Empowering our unique schools to Excel

Pupil Attendance Policy and Procedure

ODBST Level 1 Statutory Policy:	**ALL** Schools require this policy with **no changes** allowed to core text. No changes are necessary to personalise this with school name and branding, as this is a Trust level policy for use, without change, by all schools, **except** where a school contact is required as identified in the content of the policy. LGBs will **note** adoption in LGB meetings. Review will take place at Trust level, and schools will be notified of updates and review dates as necessary.
Other related ODBST policies and procedures:	ODBST Attendance Guidance Absence for Religious Observance
Committee responsible:	AEC
Approved by:	AEC
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Contents

1. Aims

Government guidance on <u>improving school attendance</u> emphasises the need for 'clear and consistent' systems to improve and reward attendance. This includes monitoring and analysing attendance data to better understand patterns within your school.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school 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 <u>school attendance guidance</u> from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on <u>school attendance parental responsibility measures</u>. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of <u>The Education Act 1996</u>

> Part 3 of <u>The Education Act 2002</u>

> Part 7 of <u>The Education and Inspections Act 2006</u>

> <u>The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006</u> (and <u>2010</u>, <u>2011</u>, <u>2013</u>, <u>2016</u> amendments)

> <u>The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013</u>

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the <u>school census</u>, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school **on at least a termly basis**. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Governors receive updates on attendance in the operations report at each LGB meeting.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the school

> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer:

> Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level

> Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

> Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

> Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School [admin/office] staff

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

4. Attendance of particular groups of children

4.1 Pupils who are from the traveller community

Who are Travellers?
'Traveller' is a general term that covers a number of different groups:

- Roma
- English and Welsh Gypsies
- Irish and Scottish Travelers
- Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people
- Bargees (occupational boat dwellers)
- New Travellers

This is explained in advice from the DfE (page 13).

Traveller children are expected to attend school regularly. **Parents must ensure that, when their children are of compulsory school age, they are registered at a school and attend 'regularly'.**
However, parents of children with no fixed abode have a defence against prosecution if they can prove all of the following:

- They are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel
- The child has attended school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits
- The child has attended school for at least 200 attendances (sessions) during the last 12 months (if they're aged 6 or above)

This applies to parents of pupils registered at any school.

This is stated under the Education Act 1996, as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Traveller children whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal and are subject to the same rules as any other pupil (DfE guidance, page 13).

4.2 Authorising and recording absence
You will most often use codes D and T when recording the attendance of Traveller pupils.

Code D: Dual Registered – at another educational establishment

It is expected that Traveller pupils will attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual-registered at that school and their main school.

If a pupil is not attending a session because they are scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered, record their absence with code D.

This is explained on page 11 of DfE's guidance (linked to above).
Code T: Traveller absence

If you have agreed with the family that the pupil will be travelling for occupational purposes, but you do not know whether the pupil is attending a different educational establishment, record their absence with code T.

For any other absence, use the absence and attendance codes as you would for any other pupil. You should also investigate unauthorised absences in the same way as you would for any other pupil.

4.2. Attendance of Pupil Premium pupils

Making sure pupils eligible for the pupil premium have high attendance is an important part of the support you can give them.

The strategies outlined below will help you support any pupils eligible for the pupil premium who have poor attendance. This includes getting to know their families and circumstances better, which can help inform the support you offer, both around attendance and in other areas.

However, these strategies can be used to help any pupils with poor attendance. Monitoring and analysing attendance data will help you identify and target which pupil groups have attendance that's below average for your school.

Appoint 1 person to lead on improving attendance

Consider appointing an attendance officer or home liaison officer who can lead on improving attendance at your school. For example, they can:

- Build relationships with pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their parents
- Monitor pupils with low attendance and work with them to improve
- Understand the barriers to attendance
- Develop attendance plans for individual pupils
- Analyse school attendance data

Provide extra training for this person if needed and give them enough time to carry out these tasks – attendance cannot be a bolt-on responsibility.

Note: the rest of this policy is directed at whoever has main responsibility for attendance in your school.

a. Engage directly with parents and pupils

Contact absentees quickly. Put a system in place to call pupils or their parents on the first day of absence. Do this early in the day, so you can persuade them to come in for the rest of the day, if appropriate. Prioritise the more vulnerable pupils and those where parents have not called in to report the absence. Be consistent and persistent with this approach. If possible, consider offering to collect the pupils using a school vehicle, to make it as easy as possible for them to come into school.

Proactively engage with pupils who are regularly late or have poor attendance. Call these pupils or their parents before school starts to make sure that they are awake, getting ready and planning to come into school. Organise to go and pick these pupils up if needed (and if you are able to).
Try to understand why these pupils are regularly late or have poor attendance. For example, 1 barrier could be a lack of transport or feeling daunted by the morning routine of coming into school and getting settled. By understanding the barriers, you can better target your interventions.

If things do not improve, invite the parents in for a meeting or carry out a home visit. This can help build your understanding of why the pupil is often absent or late. At the meeting, agree on actions that the parents will take and what support the school will offer. After the meeting, set these out in a parenting contract for the parents to sign.

Be ready to point parents to relevant services that can provide additional support – for example, behaviour management, parenting skills or local mental health services. Bear in mind that recommending these services to individuals should always be done sensitively and by a suitably trained staff member.

b. Train other members of staff to help out
Doing all the above work might be too much for 1 person, such as the attendance officer. Train some other staff to help with, for example, making morning phone calls to absent pupils or their parents, and bringing them to school (if that's part of your attendance system).

Get to know all your pupils' families, not just those whose children have poor attendance
Having a good existing relationship with a pupil's family will help you tackle any problems with attendance further down the line.

Hold coffee mornings to build relationships with parents and encourage them to attend. This can help you to understand the needs and circumstances of your pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their families.

c. Track and monitor attendance data

Make sure all staff know how to use your system and understand what's expected of them. For example, that they're expected to fill in attendance registers.

Monitor and analyse the data on a regular basis, so you can:

- Spot if staff are not using it consistently
- Identify when a pupil's attendance starts to drop so you can proactively engage with them
- Pick up on patterns such as if a pupil is regularly absent on a particular day each week

d. Raise the profile of attendance with pupils, parents and the wider community

Use your assemblies and communications with parents (e.g. newsletters and letters) to:

- Explain the importance of attending school for building friendships and achieving academically
- Praise individuals who have improved their attendance – e.g. give weekly prizes to those with 100% attendance

Use displays in school to promote and celebrate high attendance. For example, highlight those pupils winning prizes or receiving recognition for improving their attendance.

Get in touch with local institutions such as churches, mosques and community groups. Explain to them the importance of school attendance so that they can promote the message outside of school.

e. Work closely with colleagues and external agencies

Liaise with other members of staff and external agencies to build a more accurate picture of the challenges your pupils and their parents face and to plan how best to support them. For example:

- Share information with your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) so they can keep track of pupils with poor attendance, as this can be a sign of a safeguarding issue
- Talk with heads of year, form tutors or class teachers, your special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and mental health lead so you can find out about other challenges these pupils might have, such as poor behaviour or mental health
- Feed in to the senior leadership team (SLT) so they know what strategies are in place and how they're working. Ask for more support if needed
- Work with agencies to discuss and consider legal action against parents of persistently absent children

6. Recording attendance

6.1 Attendance register

We will keep an 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 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 keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by <mark>8:45am</mark> on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at <mark>9am</mark> and will be kept open until <mark>9:15am</mark> The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm and will be kept open until <mark>1:30pm</mark>

6.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by <mark>9:30am</mark> or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

<mark>Parents should email the school office or telephone, where there is an option to leave a voicemail.</mark>

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask 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.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

6.3 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.

<mark>Parents should inform the school office in writing.</mark>

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. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

6.4 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

<mark>Lateness is monitored using our Inventry system and pupils who are regularly late will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and Family Liaison Officer to identify any ways in which school may support the family.</mark>

6.5 Following up absence

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

> Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by telephone and by email. If there is no response, the school may contact other named contacts on the pupil record and conduct a home visit.

> Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use

6.6 Reporting to parents

<mark>Explain when and how your school reports to parents on their child's attendance record. For example - annually in the written end-of-year report, or via a termly written report.</mark>

7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

7.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher 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's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as <mark>[add your school's definition here]</mark>.

The 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

> 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

> 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

<mark>You can add further examples here, for example:</mark>

> <mark>Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the [headteacher] may grant term-time holiday</mark>

> <mark>Flexi-schooling requests – your schools can add details of their procedures for requesting and deciding on this</mark>

7.2 Reducing persistent absence

<mark>Explain your school's procedures for targeting unauthorised absence. For example – meetings, letters, closer monitoring.</mark>

7.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

› The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

› One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

› Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

8. Strategies for promoting attendance

The strategies mentioned below can be used to improve attendance.

- Having a 'first day contact' system in place, where parents are expected to inform the school of pupil absence as soon as possible
- Using posters and leaflets to boost the profile of good attendance
- Using rewards and incentives such as credits and prizes
- Clearly allocating attendance responsibilities among staff
- Tracking attendance data rigorously over time, and analysing it by pupil group
- Targeting pupil premium funding
- Having robust procedures in place for day-to-day management of attendance, including speaking to parents on the first day of absence and following up on the third Examples of systems for rewarding good attendance include:
- An 'Early Bird' scheme – encouraging pupils from Key Stage (KS) 1 and KS2 to attend fully and punctually for a week, and giving out a sticker for each attendance
- The '100% Attendance Club' – offering rewards and incentives to pupils achieving 100% attendance across a whole term
- The 'Attendance Tree' project – giving pupils different coloured leaves dependent upon their attendance rate, and decorating an 'attendance tree' at the end of each term

You can access the guidance (as a PDF) from the Institute of Education's Digital Education Resource

9. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a <mark>monthly</mark> basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health.

<mark>Parents are expected to notify the school on each day of absence.</mark>

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

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.

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 governing board.

The school uses our management system, Bromcom, to track and monitor attendance of pupils, so that we can:

› Track the attendance of individual pupils

› 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

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

› Child protection and safeguarding policy

› Behaviour policy

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 at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
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
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
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	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 on a holiday 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
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
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