Policy No: 27

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 Working together to improve school attendance. We aim to achieve this 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 2006
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
  - Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

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
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
  - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times

- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

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
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- 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 attendance 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
- 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 Jenny Davies, Deputy Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and 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 Sheffield 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.

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 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 unexplained absence continues, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare/attendance officer
- Where there is a period of unauthorised absence weekly welfare checks in the home will be undertaken
- 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.

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 or admission to another educational establishment
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Examples (non-exhaustive) of exceptional circumstances may include: serious or terminal illness within the family.

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.

Supporting pupils with poor attendance

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:

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.

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

8.1 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 we have identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 9.4 below)
- 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

8.2 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. As a school we recognise that many of our pupils have complex medical needs

impacting their attendance at school. This will always be taken into consideration when supporting pupils whose attendance falls into the category of persistent or severe absence.

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.

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: Sheffield Attendance Codes

Attendance Codes

Code	Meaning	Type
/ \	Present at the school / morning \ afternoon	Present Mark
B	Attending any other approved educational activity - Alternative Provision - Face to face education provided off school site	Present Mark
C	Authorised Circumstance (see next page for breakdown)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registered at another school - Attending Alternative Provision at another school site - Chapel House / Becton Outreach / CAMHS Lodges/Hospital Ed - Education at a secure / residential site - Off-site direction / managed move - Attending Sheffield Inclusion Centre	Present Mark
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school or Term Time Leave not granted by the school	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Authorised Absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised Absence
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority	Present Mark
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed	Present Mark
M	Attended a medical appointment	Authorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised Mark
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised Absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Present Mark
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Not expected to attend
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school.	Authorised Absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.	Authorised Absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised Absence
V	Attending an Educational Trip or Visit	Present Mark
W	Attending Work Experience	Present Mark
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause (see next page for breakdown)	Not expected to attend
Z	Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register	Not expected to attend

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Attendance Codes

Code	Meaning	Type
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend
The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.	Authorised Absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised Absence