

ELA Attendance Policy

Downham Market Academy



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Document Control

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1.0	Changes have been made following the release of new DfE guidance – Working together to improve school attendance, applies from 19 Aug 2024	

1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the head of school to account for the implementation of this policy
- The link governor for attendance will meet half termly with the Senior Attendance Champion to support and monitor pupil attendance.

3.2 The Head of School

The head of school is responsible for:

- The 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
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the Attendance Lead and Attendance Officers to be able to do so
- Supporting the SENDCo in working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Supporting the SENDCo in communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.3 The senior leader with responsibility for attendance

The Attendance Lead is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Coordinating attendance support from Heads of Year to provide consistent support for attendance across the school
- Organising home welfare visits for pupils who have been absent from school for more than 5 consecutive days
- Meeting with parents to support pupils for whom previously offered support has not been successful in improving attendance

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Lewis Swatman and can be contacted via lswatman@dma.tela.org.uk .

3.4 The attendance officers

The school attendance officers are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Attendance Lead responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the head of school/Attendance Lead(authorised by the head of school) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officers are Sarah Venni and Clare Cook and can be contacted via attendance@dma.tela.org.uk or 01366 389100

3.5 Form Tutors/Class Teachers

Form Tutors/Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

- Form Tutors and Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance within the first 5 minutes of every lesson, using the correct codes, and submitting this information using either SIMS or Edulink
- Marks should be recorded as / for a present mark or N for an absent mark. No other codes should be entered by Form Tutors/Class Teachers.
- Taking prompt action when pupils are late or absent without reason, updating the register and referring concerns to the attendance officer or Heads of Year
- Class teachers are responsible for Informing relevant staff of any pupils missing from the lesson that had previously been marked present.
- Where emerging attendance concerns are identified by the Senior Attendance Champion, Form Tutors are expected to hold initial conversations with pupils in their form group to identify barriers to attendance and communicate these to the attendance officer.
- Form Tutors are also expected to arrange a telephone meeting with parents of pupils with emerging attendance concerns and record a summary of the meeting via the Initial Support Meeting telephone record/script.

3.6 School admin/reception staff

School admin/reception staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer or Attendance Lead where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and timetabled session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:55am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Attendance Officer, Form Tutor or Head of Year, who can be contacted via hello@dma.tela.org.uk or 01366 389100

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time at 8:50am ready for registration in lesson 1 at 8:55am
- Attend every timetabled session, on time
- Sign in at the main reception if they are late arriving to school and provide a reason for being late
- Sign out at the main reception if they have been given permission to leave school before the end of the school day
- Tell their Form Tutor if they are having any problems attending school
- Monitor their own attendance on Edulink

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present

- > Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- > Absent
- > Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- > The original entry
- > The amended entry
- > The reason for the amendment
- > The date on which the amendment was made
- > The name and position of the person who made the amendment. See

Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- > Whether the absence is authorised or not
- > The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- > The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:55am and ends at 3:05pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9.05am (not longer than 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place). The register for the second session will be taken at 1.25pm and will be kept open until 1:35pm.

Once the registers are closed the session will be recorded as unauthorised and the 'U' code will be used.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:50am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school absence line via 01366 389100, via absence reporting on Edulink or emailing attendance@dma.tela.org.uk.

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

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

If exceptional circumstances are being applied for in advance for a planned absence, an [Absence Request Form](#) is to be completed and submitted for approval by the Head of School at least two weeks prior to the absence.

However, we encourage parents 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 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.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate L code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate U code
- It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, we would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.
- We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken; parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police or other appropriate external agency if appropriate.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer and/or education inclusion officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer

- > Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents/carers to improve attendance
- > Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- > Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with school will issue a Notice To Improve, Penalty Notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly written reports as well as live daily data accessible to parents/carers via Edulink.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head of School will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Head of School will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- > Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- > Attending an interview
- > Study leave (see section 5.5)
- > A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- > Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The DfE guidelines look at the area of Special Occasions and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a student attending the wedding of a parent could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would not.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in a protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form,

accessible via the school's website. The Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

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

- > Illness (including mental-health 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 parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- > Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (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
- > If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- > Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- > Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- > Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- > Attending work experience
- > If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

5.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence is unauthorised if:

- > No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers
- > The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence
- > Medical evidence for the absence is not provided for a pupil whose attendance is low or below the expected attendance threshold

For example, DfE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- > Minding the house; caring for relatives
- > Awaiting repair people
- > Shopping
- > A birthday or family celebration

Reasons for unforeseen absences must be provided to the school within 5 school days otherwise they will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This follows the guidance in Section 395 of 'Working together to improve school attendance' from the DfE.

5.3 Absence due to mental health issues

DfE guidance is clear that schools should 'set and maintain high expectations for the attendance, engagement and punctuality of pupils who are anxious about attending school'. The guidance also states 'Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly.'

To support students who are anxious about attending school, Downham Market Academy will work with students, parents and carers to create plans to implement reasonable adjustments. Such adjustments will be decided on a pupil-by-pupil basis and may include strategies such as:

- > Identification of trusted adults for the child to speak to in school
- > In-school mentoring with a mental health lead
- > Referral to external agencies and/or external professional support
- > Short-term withdrawal from some lessons
- > Issue and use of downtime cards
- > Changes to seating plans in lessons

5.4 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The Head of School (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- > Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- > Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- > Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- > Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

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

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the code of conduct for the local authority.

They will include:

- > Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- > The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- > Details of the support provided so far
- > Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- > A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- > A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- > The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

5.5 Study Leave

Downham Market Academy follows guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding study leave. The guidance states 'study leave should not be granted by default once the exam syllabus is complete, it should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations.'

DfE guidance also makes clear that a student is of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year during which they turn 16.

Downham Market Academy applies this guidance in the following manner:

- > The date for study leave starting will be decided on a year-by-year basis dependent upon the public examinations calendar.
- > When study leave is granted, students who have not completed all coursework requirements will still be expected to attend school to complete this work before starting study leave.
- > Study leave will only be granted if a signed letter or completion of an electronic form confirming parents accept the conditions for study leave is received by the Academy. Verbal confirmation or permission will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- > During study leave, Downham Market Academy will continue to make provision available for those pupils who want to continue to come in to school to revise.
- > In exceptional circumstances, early study leave may be granted to students if there is a clear rationale for this being supportive to their individual needs.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

6.1 Rewarding Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance, each school within the ELA will have its own rewards system which may include:

- Rewards for 100% attendance
- Celebration in Tutor Time and Assemblies
- Attendance certificates
- Letters from the Head of School for long term exceptional attendance and overcoming long term non-attendance will become part of the student's records and make a meaningful contribution to their reference for further education or the world of work. Prospective employers, Sixth Form Colleges and Colleges of Further Education view attendance and punctuality as important indicators of motivation/attitude and our records and references are very valuable evidence of reliability. The majority of Cambridgeshire and Norfolk Sixth Form providers expect at least 96% attendance when offering places.

6.2 Sanctions for poor attendance and punctuality

At Downham Market Academy, we want to work with parents and pupils to support and promote high expectations for attendance. However, when attendance expectations are not being met, the school reserves the right to sanction pupils with any of the following:

- > Detention for being late to school or lessons without a good reason

- > Appropriate report for attendance/punctuality
- > Other, more serious sanctions, for repeated defiance of school attendance rules
- > Poor attendance or punctuality may lead to pupils having an extended day to catch up on work missed

6.3 Support for pupils and parents

Downham Market Academy provides support for parents and pupils if pupils are struggling to attend school. Measures include the following:

- > Attendance Reports
- > Attendance interviews and regular reviews with pastoral leads
- > Signposting relevant external agencies to provide support for children and their parents
- > Re-integration programme arranged between pupils, parents, pastoral leads, SLT, Inclusion and SENDCo if appropriate after long-term absence
- > Individualised curriculum where appropriate
- > Coordinate support, where appropriate, from external agencies to help pupils reintegrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

School will aim to identify and discuss barriers to in-school attendance with the pupil and their parents/carers. The meeting notes, with actions, will be recorded and saved with relevant information and actions being forwarded to appropriate staff to allow support to be actioned.

This could include, but is not limited to:

- In-house support; mental health support, pastoral mentor, peer buddy
- Identification of a trusted adult
- Discussion of appropriate places for a pupil to go an break and/or lunch
- Suggestion to speak to a GP re: issues outside of school
- Changes to PD groups

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where mental or physical ill health or their SEND impact their ability to attend school, staff will work with pupils and their families, making adjustments and providing additional support to remove barriers to attendance.

These could include, but is not limited to:

- Supporting [Medical Needs](#)
- Referral to external support
- Reintegration timetable
- Support meetings in school

- Restorative meetings with peers to support friendship breakdowns.
- Early lesson exit passes
- Meetings with Student Welfare Officers
- Early Help referral
- Changes to timetables

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority EHCP coordinator.

7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

School aged pupils in maintained schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.

In a case where an authorised exceptional circumstance results in a long period of absence, attendance/pastoral staff will implement an integration plan. This will be personalised to the needs and circumstances of the individual pupil and involve the Education Inclusion Officer from the local authority.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

The school has granted DfE access to its management information system, SIMs, so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

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 benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the local governing board.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular opportunities for personal development tutors/class teachers to review pupil's attendance, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and report headlines to the local governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence

➤ Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above) School will use a number of steps to target unauthorised absence:

- Send attendance letters to make parents aware of their legal obligations.
- Arrange meetings with parents/carers to discuss barriers to education and work to remove these.
- Continue to closely monitor the pupil's attendance.
- Regularly review the support in place for effectiveness and make adjustments, if required and appropriate.

8.5 Three-letter monitoring process

A three-letter system is intended to enable schools to continuously and consistently monitor and address poor school attendance and communicate attendance concerns to parents in a consistent manner. The system is designed to identify patterns of absence, either authorised or unauthorised, which are beginning to cause concern. The full attendance support framework can be found in Appendix 2.

To maintain 'outstanding' attendance of 96% a pupil would need to miss no more than 4 whole school days (8 sessions) within an academic year. Beyond this point attendance becomes a cause for concern and the following system would be implemented:

- **Stage One Letter.** A stage one letter would be issued notifying parents/carers of our concerns. Our expectation at this point is that there are no further absences but if there are, they will be supported by medical evidence in order to be authorised. School staff will contact home to discuss emerging attendance concerns.
- **Stage Two Letter.** If attendance continues to fall then a stage two letter would be issued. Parents/carers will be invited to attend an attendance support meeting with the pupil's Head of Year or Assistant Head of Year. This meeting will be to discuss attendance concerns / barriers to attendance and produce an action plan to improve attendance.
- **Stage Three Letter.** If, following the stage two attendance support meeting, there is no improvement and attendance continues to fall, a stage three letter will be issued. Parents/carers will be invited to attend an attendance support meeting to with the Attendance Lead. This meeting will be to review attendance concerns / barriers to attendance, discuss the support already offered and investigate any further support necessary. An **attendance support contract** will be created with the aim to improve attendance.
- **Notice to Improve.** If, following the stage three attendance support meeting, there is no improvement in attendance, parents will be sent a formal Notice to Improve letter (using Norfolk County Council template) giving them 30 school days (6 weeks) to improve their child's attendance. In this period, the child must show significant improvements in attendance and have no unauthorised absences from school. Attendance will reviewed daily and if any unauthorised absences are recorded, the case will be referred to Norfolk County Council for consideration of issuing a fixed penalty fine or referring for consideration of prosecution.

8.6 Welfare Checks

If a child is absent during the school day and no contact has been received from parents or carers by session 2, staff must make every effort to contact the family using all appropriate and necessary methods. Where phone contact is unsuccessful, a welfare check must be carried out.

If a child is absent for 10 consecutive sessions, a welfare check must be conducted. In some circumstances, such as where the student is under the care of medical professionals, this may not be necessary: these cases should be discussed with Director of Safeguarding & Inclusion who will agree an approach with the school Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Attendance Lead.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Trust. At every review, the policy will be approved by the local governing board of each school.

10. 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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination

X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent – other authorised reasons

T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made

Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
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Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided 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	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence

U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: Attendance support framework

Stage 1 Attendance Support	Stage 2 Attendance Support/Review Meeting	Stage 3 Attendance Contract Meeting
Attendance Officer, Personal Development Tutor, Heads of Year, Assistant Head of Year	Heads of Year, Assistant Head of Year, Attendance Lead	Attendance Lead
Trigger Point: 2 separate absences (4 sessions)	Trigger Point: Further absence (7 sessions)	Trigger Point (10 sessions)
IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE	REMOVE BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE AND OFFER MORE FORMAL (VOLUNTARY) SUPPORT	DISCUSS CONSEQUENCES OF NON-ATTENDANCE AND ENSURE APPROPRIATE SUPPORT HAS BEEN OFFERED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue Letter 1 Discuss attendance and barriers to attendance with pupil (wishes and feelings) Discuss attendance and barriers to attendance with parents (can be a telephone discussion) Offer appropriate support; This could include: In-house support (Mental Health Champion, Student Welfare Officer) ;Identification of trusted adult; Discussion of appropriate places for child to go at break/lunch; Suggestion to speak to GP re: issues outside of school; Changes to PD groups (last resort) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue Letter 2 Hold a formal meeting with parents and pupil in school (TEAMS, phone or in person) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all support is in place and formally recorded to support and remove barriers to attendance. This could include: Supporting <u>Medical Needs</u>; Referral to external support; Reintegration timetable; Support meetings in school; Restorative meetings with peers to support friendship breakdowns; Early lesson exit or downtime passes; Meetings with student welfare officers; Early Help referral; Changes to timetables (last resort) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue Letter 3 Discuss impact of attendance not improving: Impact on attendance, mental health & progress in lessons Risk of Local Authority considering Penalty Notice Fines or Prosecution if no improvement is seen. Write and agree and an Attendance Contract the using template provided. Achievable outcomes and targets are mutually agreed to provide focus and measure impact of interventions. School will determine the duration of the Attendance Contract (between 3 – 6 months) with the family and open professionals - can be extended if felt beneficial. Frequent reviews are conducted informally, maintaining relationship with parents and the offering of support. These can take place during professional meetings e.g. CP conference, CIN or TAF meetings.

STAGE 4 Notice to Improve Meeting

If attendance does not improve, and support/Attendance Contract is declined, school complete online referral for a 'Notice to Improve'.

Attendance Service processes request and reviews schools' suggested monitoring period and attendance target.

Attendance Service via email, provides suggestions for support, confirms monitoring period and targets with a 'Notice to Improve' template.

School issues a Notice to Improve to BOTH parents by post giving them a fixed period to improve their child's attendance.

In this period, the child must show significant improvements in attendance and have no unauthorised absences from school.

Throughout the monitoring period, school to reflect on the journey of the pupil and the target(s).

Attendance reviewed daily/weekly and progress to stage 5 considered, if any unauthorised absences are recorded (this can be done as soon as any unauthorised absence is recorded, if appropriate), for legal sanctions to be considered by the LA.

STAGE 5

School does not have to wait for the monitoring period to finish before referring for legal sanctions if the threshold is met.

LA review if there is clear evidence of school offering a support first approach in line with the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) statutory guidance, August 2024

LA review whether any previous penalty notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the child/ren concerned.

LA review if there are any other prosecution cases pending in respect of the family to avoid duplication.

LA review parental engagement with the support offered and the impact of this on improving attendance.

LA decide if there is a statutory defence for non-attendance or whether to issue a penalty notice fine or refer for prosecution.