

Attendance Policy



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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:

- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- 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

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:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and vision and values
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - o Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - o Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Ensure attendance support is focused on those pupils who need it and resources and staffing are used effectively to support these pupils
- Ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy and their statutory duties

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher 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 Champion to be able to do so.
- Working with the parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for all pupils including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils face in-school barriers
- 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 designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') 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
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Having oversight of absence data and providing data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Liaising and coordinating with colleagues from Local Authority services including Health and Social Care
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Ruth Liu and can be contacted via 0114 284 5298 ruth.liu@paces-school.org.uk

3.4 Class teachers

- 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 each morning and afternoon.
- Class teachers are the pastoral leads for all pupils in their class group and directly support pupils to gain the best attendance they can
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

3.5 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls/emails 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 appropriate member of the senior leadership team, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Contact parents/carers if a pupil is absent and no call/email has been received to explain the reason for the absence
- Accurately record the attendance codes on Sims on a daily basis.
- Record accurate notes against codes on day attendance notes
- Record any changes to the day attendance codes via the notes
- Record approved Leave of Absences via the notes
- Check that Off-site Educational Activity has corresponding event logs
- Recording the reason for code changes via the Day Attendance notes
- Providing Local Authorities up-to-date attendance data for their funded pupils, in accordance with each Local Authorities reporting procedure.

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 on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence. Whereby parents /legal guardians know that their child will not be returning the next day then they will be asked to give the estimated date of return. If the estimated date of return is unknown, then the school office will need to be notified on each day of absence.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Due to the nature of our pupils' complex needs, permission will always be granted to attend medical appointments. However, where possible parents / carers should try and secure as many appointments outside of term time as possible.
- When necessary, work collaboratively with the school and relevant partner agencies, including health & social care, to support their child to improve their attendance when appropriate.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Kim Donovan, Wellbeing and Pastoral Lead or the Attendance Champion.

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 9.00am and ends at 3pm. Pupils begin to arrive either via school transport or their parents by 8.45am.

Pupils must arrive in school between 8.45am and 9.15am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

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 9.00am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school, who can be contacted via 0114 284 5298.

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 5 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 and parents are asked to notify the school in advance of the appointment. Forms to record planned absences are available from the school office on request (office@paces-school.org.uk) or on the school website.

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. However, we understand that many of our pupils have complex medical needs and may need to attend multiple appointments and not be able to request specific appointment times. We encourage parents to ensure pupils are 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 (after 9.15am):

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed, will be marked as absent using the appropriate code

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 send a member of staff to visit the home to ensure that the child is safe.

- 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 unexplained absence continues, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents 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, guidance from Sheffield Local Authority and the placing Local Authority will be sought.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via the termly report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

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

The headteacher 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
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Examples (non-exhaustive) of exceptional circumstances may include: multiple complex needs within the family that in combination mean that holiday in school holiday time is unfeasible. Serious or terminal illness within the family. Lack of availability of support to enable a successful family holiday during school holidays.

The taking of unauthorised term-time leave of 5 days or more, requires Paces School to refer to their Local Authority Attendance Support Team for potential legal intervention. See Appendix 4 for further details.

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 where there are no exceptional circumstances.

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

If a parent wishes for their young person to be granted a leave of absence, they must make their request in advance to the Headteacher. Their request should encompass the following:

- Be at least 6 weeks in advance where feasible
- Provided in writing
- The start and end date of the absence

- The purpose of the absence
- The exceptional circumstances that justify the absence taking place during school time

Each request will be taken on its own merits and decisions will be made at the discretion of the Headteacher who will provide their response to the request in writing.

Leave of absence requests are recorded by the school on Sims and will include whether the absence has been agreed or declined and the reasons why.

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's 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

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 Notifying

- Where a pupil is likely to miss more than 15 days, the school will notify the pupil's Local Authority.
- Where a pupil has a Social Worker and/or a Youth Justice Worker these will be informed on each instance of unauthorised absence.

5.3 10 in 10

When a child receives 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any rolling 10-week period, the school must consider the next steps.

- This could include unauthorised absence (O codes), unauthorised lateness (U codes), unauthorised term time leave (G codes) or a combination of these codes.
- As each day includes 2 sessions (morning and afternoon), 5 full days of absence equates to 10 sessions.

Next steps could include further support, alternative provision, reasonable adjustments, or enforcement.

Where support has been ineffective, or families have not engaged collaboratively with school, we must refer to our host Local Authority attendance team who will advise on next steps. The Local Authority may recommend that the case is progressed to attendance prosecution.

The Local Authority remains the decision maker on whether attendance legal processes will be followed.

5. Formalised Support and legal interventions.

All attendance support processes at Pace School assume and require the good-faith collaboration and support of parents. Where this does not take place, we will progress through a more formalised route to attempt to re-engage parents in improving attendance for their child:

Stage 1: Letter of concern and offer for further voluntary support

Stage 2: Attendance Agreements - written agreements outlining expected actions for parents, students and school.

Stage 3: Final letter of concern, prior to referral for legal interventions.

Where support has been ineffective, families have not engaged collaboratively with school, or there has been a period of unauthorised term-time leave lasting 5 days or more, we must refer to our host Local Authority attendance team who will advise on next steps. The Local Authority may recommend that the case is progressed to legal interventions.

In all cases, the guidance is clear that legal processes should only be followed if it is believed that it will be effective in altering parental behaviour and improve attendance.

As a Non-Maintained Special School, Paces is exempt from processes around attendance contracts and attendance penalty notices, that are specified in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance.

The consequence of this is that, when an attendance threshold is met that would - in other schools - lead to a penalty notice request, the school must instead consult with its host Local Authority Attendance Support team, who may advise that the case moves directly to attendance prosecution.

The Local Authority remains the decision maker on whether attendance legal processes will be followed.

A summary of the potential legal interventions can be found in Appendix 4. The school recognises that, for many of our pupils, attendance is significantly impacted by complex medical issues and health needs relating to their disability.

We aim to ensure that our attendance policy and procedures emphasis collaborative approaches with families, local authorities health services, and social care wherever possible. This requires a whole-school vision and aspiration for attendance, with highly individualised approaches to achieving this. Essentially we aim to work with families and support pupils to come into school when they are well and able to access our educational offer. For this reason, we do not have a whole-school reward system to encourage attendance, recognising for the vast majority of pupils their absences are for genuine health related reasons.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We aim to ensure that our attendance policy and procedures emphasise collaborative approaches with families, local authorities health services, and social care wherever possible. This requires a whole-school vision and aspiration for attendance, with highly individualised approaches to achieving this. Essentially we aim to work with families and support pupils to come into school when they are well and able to access our educational offer. For this reason, we do not have a whole-school reward system to encourage attendance, recognising for the vast majority of pupils their absences are for genuine health related reasons.

Where necessary, individualised support will be provided for any pupils who do need encouragement to attend school and where there are concerns relating to attendance that do not link directly to physical illness.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Where pupils have long term complex medical needs resulting in extended periods of absence either at home or in hospital, we will work with parents, medical and health professionals to ensure that when they are able to return to school we are ready and able to support their transition. This may mean additional training for staff, a review of medication given in school or a review of existing care plan procedures. A pupil will not be able to return to school until all the necessary arrangements have been made to facilitate a safe

and successful return to school. Regular contact will be maintained with the parent throughout any extended absence to ensure that we are fully aware of the situation.

For pupils who have had surgery and require a period of time in hospital followed by a period recuperation at home we will communicate regularly with the family to ensure we are up to date with the pupil's progress. In the case of pupils who have had surgery, pupils will be offered zoom chats with their class or a member of staff once they are well enough to engage in the process. This will aim to support a successful transition back into school. If parents require work sending home this will be organised by the class teacher, although we recognise that for some of our pupils sending work home can be challenging and so suggested activities linked to their classes topic may be offered instead. We also recognise that for pupils, post-surgery recovery can be a painful and a challenging time for families, and we do not want to add unnecessary pressure with the expectation of the pupil completing school work.

Following an extended absence it may be necessary to offer a phased transition into school. This can be flexible in terms of offering either shorter days or days at home in between days in school. This would be discussed with parents and be constantly reviewed. It is anticipated that this type of flexible arrangement would be in place for up to 3 weeks, although this will be dependent upon the individual pupil and their circumstances.

8. Attendance monitoring

Individual pupil attendance data is reviewed on a termly basis with an overview of attendance presented to governors. Regular meetings with our Attendance and Inclusion Officer ensure that any pupils who present as a cause for concern in relation to school attendance can be discussed and the relevant support put in place.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE and placing Local Authorities on request.

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils 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 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

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- 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
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	Every pupil absent as the school is closed

	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 • 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