Attendance Policy

2026–27

peletrust.org.uk
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John Spence Community High School

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Introduction

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. We know that regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential as there is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. This can, in turn, impact negatively upon the life chances of those pupils with low attendance.

Pele Trust schools believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally and socially resilient, confident and responsible. This will support them to achieve well and make a positive contribution to their community.

Regular attendance is also important in safeguarding children as it enables potential risks to be identified and support provided. Regular absence, particularly unexplained, can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns.

We value all of our children, pupils and students. As set out in this policy, John Spence Community High School will work in partnership with families to identify barriers to attendance and support to resolve any difficulties.

We believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the school, parents/carers and the local community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

Key Contacts:

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Senior leader responsible for attendance	Leanne Clay	Leanne.clay@johnspence.org.uk

In the event your child will not be in school for the start of the school day for any reason (absence or lateness) please notify us on 0191 296 1432 (option 1) as soon as possible.

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regard school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

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

Attendance expectations

We want all pupils to attend school every day. We aim to develop a culture where all pupils can and want to be in school, enjoying and benefiting from their learning and other enrichment and extracurricular activities.

To do this, all schools in Pele Trust will:

- Create a positive and welcoming learning environment where pupils feel safe and able to learn effectively.
- Implement an ambitious and broad curriculum that develops skills and knowledge, enabling the achievement of strong qualifications and preparing pupils for life beyond school.
- Regularly communicate the importance of strong attendance and reward pupils whose attendance is high or improving rapidly.
- Monitor attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) so that intervention can be timely and effective.
- Listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with pupils and parents/carers to overcome difficulties, involving external agencies where appropriate.
- Where necessary, work with the local authority to enforce attendance through legal interventions

Pele Trust defines key levels of attendance as:

Attendance	Description
98 -100%	Excellent
95-97.9%	Good
92-94.9%	Caution
90- 91.9%	Cause for concern
89.9% or below	Persistent Absence Serious Concern

90% attendance means that a child will have missed around 100 lessons and nearly 4 weeks of education over a school year.

Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility involving school staff, Academy Committee members, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

The Academy Committee will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality are promoted to pupils and their parents/carers
- Ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the Attendance Policy
- Identify a member of the Academy Committee to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure compliance with the statutory duties of School Attendance, Pupil Registration Regulations, England, 2024 and Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2026 and other attendance-related legislation
- Monitor and evaluate the school's attendance and related issues through the headteacher's termly reporting to the Academy Committee
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department for Education as required and on time
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is easily understood, used to drive interventions and that interventions are evaluated

The Headteacher will:

- Implement this policy alongside a whole school approach and strategy that promotes good school attendance and punctuality
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to pupils and their parents/carers
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and Strategy and ensure that they are reviewed annually
- Make all staff aware of the Attendance Policy and their responsibilities within it.
- Ensure adequate training to support staff
- Ensure that the School Attendance, Pupil Registration Regulations, England, 2024 and Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 and other attendance-related legislation are complied with
- Ensure accurate completion of admission and attendance registers.
- Have a named senior manager/leader to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resources to this role.

The Senior Leader responsible for attendance will:

- Lead, champion and improve attendance across the school
- Ensure that the Attendance Policy and the associated practices are implemented effectively and that robust day-to-day processes are in place, making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Have systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Build close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Work with the SENCo and parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Academy Committee and on a half-termly basis to the Academy Committee Link person for attendance
- Ensure that interventions used are documented to a standard required by the Local Authority, should legal proceedings need to be instigated.

The attendance officer will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to pupils and parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Monitor, identify and follow up on any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to understand why and when the pupil will return.
- Carry out robust first day calling procedures, including priority routines for vulnerable students.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify patterns of absence.
- Work with the senior leader responsible for attendance to maintain an up-to-date attendance risk register and punctuality risk register of high-risk pupils
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss Attendance, engagement and support
- Identify students who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Work with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies, as appropriate, to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Undertake home visits in line with safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority, should legal proceedings need to be instigated.
- Implementing children missing education (CME) procedures when appropriate

Class Teachers will:

- Ensure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Provide good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve well
- Ensure that completion of the statutory attendance register using the school's MIS system at the start of the first session of the school day and during the afternoon session.
- For the purposes of safeguarding, registers should be accurately marked within the first 10 minutes of each lesson. Lateness to lessons should also be recorded appropriately.
- When a pupil is missing from a lesson, but is marked as present in the previous lesson, a member of pastoral or duty staff should be alerted.

Parents/Carers will:

- Ensure that, whenever possible, their child attends and stays at school every day on time
- Instil the importance of education and value of regular school attendance within the home
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences; wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Work in partnership with the school if their child is experiencing difficulties attending school
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home about the importance of good attendance
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on family holidays during term-time.

Pupils will:

- Attend school punctually, on every day that it is open.
- Attend school prepared for the day with appropriate equipment.
- Report to the school office if they arrive to school late
- Engage positively with staff to improve their attendance if they are experiencing difficulties
- Be on time for every lesson
- Report any difficulties they are having in attending school.

Recording and categorising attendance and absence

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

We will take our attendance register for all registered pupils, 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 DfE Working together to improve School attendance document for the 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.

Registers close 30 minutes after they open. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.35am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 2:00pm and will be kept open until 2.30pm

Absence from school

The Education Act 2006 sets out that parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means the child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. When a child is absent and no reason has been provided by the parent or carer, contact will be made by the attendance team. All available emergency contacts may be called. This is to ensure that the child is safe and to offer or signpost support if required. Home visits may be carried out for safeguarding checks and/ or to offer support.

Schools must record whether each pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school using the appropriate national attendance and absence code from the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 (see Appendix 1).

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent / carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am, or as soon as practically possible.

Absence due to Illness

- Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.
- On each day of any continued absence, parents/carers must contact school before the morning registration period begins

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. In line with the DfE guidance, schools may request reasonable evidence where they have genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or when they are seeking to support pupils with prolonged or repeated patterns of illness. In such cases, medical evidence may play a role in supporting schools to better understand the pupil's health needs, inform what reasonable adjustment may need to be made and/or to accurately record absence in the attendance register.

Where a pupil is placed in an attendance intervention stage, or where a pupil is classed as persistently or severely absent, medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of a doctor's note, appointment card, prescription or other appropriate 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.

Where a pupil's health needs mean they need reasonable adjustments or support because their health needs are complex, long term or frequently recurring, schools can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance.

Unexplained absences:

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

- Call the parent/carer in the morning on the first day of the unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- If staff are unable to reach any of the emergency contacts, we may visit the pupil's home
- 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.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure appropriate safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- If absence continues, the school may involve other agencies

Please note, unexplained absences will always be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the school will report the absence to the local authority. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause.

Planned Absence:

- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent / carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment
- Parents/carers are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should aim to attend school for part of the day.
- For other types of planned absence, parents/carers should apply as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence is categorised according to those set out in the School Attendance Pupil Registration Regulations (England) 2024, Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024 (summary of Registration Codes can be found in Appendix 1):

Valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness)
- 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) / carer(s) belong(s).
    - Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent due to religious observance.
    - If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
    - In the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school, our reasonable approach is that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year.
- Parents / carers travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) absence. Absence may be authorised only when a family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Approval for term-time absence:

Any absence interrupts the continuity of learning and should be avoided.The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

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

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.
    - As a guiding principle, the Headteacher may consider 'exceptional circumstances' if the reasons given for requesting leave are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

The government guidance states that *'generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance'.* Holidays in term time will therefore not be authorised and could lead to a penalty notice being issued.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. All decisions in relation to whether leave of absence is granted (authorised) or not (unauthorised) should be applied consistently and equitably. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Where a leave of absence is not granted or where the child fails to return to school by the agreed date following approval of leave of absence, then the Headteacher will pass on the details to the local authority in line with the duty around reporting children missing education.

The Headteacher may request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for each child for absence from school.

If a pupil fails to return for ten days after a Leave of Absence and contact with the parents/carers has not been made or received, despite significant effort to do so, then the school, after notifying the local authority, may remove the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with Working Together to Improve Attendance, 2026. This means that the child will lose their school place.

Leave of Absence Application Process

- A parent/carer requesting a leave of absence for their child during term time should make an application in writing, as far in advance as possible, explaining the specific reasons for the absence.
- School may request further information or contact the parent/carer to discuss the reasons for the application and the impact the absence may have on the child's education
- The school will reply to all requests promptly.
- A formal approval is necessary for the absence to be considered authorised.

- If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated, including the date the child is expected to return to school, including possible consequences if the child fails to return on that date
- If a parent /carer removes their child from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the headteacher and the school requires the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice, then the parent will be informed that a request to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice is being made.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted as such by the school or been granted leave of absence by the Headteacher.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include (but are not limited to):

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping trips
- Childcare/babysitting
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for staff training (or other) purposes
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of school

Absence from lessons

It is crucial that pupils attend all timetabled lessons when they are in school. Not attending lessons whilst marked present at school, unless there is a valid reason, will be classed as internal truancy and dealt with under the behaviour policy

Lateness and punctuality:

It is essential that pupils arrive punctually for both morning and afternoon registration and to all lessons. We appreciate that there may be occasional instances where lateness may occur due to circumstances outside of the pupil's control. Should this be the case, parents / carers should inform the school.

Registers close 30 minutes after they open. A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L).
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

Any child arriving into a morning or afternoon session more than 30 minutes late will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless a suitable reason is provided

Morning registration begins at 8.35am

- Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L).
- The register will close thirty minutes after the start of the session at 9.05am
- Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, having arrived after registration (U); this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

Afternoon registration begins at 2.00pm

- Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time
- The afternoon register will close thirty minutes after the start of the session at 2.30pm
- Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, having arrived after registration (U); this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

Absence will only be **authorised** if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, evidence of attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late.
Persistent lateness may be referred to the Local Authority, who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

Using Attendance Data

Collecting and monitoring data:
The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) frequently at an individual pupil, year group, cohort and whole school level to:

- Identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Inform whole school/Trust strategies to improve attendance and attainment.
- Benchmark against local, regional and national levels and comparison against similar schools.

Using data
The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis.
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families.
- Provide regular attendance information and reports, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the Academy Committee and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies.

Sharing data:
Pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared every half term with parents via a letter home. It is shared with pupils weekly during form time. Attendance data will be shared in a way that makes it easy to understand, e.g. number of sessions/days missed against possible total attendance.

Attendance data may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

The school will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the Local Authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

Supporting and improving attendance

Encouraging and celebrating good attendance
There is evidence to show that good attendance is significantly correlated with higher performance and outcomes in examinations. It is important that all our pupils attend school as much as possible to ensure that they are able to engage fully with their learning and the opportunities presented to them. We will celebrate the success of our pupils in many ways including (but not limited to)

- Weekly - 100% Friday draw for 'Queue Jump and Cookie Vouchers'
- Weekly - 100% attendance merit
- Attendance certificates rewarded termly.
- Celebration assemblies and termly rewards events/experiences.
- Attendance league tables for form classes with half termly awards
- Letters and postcards home.
- Attendance drives each half term with linked rewards.
- End of Year - Reward Trips and Inflatables Day.

Support and intervention:
Pele Trust recognises that repeated absence from school is often a sign that there are other issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to difficulties at home and/or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse etc. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is important to ensure that poor attendance is identified and addressed early to avoid absence becoming a habit.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils classed as Disadvantaged, with Special Educational

Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with additional physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils, looked after children and Young Carers.

The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include the following:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Attendance contracts
- Attendance / punctuality report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors/pastoral support staff
- Friendship group support
- PSHE sessions
- Reward systems
- Time-limited part-time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Round robin
- Shared strategies with staff
- Pastoral support
- Target setting
- Attendance clinics
- Focus Groups

The proposed support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion with both parents/carers and pupils.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored to identify children who are persistently absent (PA), or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified, we will initiate interventions as outlined in our policy.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil is defined as persistently absent (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Over a full academic year, this would be equivalent to 19 school days (38 sessions).
Where pupils are PA, referrals may also be made to the local authority and external agencies for targeted support. An attendance improvement plan will be developed with bespoke strategies to ensure attendance improves during the course of the monitoring period.

Severe Absence (SA)

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent' (SA). This is equivalent to 95 school days or 19 weeks of education over an academic year. Missing so much school can severely impact a child's ability to develop both academically

and socially. Pupils within this cohort are likely to have more complex barriers to attending school and will need more intensive support from school and external agencies.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Communicate regularly with the parents / carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school.
    - Listen and understand barriers to attendance.
    - Explain the help that is available.
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence.
    - Review any existing actions or interventions.

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant.
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Where a student is absent for 15 or more days within an academic year due to illness (either mental or physical), a Section 19 referral may be made to the Local Authority requesting that alternative provision is made for the pupil.

Before the Section 19 referral can be made, the school must be able to demonstrate that appropriate support has been offered to the family. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Attendance letters.
- Records of phone calls.
- Attendance meetings.
- Attendance action plans.
- Referrals to other agencies.

Legal interventions

In the majority of cases, the school and the Local Authority will provide support to help you improve your child's attendance. If your child continues to miss school without a good reason, the Local Authority may use various legal sanctions.

Penalty Notice:

A penalty notice (otherwise known as a 'fine') is issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school. Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school.

The national threshold for penalty notices is:

- When a pupil misses 10 unauthorised sessions (the equivalent of 5 days) in a 10-week period
    - This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes, all within 10 school weeks).
    - These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
    - Can be for persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has been closed;
    - The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).
- When an unauthorised holiday is taken in term time

The fine for school absences across the country is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions like a parenting order, an Education Supervision Order or prosecution will be considered.

Before referring a case to the Local Authority, the school will consider the individual case, including whether:

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

Notices to improve

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

parents / carers a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

Other legal interventions
Where all voluntary support has been exhausted, the Local Authority will work with the school and other agencies to enforce school attendance. This includes parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecution through the courts. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or be imprisoned for up to three months.

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 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools