

Part of the Branches Education Group



ATTENDANCE POLICY



Approved By	Joe Darnell	Head Teacher	March 2026
Amendments Made			
Linked Policies	Admissions Policy		
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance at school is essential for securing excellent pupil outcomes and improving overall life chances and success in adulthood. Local Authorities pay a significant fee for pupils to attend the specialist provision they need. Pupils cannot benefit from this provision unless they attend regularly.

This policy has been updated in line with *Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, August 2024)* and *Children Missing Education statutory guidance (DfE, September 2025)*. It should be read alongside the School Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

1.1 Rationale

All our pupils have a range of needs, challenges, and difficulties, requiring the specialist support and education provided by our school. Many pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education, with a history of placement breakdowns and school moves.

Safeguarding our pupils is always our foremost priority and we ensure our procedures to secure good attendance reflect this. We know that improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone around a child. Staff understand that good attendance is vital in supporting us to build positive relationships and engagement in learning. We work closely with parents and carers to help them ensure their child's good attendance at school.

2.0 PURPOSE

2.1 The Aim as a School

Our aim is to improve the attendance of every pupil and therefore, the overall attendance at our school.

We will do this by:

- ensuring all staff and those responsible for governance know they have a key role to play in ensuring attendance and punctuality remain key priorities,
- providing a clear framework which sets out everyone's role and responsibilities in securing good attendance,
- making pupils, parents/ carers aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality, and the issues which arise when they are not good,
- giving recognition and rewards to pupils with good and/ or rapidly improving attendance,
- supporting pupils and families to identify and address barriers to good attendance,
- promoting effective partnerships with the Early Help, Social Care and other agencies who can help us to work as a team around a child or family,
- monitoring, reporting, and analysing attendance and punctuality related data, identifying objectives to support continued good attendance, as part of our whole school development planning.

2.2 Statutory Guidance and Safeguarding

From September 2024, the Department for Education's [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) guidance has become **statutory**. This means that all schools are required to treat **poor attendance as a safeguarding concern**.

Where a child's attendance is persistently low, or there are unexplained absences that may indicate a child is at risk of harm, the school has a duty to:

- Investigate patterns of absence promptly and engage with parents/carers at an early stage.
- Refer to and work with children's services and other relevant safeguarding partners where appropriate.
- Record and monitor attendance data as part of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Implications for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL now has an enhanced role in relation to attendance, including:

- Monitoring attendance data closely alongside pastoral and safeguarding information to identify children at risk.
- Working collaboratively with the attendance lead and wider staff to ensure concerns are escalated where absence may be linked to neglect, exploitation, or other safeguarding risks.
- Initiating or contributing to referrals to children's services where persistent absence raises safeguarding concerns.
- Ensuring attendance concerns are included in safeguarding records and considered in any multi-agency work or case conferences.

In practice, this means attendance is no longer viewed solely as an educational issue but as an integral part of safeguarding practice.

3.0 ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

3.1 Punctuality

Pupils should arrive at school on time every day.

Local Authorities pay significant costs for transport to school for many of our pupils. Where this is the case, pupils should be ready in plenty of time ahead of transport arriving at their home. Ultimately, it is parents and carers responsibility to get a child to school. We cannot arrange alternative transport if it is missed.

The school gates and doors open to pupils from 8:45 a.m.

Our Breakfast Club provides toast and juice. It is a great start to the day, with an opportunity to socialise before lessons.

Pupils should arrive by 8.55 a.m. at the latest. Staff will greet them ahead of Tutorial and take an Attendance Register at 9.00 a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as Late ('L'). The register

will remain open until 9.30a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked on the Register with a 'U' code.

3.2 Attendance Register

The attendance register is a legal document and must be completed accurately in line with Department for Education requirements.

Registers are taken twice daily, at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions. All entries must use the national set of attendance codes, including the most recent updates (e.g. removal of Code H, introduction of Codes C1 and C2, and replacement of Code J with J1).

Registers must be retained securely for a minimum of six years, and any amendments must clearly show the original entry, the reason for the change, and the Cherry Tree of the person making the amendment.

Attendance data is recorded and reported using the prescribed national codes and is shared with the local authority and Department for Education as required. See **Appendix 1** – DfE Attendance Codes

3.3 Role of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers have a legal duty to send their children to school regularly. They risk prosecution if they fail in this duty. There are 190 school days per year for pupils. When a pupil misses one week from school, they miss 30 lessons, they miss out on vital social, emotional, and academic learning.

We expect pupils to attend 100% of the time, on a full-time basis, unless there is a good reason not to be in school; see Section 3.4 below. This is not only a national requirement, but also what local authorities are paying for when they send children to specialist schools such as ours.

We ensure that parents and carers are made aware of our high expectations and duty to expect good attendance at the Pupil Admission Meeting, where we share all relevant policies and procedures. We encourage open and honest dialogue about problems with attendance, as this helps us all to work together to identify solutions.

3.4 Reporting Absence

Parents and carers are expected to contact the school office by 9:00 a.m. on the first and every subsequent day of a child's absence. If no message has been received, the school will attempt to contact home by 10:00 a.m.

All unexplained absences are followed up promptly. Where absence remains unexplained despite attempts to contact parents or carers, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If no communication has been received, a member of staff may visit the home to:

- establish the reason for absence,
- check that the child is safe and well,
- identify any support that may help the child return to school at the earliest opportunity.

Attendance information is recorded using the national codes and shared with the local authority in line with statutory requirements.

Medical and other appointments should, wherever possible, be arranged outside of school hours. If an appointment is local, pupils will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.

3.5 Different Types of Absence

Attendance Register and Classification of Absence

The Attendance Register is taken twice daily: once for the morning half-day session and once for the afternoon half-day session.

Pupil attendance is classified and marked by the school as either '**authorised**' or '**unauthorised**' for every half-day session. Daily communication from parents and carers is required to ensure absences are recorded correctly.

Authorised Absences are sessions away from school for a genuine and unavoidable reason, such as illness, evidenced medical or emergency appointments, or religious observance.

Unauthorised Absences are sessions for which no permission or 'leave' has been granted by the Headteacher, and include, but are not limited to:

- Absence which has never been properly explained
- Parents or carers keeping pupils off school
- Truancy during the school day
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Birthdays
- Hair appointments
- Day trips
- Waiting for a delivery
- Sleeping in after a late night

Leave of Absence

Leave of absence will only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**; holidays are not considered exceptional. All requests for leave must be submitted in writing and will be considered by the Headteacher on a case-by-case basis.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil will be classified as a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls to **90% or below**, regardless of the reason for absence. Parents and carers will be informed immediately if a pupil is at risk of moving towards, or has reached, the PA threshold.

Descriptor	Attendance %	Impact on Pupil Outcomes
Outstanding	100 - 99	Best chance of success
Good	98 - 96	
Satisfactory	95 - 91	
Cause for Concern	90 - 86	Worrying. Less chance of success
Serious Cause for Concern	85 or below	Serious concern. Limited progress. Damage to future prospects.

It takes very little for pupil attendance levels to fall. Attendance reduces to 96% after 9 days' absence.

3.6 Attendance Support Plan

We review attendance each day and are vigilant about any patterns or trends with pupils who are late or absent from school.

Senior leaders identify pupils who need additional support to improve or maintain rates of attendance and/ or punctuality. Staff will meet with the pupil and family to discuss the issues preventing good attendance. We will write and implement an Attendance Support Plan, which will set out the role and responsibilities of the pupil, parents/ carers, and the school in supporting improvements in attendance. The Attendance Support Plan will identify targets, timescales and any other additional services which might be involved.

See **Appendix 2** – Attendance Support Plan

3.7 Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

A range of strategies are used to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

Each week, pupils will be given a certificate and merit points for achieving 100% attendance that week. Each week, all pupils who have 100% attendance will be entered for a prize draw. Achievements are celebrated privately with the pupil concerned, in Tutorial, assembly, on school noticeboards as appropriate.

Each half-term, certificates and prizes will be awarded to pupils who have significantly improved their attendance or have 100% attendance overall, since September of that academic year.

Every year, at the end of the Summer Term, we will recognise and reward pupils who achieve 100% attendance during that academic year, and those who achieve 100% attendance over two or more consecutive years.

When fully established, we will work with our Student Council and ask them to consider awarding group points and certificates for Tutor Groups with the highest attendance.

Pupils who have an Attendance Support Plan may also have their own reward system to encourage them to achieve their individual targets and overall goals.

3.7 School Absence Procedures

Procedure	Role	Responsibilities
First and each day of absence	Parent/ Carer	Contact Reception by 9a.m. to notify school, give reason for absence, and expected date of return to school.
First and each day of absence	Administrator	- If parent/ carer has not contacted school, call them by 10 a.m. to question reason for absence. - Request parent/ carer to call the following day if pupil remains absent, and that a home visit might be conducted by staff. - Log the reason for absence on the MIS.
Third day of absence <i>or sooner where there are specific concerns</i>	Head Teacher	- Identify Tutor/ staff to conduct a home visit to share attendance information and identify plan for returning to school. - Visits may take place earlier if unable to contact a family or if the family is receiving external support.
Daily	Administrator	Check attendance for pupils who are dual registered/ attend elsewhere such as mainstream.
Daily	Head Teacher	Identify if reasons given for absence will be unauthorised, and any action needed.
Daily	Designated Safeguarding Lead	Inform social care of any unauthorised absences for pupils known to them.
Weekly – Fridays	Administrator	- Identify pupils with 100% attendance – print certificates for Tutors. - Give names of the above for the class draw, - Identify Tutor group with highest attendance. - Update the noticeboards as relevant. - Share above information with senior leaders ahead of weekly assembly.
Weekly	Head Teacher	Celebrate attendance and punctuality in Friday tutorials/ assembly as relevant.
Weekly – Mondays	Senior Leader - Attendance	Provide the Head Teacher with: - headline attendance data for Tutor Groups and whole school, - update on children looked after (CLA) - progress of Persistent Absentees and those on Attendance Support Plans.
Half-termly	Senior Leader - Attendance	Work with the Administrator to: - produce certificates and celebrate improvements/ good attendance. - update attendance display with achievements and photographs of rewards.
	Administrator	Send attendance summary to parents and carers of all pupils.
	Head Teacher/ School Governance	- Ensure attendance is standing item on the agenda of every School Governance Meeting. - Report on trends, concerns and actions identified as part of routine data analysis. - Governance Chair to review attendance data, providing support and challenge.
Pre-Admission of new pupils	Administrator	Gather attendance data from previous school settings.

3.8 Children Missing Education (CME)

From September 2025, the school has strengthened its duties regarding Children Missing Education (CME) in line with statutory guidance.

The school will:

- **Not remove a pupil from the school roll** unless one of the prescribed grounds in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations is met.
- **Notify the local authority** whenever a pupil is removed from the admissions register, providing full details of the pupil and the reason for removal.
- **Ensure parents or carers provide written notification** if they intend to educate their child at home, including the proposed date of removal from school.
- **Work closely with the local authority** to identify and support pupils at risk of CME, particularly those in temporary accommodation or other vulnerable circumstances.

This ensures that all children are accounted for and that appropriate support is in place to safeguard their education and welfare.

4.0 POLICY MONITORING

4.1 Monitoring and Reporting Attendance

Monitoring of the school's attendance policy is continuous and proactive. The School Administrator updates senior leaders daily on pupil absences and the reasons provided.

Attendance is a standing item on the agenda of the weekly Leadership Meeting, where the following is discussed and followed up:

- Overall attendance for the school and for vulnerable groups
- Attendance of persistent absentees
- Pupils who require, or are on, an Attendance Support Plan, including regular reviews
- Attendance data is shared each half-term with the Proprietor and those responsible for school governance
- Attendance data is available for the local authority, and where appropriate, the DfE and Ofsted

In addition:

- Attendance data is shared with the DfE via the **Monitor Your School Attendance** tool
- Reports are used to identify patterns, monitor persistent absence, and target interventions effectively
- Governors receive regular attendance reports, including the required statutory codes

- **Where attendance thresholds are breached, penalty notices may be issued in line with statutory guidance, and attendance concerns are linked to safeguarding, with patterns of absence promptly investigated and escalated as necessary**

This ensures robust oversight of attendance, enabling timely interventions to support pupils and maintain compliance with statutory requirements.

5.0 REFERENCES

- Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance, DfE, 29 Feb 2024 (for use Aug 2024 +)
- Moments Matter - Attendance Counts. Communications Toolkit for Schools, DfE, Feb. 2024
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance, DfE, Aug 2024
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)
- The School Attendance (
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, para 7(b)
- The Children Act 1999
- Parental Responsibility Measures for Attendance and Behaviour, DfE, Jan.2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE, updated Feb.2024
- Arranging Education for Children who Cannot Attend School because of Health Needs, DfE updated Dec.2023
- Is My Child Too Ill for School, NHS, 2021
- Support Remote Education as required:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/662a6aefe8c75df17da7e593/Providing_remote_education_non-statutory_guidance_for_schools.pdf

See also:

- Admission Policy – Cherry Tree School

6.0 APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Codes

6.1 Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Register Codes

Attending the school**Statistically present**

Code / \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
Code L	Late arrival before the register is closed

Attending a place other than the school**If in attendance statistically present**

Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Code V	Attending an educational visit or trip
Code P	Participating in a sporting activity
Code W	Attending work experience
Code B	Attending any other approved supervised educational activity
Code D	Dual registered at another school

Absent - leave of absence**Statistically not present**

Code C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
Code M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
Code J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
Code S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
Code X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Code C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
Code C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons**Statistically not present**

Code T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
Code R	Religious observance
Code I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
Code E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause**Statistically not present**

Code Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Code Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Code Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Code Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence**Statistically not present**

Code G	Holiday not granted by the school
Code N	Reason for absence not yet established
Code O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Code U	Arrived in school after registration closed

Administrative codes**Not collected**

Code Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
Code #	Planned whole school closure

6.2 Appendix 2 – Attendance Support Plan



ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PLAN

Pupil Name:

Year Group:

Date Plan Written:

Overall % Attendance this academic year: %

History and Background Information

Attendance last academic year	%
Reasons for absence, support and impact of strategies implemented:	
Attendance history at previous school settings	%
Reasons for absence and support strategies implemented:	

Views of Pupil	
Views of Parents/ Carers	
Names of Parents/ Carers providing information:	

Actions to Improve Attendance <i>What will be done?</i>	Responsibility <i>Who will do this?</i>	Timeframe <i>Date it will be achieved by?</i>	Review <i>What was the impact?</i>

Signed: _____ (Pupil)

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent/ Carer)

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Senior Leader)

Date: _____