Attendance Policy

Reviewed by:	John Shanahan, Principal
Date:	01 May 2024
Last reviewed on:	1 January 2023
Next review due by:	31 December 2024
Version control:	3
Approved by:	Tracey Storey, CEO

Contents

- Aims
- Legislation and Guidance
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Recording Attendance
- Authorised and Unauthorised Absence
- Strategies for Promoting Attendance
- Attendance Monitoring
- Monitoring Arrangements
- Links with Other Policies
- Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every learner has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Roles and Responsibilities

The School Advisory Panel (SAP)

The School Advisory Panel is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Principal

The principal is responsible for:

- implementation of this policy at the school
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the SAP
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual learners
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The Assistant Principal, Behaviour and Welfare

The Assistant Principal, Behaviour and Welfare is responsible for:

- monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual learner level
- reporting concerns about attendance to the principal
- arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- advising the principal when to issue fixed penalty notices
- Reporting attendance data to the Local Authority

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Teachers may also take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

Administration Staff

Administration staff will take calls from parents about absence, record it on the school system and advise class teachers and the senior leadership team.

Recording Attendance

Attendance Register

We will keep an attendance register and place all learners 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. We use our Management Information System for our attendance registers.

It will mark whether every learner 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 keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Learners must arrive at school by 9.00 a.m. on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.15 a.m. and will be kept open until 9.30 a.m. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00 p.m. and will be kept open until 1.15 p.m.

Unplanned Absence

The learner's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00 a.m. or as soon as practically possible. We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the learner's parent/carer to provide 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 with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the learner's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the learner should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The learner's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. The term-time absences the school can authorise are detailed below.

Lateness and Punctuality

A learner who arrives late:
- 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

Following Up Absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:
- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by calling as soon as possible and at least before 10.00 a.m. on the day of absence
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- If we are unable to contact the parent/carer on the first day of absence, we may choose to make a doorstop visit. If we are still unable to make contact, we will ensure appropriate safeguarding action is taken and contact Multi-Agency Services and the Police.

Reporting to Parents

The Stable School reports attendance to parents termly in the end of term report and annually at the end of the summer term. Attendance is discussed in reviews of the Education, Health, and Care Plan. Contact with parents can include letters which feedback on a week of 100% attendance, or if there has been an improvement in attendance if it is being monitored. Where attendance is a challenge for a young person, they will receive correspondence based on the 7-phase strategy detailed in the Reducing Persistent Absence below.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence
Approval for Term-Time Absence

The principal will only grant a leave of absence to learners during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion.

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

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the learner's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

- Traveller learners travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English, and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (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 learner is attending educational provision.

Reducing Persistent Absence

Persistent absence will be monitored by the Assistant Principal, Behaviour, and Welfare. Concerning levels of attendance will be discussed in the weekly safeguarding meeting. Actions will be agreed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The Stable School monitoring use a 7-phase process to support attendance and improving feedback and support for parents to improve attendance. The phases are broken down as follows.

- Phase 1 – Expect. All learners' households receive a letter outlining the expectations around attending The Stable School.
- Phase 2 – Monitor. Learners receive a letter to explain that the learner's attendance has dropped, and the School will be closely monitoring attendance and offering support if there are barriers or issues to attendance.
- Phase 3 – Listen and Understand. If no improvement, then parents are invited in to listen and understand to the barriers to improving attendance.
- Phase 4 – Facilitate support. This will be used if after the listen and understand there is no improvement in attendance to work with parents to offer practical support to improve attendance.
- Phase 5 – Formalise support. This will be used to formally monitor support which has been agreed.
- Phase 6 – Enforcement can be used if there is no improvement or support offered is not being taken.
- Phase 7 – Placement cessation. Will be considered if there seems no way forward to support the learner to improve their attendance.

At The Stable School, all our learners have an EHCP, many of our learners have been excluded from previous schools and/or have encountered traumatic experiences. In addition to their Special

Educational Needs, we recognise that attending the school environment can be very challenging for them. We ensure that our learners develop confidence in their abilities and have positive relationships so that they can attend. Often our learners have been educated at home or in provisions other than a school so their ability to socialise with others in a formal setting needs to be gradually developed. For some learners, low attendance is the best that they can achieve, and we take a rounded view of a learner who is working hard to achieve learning goals, acquire social skills, meet their mental health needs, and increase their attendance at school.

Legal Sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded learner is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Early intervention is a key part of the process of promoting attendance. For example, if time and resources allow, learners may not be in school due to their SEND and staff may go to the home to facilitate bringing the learner in. This is only possible due to the excellent relationships that staff have with their learners. Staff understanding the learner and parent/carers concerned are a priority for all staff at The Stable School. Bespoke curricula also allow the learners to access and look forward to their time in school.

Attendance Monitoring

The Assistant Principal, Behaviour and Welfare monitors learner absence daily. The Assistant Principal will also bring any concerns to the attention of the principal immediately and regularly review attendance at daily safeguarding meetings. A learner's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health and give an indication of their expected return date. The class teacher will check in with the parent/carer to see if the learner is returning on the date expected and will update the Assistant Principal, Behaviour and Welfare.

Learner-level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the School Advisory Panel and the directors at Melrose Education.

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated.

Links With Other Policies

This policy links to the following:
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance and colour coded for ease for our use.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated Off Site (NOT Dual Registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised Absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller Absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational Visit or Trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Education Activity
D	Dual Registration (i.e., learner attending other establishment)	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
Y	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
Z	Learner not yet on roll	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
#	School closed to learners	Not Counted in Possible Attendances

Key:

Present
Authorised absence
Unauthorised absence
Approved Education Activity (Present)
Not counted in possible attendances