

THE HEATH ACADEMY TRUST

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Pupil Attendance Policy

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2025	September 2025	To establish a Trust wide policy
2025-1	May 2026	- Add appendix references in body of policy - Change layout of appendix C.
2026	September 2026	Annual review - Appendix B - notice period now states 'at least two weeks'

Oakhurst Community First and Nursery School, Sixpenny Handley First School & Nursery, St Mary's CE First School and Nursery, St James' CE First School & Nursery, Three Legged Cross First School and Nursery & St Ives Primary & Nursery School

The CEO and the Trust Leader for Church School Flourishing both support and champion the distinctiveness of our Church schools within our Trust. Our Church Schools are places where education is rooted in Christian vision and values and where every child and adult is encouraged to flourish in all aspects of life including their personal development, relationships, learning and spirituality.

This policy is written with respect to our church school's individual Christian visions. As a Trust it is understood that, whilst the policy will be upheld and implemented as stated, our Church schools will bring their vision and values into the policy being lived out within their school.

Pupil Attendance Policy

Throughout this policy, the term 'parent' means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

Relevant legislation:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Sentencing Act 2020](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

Relevant government guidance:

- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [School attendance and absence - legal action to enforce school attendance](#)
- [Children missing education](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Elective home education](#)
- [Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)
- [Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)

- [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#)
- [Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying](#)
- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)
- [Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance Effective practice examples](#)
- [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#)

The Senior Attendance Champion for each school is:

Oakhurst First and Nursery School	Ann Clark
Sixpenny Handley First and Nursery School	Laura Stone
St Ives Primary and Nursery School	Laura Crossley
St James CE First and Nursery School	Jo Hudson
St Marys CE First and Nursery School	Sarah Corbett
Three Legged Cross First and Nursery School	Anna Morris

Introduction

Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to a pupil's achievement at school and therefore, improving attendance is everyone's business. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. However, any barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Schools within Heath Academy Trust are committed to work in collaboration with parents and children to ensure that all pupils benefit from regular attendance.

Good attendance is celebrated as part of our Trust wide values – Inspire, Transform, Together. All staff in Trust schools communicate to pupils that their contribution to the school community

is valued and respected; furthermore staff endeavour to make school a fruitful and enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered: through this, we aim to ensure that pupils want to attend school regularly in the first place. However, some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools will work collaboratively with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Attendance and safeguarding

The safeguarding of all pupils is of utmost importance. School provides a protective environment for those who attend. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extrafamilial harms, including crime. Schools are well placed to identify safeguarding issues early and regular attendance is vital for this. For those who don't attend regularly, and where all avenues of support have been facilitated, and the appropriate educational support has been provided but the unauthorised absence continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, request that a full children's social care assessment is conducted. When a pupil is absent and no reason has been given for the absence, the school will prioritise the safety of these pupils. See '*Where the school is not notified of an absence*' below.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education.

Where parents have registered their child at school to receive their education, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their 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. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attendance at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attainment over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attendance.

Working with families and partners

All Heath Academy Trust Schools are committed to successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly. This requires local partners to work collaboratively with families.

School will work collaboratively to:

- identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual, cohort and school level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

- Ensure aspiration to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents by building a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- Listen to families to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- Remove barriers in school where practically able and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Escalate concerns where the voluntary support is not having an impact by explaining the consequences of non attendance clearly and ensuring support is also in place to enable families to respond.
- Enforce attendance through statutory interventions or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education where support is not having an impact or not being engaged with

Heath Academy Trust schools overall approach takes these six graduated stages:

1	Expect	High expectations that all children will attend well
2	Monitor	Closely monitor the attendance of all pupils to spot problems early
3	Listen / Understand	Work with pupils and parents to understand any barriers to good attendance and agree how all partners can work to resolve them
4	Facilitate support	Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents overcome the barriers outside of school
5	Formalise support	Formalise support where informal, voluntary approaches are not working
6	Enforce	If all else fails, enforce attendance through statutory intervention and prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education

Why regular attendance is so vital

There is a clear and proven link between attendance and achievement. The pupils with the highest attainment have higher rates of attendance than those achieving lower grades. Pupils who miss a substantial amount of school, fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up as most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning.

Poor attendance often starts at first/ primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at upper / secondary school.

Friendships can be negatively affected by absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their peers.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence

(83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

These tables show the impact of absence on a child's education

Number of days lost each year (the full school year for HAT has 187 days or 37.4 weeks)	Overall attendance level	Impact on child's education
5 days (1 full week) or less	97%+	These children have every chance to make really strong progress at school.
10 days (2 full weeks of absence)	95%	These children benefit from strong overall attendance and are well placed to make good progress at school. We aim for every child to have at least 96% attendance overall.
19 days (similar to 1 month of absence)	90%	Children in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best
29 days (similar to a whole half term of absence)	85%	Children in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder children's progress. Absence below 90% is considered to be persistent absenteeism.
38 days (similar to 8 weeks of absence)	80%	Children in this group are missing a year of school over five years of education. They are not benefitting from their right to be educated. Parents / carers of young people in this group could be issued with a penalty notice.
Minutes late per day =	days of learning lost per year	
5	3.2 (over half a week of absence)	
10	6.5 (over one week of absence)	
15	9.5 (almost two weeks of absence)	
20	12.5 (over two weeks of absence)	
30	19 (similar to one month of absence)	

Monitoring attendance / punctuality and responding to concerns

All staff have a duty to informally monitor the children's attendance / punctuality and to report any concerns that they may have about a pupil. In this way, pupil attendance is being monitored in the schools at **all** times. Concerns can then be triangulated with any other information held about the pupil such as child protection issues, mental health difficulties, SEND, caring responsibilities etc. and appropriate support can be put in place.

Best practice is that attendance is dealt with proactively using strong links with the families. For those pupils where a pattern of lateness or non attendance has been identified, pre-emptive phone calls can be a powerful tool to encourage attendance.

All Heath Academy Trust schools will follow more formal procedures for the regular and systematic monitoring of pupil attendance with particular emphasis on those who are classed as vulnerable.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored formally using data from registers and from the information held on MIS for the purpose of providing effective interventions to improve whole school, specific cohort and individual attendance and punctuality. We also share daily attendance data with the Department for Education. Our school attendance monitoring procedures are:

- *Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families*
- *Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders*
- *Undertake frequent individual level analysis to identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.*
- *Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends.*
- *Benchmark their attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.*
- *Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.*
- *Monitor, in the data, the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.*
- *Provide data and reports to support the work of the Local School Committee and the Trust Board.*

Expectations for punctuality and attendance (see also Appendix A)

Punctuality

Schools will actively discourage late arrivals and will be alert to any patterns of late arrival in order to start an early discussion with the family to provide appropriate support. Registers start between 8:30 am and close at 9:20 am for morning sessions and 1:00 pm for afternoon sessions. It is the expectation that all pupils will arrive in time for morning and afternoon registration. If a pupil arrives after registers open but before they close, they will be marked as

'late arrival before registers close' (L) If a pupil arrives after registers close, they will be marked as *'unauthorised absence'* (U) or another more appropriate attendance code.

The school day ends between 3 and 3.15pm and all pupils are expected to remain in school until they are dismissed. Any pupil leaving before this time MUST sign out at the school office and leave with an appropriate adult. Reasons for leaving early will be recorded on the attendance register.

Attendance

All pupils will be expected to attend school on every day that it is open. If an unexpected absence occurs, there are expectations that relate to pupil safety. A parent MUST notify the school by phone or via email/Parentmail/Class dojo absence notification by 9:00 am on the first day of the absence detailing the pupil's name, class and nature of absence. If the absence is prolonged, there is an expectation that the parent will notify the school by 8.45am at the latest on each day of absence (see also Appendix B).

Appointments during the day

Parents must avoid arranging appointments for their child during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents must notify the school of the appointment details. A child should only be taken out of school for their own appointment, not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a child early so a family member can attend an appointment.

Pupils with medical needs and/ or SEND

The Heath Academy Trust understands that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. However, their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore our attendance ambition for these pupils will be the same as they are for any other pupil.

Although our ambitions are the same for all pupils, we are mindful of the unique barriers that these pupils may face and we are committed to putting support in place where necessary to help them access full time education.

Parents of pupils with medical needs and / or SEND who are struggling to attend school should contact the school as soon as they can in order for the school to understand the support required. This could include making reasonable adjustments or having Education Healthcare Plans (EHCP) with Medical Absence Plans (MAP). In some cases, advice and support may be sought from external partners such as health services. Our work with families in these instances is crucial to ensuring specific support approaches, including supporting home routines and encouraging external professionals to schedule appointments outside of the school day.

Schools will complete sickness returns to the Local Authority for pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. This is to help the school and local authority to agree any provision needed to ensure continuity of education for pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance.

For families suggesting part time attendance, please see the section on part-time timetables.

Where the school is not notified of an absence

Pupil safety is the priority for the systems in place to follow up on non notified absences.

Schools will use their knowledge of families to identify pupils who may be more vulnerable when absent and these families will be contacted first. These pupils will be communicated to staff so that all can be aware of their additional vulnerability pertaining to absence / punctuality.

Process for following up on unexplained absence:

- Parents will be informed of their child's absence and asked to contact the school using a text message.
- If no contact is received by the school by 9:30 am, a phone call will be made to the primary contact detailed on the pupil's files.
- If there is no answer, contact will be attempted with other contacts detailed on the pupil's file.
- If no contact can be made by 9.45 am, the school will take every reasonable step to satisfy themselves that the pupil is safe. This may include: **list not exhaustive*
 - contacting sibling's schools
 - contacting Social Care / Early Help if a worker is involved with the family,
 - making a home visit,
 - in some cases, informing the police.
- The school should be satisfied with every absent child's safety by 10am at the latest.

The school will hold a record of pupils that they deem to be additionally vulnerable when not in school, which could include knowledge of mental health difficulties either for the pupil or their family, child protection concerns or medical needs, amongst others. The school will also produce a flow chart that details the process, including timings, for following up on unexplained absences to ensure every pupil's safety.

Absence thresholds

All families will receive a letter at the beginning of the school year summarising the school's expectations for attendance and punctuality; how the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance and punctuality and the process for reporting absence and requesting leaves or absence. This policy will also be available on each school's website.

There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels. These figures expressed as % attendance levels are intended as a guide. However, a decision may be made to intervene earlier at any stage if there is particular concern about a child's attendance. These letters are sent as a pupil hits a threshold and will detail how many days the pupil has already lost from their education.

Attendance below 95%:	A standard letter is typically sent to any parent whose child's attendance has dropped just below 95%. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent of this attendance level and explains that the school will continue to monitor the child's attendance. Where the cause for a child's attendance dropping below 95% is very specific and clearly known and evidenced to the school, we may decide that such a letter is not required or appropriate. For example, where a child has had a known and confirmed medical issue and where this is the only substantial cause for the lower attendance. In such circumstances, the child's attendance will be closely monitored – further reduction in attendance may prompt this initial letter, without the need to wait for the next formal half- termly audit.
Attendance between 90% and 94%	The standard letter described above may be used again where a child's attendance sits at this level. This letter may be used twice in succession but if attendance remains at this level for a third time, it will be treated as for attendance which is below 90%.
Attendance which is below 90%	Attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year and is therefore a cause for concern. In such circumstances, parents will receive a specific letter which very clearly identifies that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except for in exceptional circumstances where the attendance is not a cause for concern, such as known medical conditions). Parents are usually requested to attend a meeting, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for the child's low attendance and agree appropriate support. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an attendance improvement plan which will be shared with the parents and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting may vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the allocated lead within the school, class Teacher / tutor, SENCo and pastoral staff. The school may also invite a representative from the local authority. At this stage, school should make it known and confirm in writing that further absences may not be authorised and further evidence may be sought so that the absence is correctly coded on the attendance register.
Attendance which continues to decline from below 90%	Unless there are specific circumstances, the school will not be authorising absences at this stage because attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year. If attendance is not showing reasonable improvement within three weeks of the last communication to parents, then schools will take further action which will involve further meetings with the parents. It is likely that a referral for intervention by the local authority will be appropriate; certainly advice from the local authority attendance team will be sought.

Leaves of absence

Headteachers have no discretion to grant a leave of absence during term time unless there are **genuinely exceptional** circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the headteacher has all the information in writing to be able to determine whether the request is truly exceptional.**

Any request for absence which might be considered as 'exceptional circumstances' should be put in writing to the headteacher as far in advance as possible. Parents should include any relevant supporting documents using the leave of absence form available (appendix C).

The decision whether to authorise leave, and if so, how much, remains with the headteacher. Parents will be notified of the headteacher's decision at the earliest opportunity. If the leave is not authorised and the leave of absence is still taken, a penalty notice may be requested (see 'Penalty Notices' below for more information).

The following situations might be considered examples of 'exceptional circumstances'.

Please note that this is dependent on context and is not an exhaustive list:

- Return of parent from active service (Forces);
- Death or serious illness of a parent, step-parent or sibling;
- Young Carers;
- Disability or respite leave;
- Periods of obligatory religious observance;
- Approved public performances (with clear supporting evidence).

The following (*not exhaustive*) are examples of situations which would not typically be considered as exceptional:

- Family holiday/cheaper holiday dates;
- Educational visits arranged by family members during school time;
- Attendance at a wedding or christening of an extended family member or friend;
- Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK;
- Limitations on parents / carers leave entitlement or dates; parents / carers' profession or place of work making it difficult to coincide school and work holidays;
- A family member going for medical treatment abroad.

Notices to Improve

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve would usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any individual case.

A notice to improve is usually six weeks. Notification of consideration being given to issuing a penalty notice would be sent before the end of this period if there is not sufficient improvement in the pupil's attendance.

Penalty Notices

We adhere to the National Framework for Penalty Notices which is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where support is not appropriate eg a term

time holiday or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked and where the penalty notice is the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular pupil. The vast majority of fines for unauthorised absence (89%) are issued for term time holidays.

When a pupil is facing barriers to school attendance due to special education needs or disabilities (SEND), our school, the local authority and any relevant wider services will work together to provide the right support in the first instance. If this support isn't effective or the absence is for an unauthorised term time holiday, parents may face paying a fine.

Under the national rules, all schools are required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) within ten weeks for unauthorised reasons:

- code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday)
- code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established)
- code O (Unauthorised absence) (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies)
- code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days** and may be issued to each parent who has responsibility for attendance and in respect of each individual child.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same pupil 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 or prosecution will be considered.

If a parent is prosecuted and attends court because their child hasn't been attending school, a fine could be issued of up to £2,500.

For more information on legal interventions for attendance, please see **Chapter 6 - Attendance legal intervention** in [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

Absence for performance

The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for approved public performances provided that clear evidence is issued of the approved nature of this activity. The following will also be taken into account in reaching a decision:

- The nature and purpose of the performance;
- The frequency of absence requested and the likely impact on the child's education and progress; and
- The child's attendance record

Where licences are issued by the local authority, absences will be monitored to ensure that they comply with the permissions given in the licence. Where the licence specifies the dates that a child is to be away from school to perform, then the headteacher should authorise those

days. However, where the terms of the licence do not specify dates, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise leave of absence. Headteachers should be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a licence, as long as the school remains satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a pupil's education. Any concerns will be communicated to the senior attendance champion who may liaise with the local authority.

Promoting and Incentivising good attendance and punctuality:

Promoting good attendance and punctuality is an integral part of the school's culture. School will visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life and the curriculum. School improvement strategies for attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students will also consider how to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Incentives for good attendance and punctuality may also be used. These can include, but are not restricted to:

Celebrating the class with the highest attendance in the newsletter

Class attendance award presented weekly in whole school assembly/worship

Off-site education, alternative provision or specialist provision

Where a child's needs are recognised by the school, and specialist resources not available in school are required, the allocated lead within the school may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside of school. For pupils using alternative provision or off site education, the allocated lead will ensure that the safeguarding and quality of education for the pupil is good or better by following Heath Academy Trust's procedures. All pupils placed in a more appropriate provision will have full time education and clearly defined outcomes agreed before the placement starts and attendance will be tracked by the provider and the school at which the pupil is on roll. Such pupils will be coded appropriately and, if in attendance at the agreed appropriate provision, will not be marked as absent. Stringent safeguarding checks will be carried out before and during the placement as well as checking safeguarding daily through the daily attendance phone call.

Part-time timetables

A part-time timetable will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and will not be treated as a long-term solution. The Heath Academy Trust uses the advice from Government health officials when dealing with anxiety; a prolonged period of absence is likely to increase any anxiety. Because of this, part-time timetables are not usually appropriate to be used for those suffering with anxiety unless a medical professional recommends this. Where a part-time timetable is considered in the pupil's best interests, there **MUST** be agreement from the family; if there is no agreement then it will be classed as an unofficial exclusion. If a pupil has a part-time timetable agreed, the Heath Academy Trust part-time timetable process must be followed

which includes a thorough safeguarding risk assessment, desired outcomes for the child, expectations of work completed when not on school premises, regular review dates and a six week timetable that is gradually increased to maintain full time education by the end of week six.

In exceptional circumstances and with significant evidence that it is in the pupil's best interest, a part-time timetable may be extended for a further period of time. Weekly reviews of the part-time timetable must occur with the family and school and stringent records kept of how successful the timetable has been.

If the pupil has a social worker, they will be involved in the process. If the pupil is in receipt of an EHCP, the local authority will be involved.

Staffing for monitoring and promoting good attendance

Schools will identify appropriate key staff to undertake attendance monitoring and adhere to the following key principles:

- There will be a school attendance officer, usually within the administration team, who will ensure that careful records of attendance are maintained which conform to the codes set out by the Department for Education and provide information as requested by staff, the local authority and the Department for Education
- The school will have an allocated Senior Attendance Champion who will have a close link with the school attendance officer;
- Schools will work in close partnership with the local authority through the local authority attendance teams;
- All staff will have training in attendance including how to complete registers, how to spot patterns of absence / punctuality, how to use other information about a pupil to see the wider context, how to report concerns and how to build relationships and offer support for families that struggle to maintain good attendance.

Attendance of children in Early Years

Good attendance plays a fundamental role in supporting young children's educational achievement, well-being and in keeping children safer. Establishing regular routines for young children supports the settling-in process and enhances their sense of security and belonging. Even if a child only has a part-time place, regular attendance is still especially important. Attending nursery helps children establish routines of going to school regularly and being on time, which can help them make a smooth and positive transition to reception. We promote and monitor attendance within our Early Years and the steps that will be followed if a child is absent from the setting.

We will:

- Convey clearly to parents and children that regular attendance and punctuality is essential and is in the child's best interest and that unexplained absence will be investigated.
- Keep records of attendance that provide accurate information on actual attendance and lateness to enable monitoring and evaluation so that emerging patterns are addressed.

- Build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by quickly responding to children's absence, recognising, and celebrating, 'good' and 'improving' attendance.
- Target attendance and lateness where there has been an issue and aim to set in place strategies and techniques to support and ensure improvement.

Records of children's attendance are accurately kept and regularly monitored to ensure that we can identify any potential problems and look for patterns. All Early Years staff are alert to signs that children and learners who are missing might be at risk of abuse or neglect, and appropriate action is taken when children and learners stop attending. In our Early Years provision, we are aware that attendance is not statutory, but that non-attendance could be an indicator of other concerns. All early years staff are particularly aware of the need to monitor groups such as children who are in receipt of two year-old funding, and those for whom we receive Early Years Pupil Premium, as these groups are considered to be vulnerable learners.

Daily Registration will be completed at the start of each session. Children attendance or non-attendance will be recorded along with any lateness. If a child is absent without an explanation a telephone call will be made to the parents to establish the reason for the absence. If no contact is made, then the following process will be followed.

- 1) A telephone call to parent's carers work or training provider will be made.
- 2) An email to parents will be sent.
- 3) Calls to other emergency contacts, including other family members listed as emergency contacts, will be made to try to establish why the child is absent.
- 4) Calls to the siblings' schools, nurseries or childminders will be made to establish if they or the sibling can confirm the child's whereabouts.

If contact cannot be made by telephone call a home visit may be carried out and a contact post card will be posted through your door.

If following this no contact is made, and there is cause for concern that the child whereabouts remain unknown, the health visiting service, your child's GP and Children and Families services will be contacted to ascertain if family support may be needed. In more urgent cases, the Police may be contacted to carry out safe and well checks.

Funded places

Two-, three- and four-year-old funding is provided through the local authority. This is public money, and we feel that we have a duty to ensure it is used appropriately. If a place has been reserved but is being used for less than 75% of booked session, we reserve the right to offer that place to any child who may be on our waiting list, for example, a child who has been allocated two-year-old funding but cannot take up a place because sessions are full. This way we can be sure to use the funding to its best effect. We would discuss reasons for absence with parents before retracting the funding offer and will make every effort to work with them to encourage them to increase attendance. Funding would only be withdrawn as a last resort.

Wider support

Wider support is available, please see links below for more information:

- [West Sussex website for resources to help Emotionally Based School Avoidance](#)
- [Dorset SENDIASS](#)
- [BCP SENDIASS](#)
- [Dorset Education Advice Line](#)
- [Is my child too ill for school?](#)

For Church Schools only:

Review statement: when reviewing ensure this statement is true and appropriate	This Trust wide policy was reviewed on:
The school's current vision and values can be reflected in this policy and can be applied when implementing this Trust wide policy	

Appendix A – Summary of Expectations

For ALL pupils

Parents / Pupils are expected to:	School is expected to:	Local School Committee & Trust Board is expected to:	Local Authority is expected to:
Ensure their child attends every day except for statutory reasons.	Publish a clear attendance policy.	Champion attendance improvement.	Take a strategic, area-wide approach.
Notify school promptly of unexpected absence.	Promote a positive culture of good attendance.	Ensure leaders meet duties.	Operate a School Attendance Support Team.
Request leave of absence only in exceptional cases, in advance.	Keep accurate admission and attendance registers.	Use data to track patterns, compare schools, and focus efforts.	Provide each school with a named contact.
Book appointments outside school hours where possible.	Follow up daily on absences.	Ensure staff training on attendance.	Create opportunities for schools to share best practice.
	Monitor data regularly to spot patterns and cohorts.		
	Have a senior leader responsible for attendance.		

For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (95–90% attendance)

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
Work with school/LA to identify barriers.	Use data to identify pupils at risk.	Regularly review data.	Hold regular conversations with schools about at-risk pupils.
Engage with support to prevent escalation.	Work with families to address barriers.	Help leaders focus on pupils needing support.	Provide access to services.
	Signpost services and act as lead practitioner if appropriate.		Lead early help when thresholds are met.
	Engage in multi-agency work when needed.		Participate in multi-agency efforts.

For persistently absent pupils (below 90% attendance)

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
Work with school/LA to address barriers.	Continue previous support.	Review data regularly.	Provide formal support options (parenting contracts, supervision orders).
Engage with formal support (e.g. parenting contract, voluntary early help).	Add targeted interventions.	Ensure leaders focus support on pupils most in need.	Intensify safeguarding responses if required.
	Escalate conversations with parents.		Enforce legal interventions (prosecution as last resort).
	Work with LA on legal options if needed.		
	In safeguarding cases, escalate to statutory services.		

For severely absent pupils (below 50% attendance)

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
Work with school/LA to remove barriers.	Continue support as for persistently absent pupils.	Regularly review data.	Make severely absent pupils a top priority.
Engage with formal support.	Agree joint approach with LA.	Help leaders prioritise these pupils.	Coordinate whole-family plans, EHCPs, or alternative provision.
			Address safeguarding concerns through statutory services.

For cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than peers

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
Not applicable.	Use data to identify cohorts with low attendance.	Regularly review data.	Track area-wide trends.

	Work with LA/other schools on strategies.	Help leaders focus support.	Remove systemic barriers impacting multiple schools.
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For pupils with medical conditions and/or SEND (below 95% attendance)

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
Work with school/LA to address barriers.	Maintain ambition for attendance.	Monitor SEND and medical cohorts at board meetings.	Coordinate with SEND, psychologists, health and mental health services.
Engage with support.	Join up with pastoral/SEND support.	Work with LA to review.	Ensure alternative provision where needed.
	Ensure EHCP provisions are accessed.		
	Refer to wider services when needed.		

For pupils with a social worker

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
Work with school/LA to address barriers.	Identify pupils with a social worker.	Review attendance data regularly.	Ensure Children's Social Care staff understand importance of attendance.
Engage with support.	Understand impact of safeguarding/welfare issues.	Support school leaders in targeted action.	VSH monitors/supports attendance.
	Maintain high aspirations.		Develop system-wide strategies for this cohort.
	Share attendance data with social workers.		

For looked-after and previously looked-after children

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority
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Work with school/LA to overcome barriers.	Have high expectations.	Designate a responsible staff member.	Promote achievement of looked-after children.
Engage in Personal Education Plans.	Work with LA Virtual School Head.	Monitor and review attendance.	Appoint VSH.
	Develop and deliver strong Personal Education Plans.	Ensure policies are sensitive to needs.	Monitor and evaluate outcomes.
	Build good home–school links.		Provide advice/support for previously looked-after pupils.

Monitoring

Parents / Pupils	School	Local School Committee & Trust Board	Local Authority / Ofsted / DfE
Receive regular updates.	Senior Attendance Champion ensures staff fulfil responsibilities.	Hold leaders accountable.	DfE monitors MAT/LA efforts.
Raise concerns if expectations unmet.	Report progress to committee/trust.	Review progress and provide challenge.	Ofsted inspects attendance work.
		Ensure staff training.	SEND Area inspections assess LA approaches.
		Focus on pupils most in need.	Complaints can escalate to Ombudsman/Secretary of State.

Appendix B Contacting staff about attendance at XXXX First and Nursery School

The Senior Attendance Champion with responsibility for attendance is:	
The attendance administration officer is:	
To tell the school that a pupil is going to be absent, parents should:	Please notify the school by 9.00 am at the latest. Telephone the school and leave a message giving your child's name, class and reason for absence or email the school office.
If a parent is concerned about their child's attendance, they should:	Speak with the child's teacher in the first instance. You can arrange that by contacting the school office or emailing through Google Classroom. If you have already done that and remain concerned, you can speak to You can arrange that by contacting the school office.
Other key staff involved in supporting attendance are:	

If you wish to request a leave of absence for your child, you should:	Obtain the 'Request for Leave of Absence form' from the school website or office. Complete this form and give it to the school as early as possible and at least two weeks <u>before</u> the requested absence is due to happen.
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Application for Leave of Absence from School

Dear Parent

Please consider the following before submitting your request for leave:

In line with amendments to the Education [Pupil Registration] [England] Regulations 2006, from September 2013, the school cannot grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances; holiday requests do not fall into this category and will not be approved as authorised absence.

Our Local Authority has issued us with the following guidance:

Dorset Council Children's Services Directorate, fully supports schools in expecting parents and carers to make sure that children and young people attend school on a regular basis. Any time away from school can have a significant impact on educational attainment, success in after life and longer term health and well-being. Dorset Council will be supporting all schools in ensuring the law is upheld. In law, parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular punctual attendance of their children at school. Therefore any unauthorised absence, such as taking holidays in term time, can result in a Penalty Notice. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice may result in a criminal conviction and a fine in the Magistrates Court.

If, after carefully considering all of the above, you still wish to request permission for your child to be absent from school, please complete all the details and submit the application with a covering letter and any supporting documents. Please note that your application will not be considered unless a letter is provided.

Yours sincerely

[Head Teacher]

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Name of child/ren:

Class:

First day of absence: ____/____/____

Last day of absence: ____/____/____

I enclose a covering letter with this application, explaining why this absence can only be arranged during term time.

The number of sessions I am requesting on this application is: (sessions are half days, 1 day = 2 sessions)

Signed [Parent/Guardian] Date

OFFICE USE ONLY

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Name of child/ren: _____

Class: _____

Current attendance: _____

Dear Parent of

Thank you for your recent application for your child/ren to be granted leave from school. The letter and application for leave have been considered and the following has been agreed:

Dates authorised: _____

Total sessions: _____

Dates not authorised: _____

Total sessions: _____

Total no. of days requested to date: _____

Penalty notice reached: YES / NO

Signed [Head Teacher]

Date

OFFICE USE ONLY - do not send to parent

Code: _____
Reason: _____
No. of sessions authorised: _____
No. of sessions unauthorised: _____
Total no. of sessions requested to date: _____

Penalty notice triggered: _____