 10 Unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period (not consecutive) 8. Referral to the Legal Interventions Team

Stage 4 Attendance Management

Pupils	Those who have failed to improve attendance following Stage 3 Interventions
Staff Responsible	APSO
Actions	1. Present case file to Kirklees Legal Intervention team and take advice on next steps. This may include prosecution, fines or a parent order directed by Kirklees.

Support and Intervention to help return the pupil to a mainstream school setting

As standard practice, a review of attendance will be completed every 4 weeks. However, this may be reduced if there is no improvement in attendance.