	Vanguard Learning Trust *The Vanguard Learning Trust is a group of local primary and secondary schools in Hillingdon. We strive to be a Trust that serves its local community and is pioneering in its approach to broadening our students' lives. We believe in effective teaching which allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom and that intellectual curiosity is at the core of every learning experience. Whilst schools in the Trust have their own ethos and values, they share the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential and life is a journey of discovery.*

Attendance policy
Part A: Trust-wide

Summer 2026

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Part A: Trust-wide

Section 1: Overview

1.1 Aims

This policy demonstrates Vanguard Learning Trust's commitment to securing excellent attendance across all schools. The Trust's approach is rooted in statutory guidance, evidence-informed practice and shared learning from local and national contexts. The Trust recognises that regular school attendance is fundamental to safeguarding, educational achievement, wellbeing, positive relationships and future life opportunities.
Trust schools will:

- set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all pupils;
- promote the benefits of regular attendance for academic progress, wellbeing, belonging, social development and future opportunities;
- recognise that poor attendance may be an indicator of safeguarding concerns, unmet needs or barriers to learning;
- identify, understand and remove barriers to attendance as early as possible;
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence, through early, proportionate and targeted intervention;
- ensure all pupils can access their full entitlement to education;
- act promptly when patterns of absence or lateness emerge, recognising that regular attendance is essential to ensure pupils can access a coherent, well-sequenced curriculum over time;
- work in partnership with families in a way that is respectful, supportive, empathetic and solution-focused;
- provide timely, targeted and inclusive interventions for pupils most at risk of poor attendance;
- support punctuality across the school day, reinforcing the importance of arriving at school and to lessons on time; and
- promote a culture in which attendance is understood as everyone's responsibility and every child's right.

The Trust is committed to building inclusive school communities where pupils feel safe, valued, connected and supported to attend and thrive.

1.2 Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance in *'Working together to improve school attendance'*, which applies from 19 August 2024 (click here), as well as *'School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures'* (click here). 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 (click here)
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002 (click here)
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (click here)
- The Education (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, along with the 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments (click here)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (click here)

The policy also reflects:

- School census guidance (click here)
- *'Keeping children safe in education'* (click here)
- *'Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools*' (click here)

1.3 Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

1.4 Policy monitoring arrangements

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed through the Trust's wider quality assurance and school improvement processes. The policy will be reviewed in response to updated guidance from the Department

for Education or local authority, and at a minimum annually by the designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school. Following review, Part A of the policy will be approved by the board of trustees and Part B of the policy will be reviewed by the school's local governing body. In addition to Trust-wide quality assurance activity, school leaders will regularly review how attendance systems, processes and culture reflect:

- high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- positive school culture, belonging and inclusion;
- effective family engagement strategies;
- accurate attendance recording and effective use of management information systems;
- early identification and removal of barriers to attendance;
- effective support for vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and
- current Ofsted expectations relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and inclusion.

The Trust will quality assure attendance systems, culture and practice across all schools through its wider school improvement and safeguarding processes.

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Attendance is everyone's business

Promoting good attendance is a shared responsibility across the Trust. Creating a culture in which pupils attend regularly, arrive on time and feel a sense of belonging requires a consistent whole-school approach and strong partnership working with families and external agencies. All staff have a role to play in promoting positive attendance. Staff should recognise that absence is often a symptom of wider need or vulnerability and should respond in a way that is supportive, consistent and professionally curious. The Trust seeks to ensure that this culture is consistently understood, modelled and reinforced by all staff.

2.2 Trustees and the local governing bodies

The trustees and local governing body (LGB) of each school are responsible for:

- setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality across the school community;
- promoting a culture in which good attendance is valued, recognised and understood as fundamental to safeguarding and educational success;
- ensuring the school fulfils its statutory duties in relation to attendance, including:
    - recording attendance accurately;
    - maintaining appropriate attendance registers;
    - sharing required attendance information with the Department for Education and local authority; and
    - working effectively with relevant partners to remove barriers to attendance;
- ensuring attendance is appropriately prioritised within safeguarding, SEND, inclusion and pupil premium arrangements;
- ensuring the school has effective systems in place for identifying, monitoring and improving attendance;
- ensuring sufficient resources and staffing are allocated to attendance improvement work;
- making sure school leaders analyse attendance data regularly and use this to identify patterns, trends and groups requiring additional support;
- holding school leaders to account for the effectiveness of attendance systems, interventions and outcomes;
- ensuring attendance support is inclusive, proportionate and responsive to pupils' individual needs;
- monitoring the attendance of vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and pupils known to social care;
- ensuring attendance procedures are clearly communicated to parents/carers and are written in accessible, parent-friendly language;
- supporting the sharing of effective attendance practice across the Trust through attendance forums and school improvement activity;
- ensuring staff receive regular attendance training appropriate to their roles; and
- reviewing attendance data, trends and improvement priorities on a regular basis.

Governors and trustees should seek assurance not only regarding attendance outcomes, but also regarding the quality, consistency and impact of attendance practice and culture across the school.

2.3 The headteacher

The headteacher of each school is responsible for:

- ensuring the effective implementation of this policy;
- establishing and maintaining a culture in which good attendance is expected, promoted and celebrated;
- ensuring attendance is prioritised as part of the school's safeguarding, inclusion and pastoral responsibilities;
- ensuring all staff understand their role in promoting attendance;
- monitoring attendance data regularly and reporting this to governors and trustees;
- ensuring attendance concerns are identified and addressed promptly;
- overseeing the effectiveness of attendance interventions and support strategies;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate professional development relating to attendance, safeguarding, family engagement and barriers to attendance;
- working with parents/carers and external agencies to remove barriers preventing regular attendance;
- ensuring pupils with SEND, medical needs or mental health needs receive appropriate support to maximise attendance;
- communicating high expectations regarding attendance and punctuality clearly and consistently to pupils and parents/carers;
- ensuring the school works effectively with the local authority and other relevant agencies where attendance concerns arise;
- authorising fixed penalty notices or other legal interventions, where appropriate and in accordance with local authority procedures; and
- ensuring statutory attendance data and information is shared appropriately with the local authority and Department for Education.

The headteacher will ensure attendance practice is underpinned by a supportive, relational and inclusive approach whilst maintaining clear expectations and accountability.

2.4 The Trust attendance lead

The Trust attendance lead is responsible for:

- developing and maintaining the Trust-wide attendance policy and related guidance;
- ensuring Trust attendance procedures reflect current legislation, statutory guidance and best practice;
- working with relevant school staff to monitor attendance trends, patterns and risks across the Trust;
- supporting schools to improve attendance through advice, challenge, quality assurance and targeted support;
- supporting schools in identifying groups and cohorts at increased risk of poor attendance, including pupils with intersecting vulnerabilities;
- facilitating Trust-wide attendance networks, forums and professional development;
- supporting schools with complex attendance cases and strategic attendance planning;
- promoting evidence-informed and relational attendance practice across the Trust;
- sharing effective practice and resources between schools; and
- working collaboratively with school leaders and external partners to improve attendance outcomes.

The Trust attendance lead is Adam Walthaus and can be contacted via emailing awalthaus@vlt.org.uk

2.5 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school

Each school will identify a designated senior leader responsible for attendance (sometimes referred to as the attendance champion or designated attendance lead). This leader is responsible for:

- leading and championing attendance improvement across the school;
- promoting a consistent culture of high expectations, belonging and inclusion;
- ensuring attendance systems and procedures are implemented consistently;
- monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly;
- identifying pupils and groups requiring additional attendance support;
- ensuring early intervention takes place where attendance concerns emerge;

- overseeing attendance interventions and evaluating their impact;
- working collaboratively with pupils, families and external agencies to improve attendance;
- ensuring attendance communication with families is respectful, clear and solution-focused;
- coordinating reintegration and attendance support plans where required;
- ensuring appropriate referrals are made to safeguarding, SEND or external services where attendance concerns indicate wider need;
- supporting staff to apply attendance processes consistently; and
- providing regular attendance updates to senior leaders, governors and the Trust.

The name and contact details of the designated senior leader responsible for attendance can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.6 School attendance team

The attendance team in each school is responsible for:

- monitoring daily attendance and punctuality;
- identifying and following up absence concerns promptly;
- analysing attendance data and identifying emerging patterns;
- maintaining accurate attendance records;
- communicating with families regarding attendance concerns;
- arranging and contributing to attendance meetings and support plans;
- working closely with pastoral, safeguarding and SEND teams to support pupils with barriers to attendance;
- supporting reintegration following periods of absence;
- escalating attendance concerns in line with school procedures; and
- supporting the implementation of attendance improvement strategies.

The names and contact details of relevant attendance staff can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.7 Staff responsible for completing registers

Staff responsible for completing attendance registers are responsible for:

- completing attendance registers accurately and on time;
- recording attendance using the correct national attendance codes;
- following school procedures where attendance concerns arise;
- reporting safeguarding concerns linked to absence or punctuality promptly; and
- ensuring any amendments to attendance records are made in accordance with statutory requirements.

Further details regarding registration procedures can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.8 Office staff

Designated office staff are responsible for:

- receiving and recording absence notifications from parents/carers;
- ensuring unexplained absence is followed up in line with school procedures;
- maintaining accurate attendance records;
- communicating attendance information to relevant staff; and
- supporting effective communication between home and school regarding attendance matters.

2.9 Parents/carers

For the purpose of this policy, the term ‘parent/carer’ refers to:

- all natural parents, whether married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and/or
- any person who has day-to-day responsibility for the care of a child or young person.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time;
- notify the school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless otherwise agreed by the school;
- provide clear reasons for absence and an expected date of return;
- work collaboratively with the school to address attendance concerns;
- attend meetings and engage with support offered to improve attendance where appropriate;

- avoid arranging holidays or unnecessary appointments during term time;
- provide the school with up-to-date emergency contact details; and
- seek support at an early stage if barriers to attendance arise.

Parents/carers play a vital role in promoting positive attendance and helping children establish good attendance habits for life.

2.10 Students

Students are expected to:

- attend school regularly and on time;
- attend all timetabled lessons and registration periods;
- engage positively with support offered to improve attendance;
- communicate with staff where they are experiencing difficulties affecting attendance, where appropriate; and
- contribute positively to a culture in which good attendance is valued.

In sixth form settings, pupils may additionally be expected to follow specific absence reporting procedures outlined in Part B of this policy.

Section 3: Recording attendance

3.1 Attendance register

Each school will maintain an attendance register and record the attendance of all pupils at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session, in accordance with statutory requirements. Attendance registers will record whether pupils are:

- present;
- attending an approved educational activity;
- absent; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Schools will use the national attendance and absence codes in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (click here) and current Department for Education guidance. Attendance registers are legal documents and must be completed accurately, consistently and in a timely manner.

3.1.1 Amendments to the attendance register

Any amendment made 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; and
- the name and role of the person making the amendment.

All amendments will be made in accordance with statutory requirements and school procedures. **Appendix 1** outlines the attendance and absence codes used by the Department for Education.

3.1.2 Other information

The school will also record:

- for students of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not;
- the nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity;
- the nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances; and
- relevant attendance information required for safeguarding or statutory reporting purposes.

Schools are required to share attendance data securely with the Department for Education and local authorities in line with statutory expectations. Schools will retain attendance registers and related records for a minimum of 6 years in accordance with statutory requirements and data retention guidance. Timings of the school day and registration arrangements can be found in **Part B**.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents/carers must notify the school of the reason for their child's absence on the first day of absence as soon as reasonably practicable and in line with the procedures outlined in **Part B** of this policy. Unless otherwise agreed by the school, parents/carers should continue to notify the school on each subsequent day of absence. Where a pupil is absent due to illness, the school will normally authorise the absence unless there is a genuine concern regarding the authenticity of the illness. Where appropriate, the school may request medical evidence to support the absence. This may include:

- an appointment card;
- prescription information;
- prescribed medication;
- a doctor's note; or
- other suitable evidence.

Schools will not routinely request medical evidence unnecessarily and will consider the individual circumstances of each case. Where the school is not satisfied that the reason for absence is genuine, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. Parents/carers will normally be informed where this is the case. Where absence due to illness becomes frequent or patterns emerge, the school will consider whether additional support, assessment of need or safeguarding action is required.

3.3 Planned absence

Medical and dental appointments should, wherever possible, be arranged outside the school day. Where this is not possible, parents/carers should notify the school in advance and pupils should only be absent for the minimum amount of time necessary. Requests for leave of absence during term time must be made in advance and in accordance with the procedures outlined in **Part B** of this policy. The headteacher will determine whether a request for leave of absence should be authorised in line with statutory guidance and the circumstances outlined in Section 4 of this policy.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

Promoting punctuality is an important part of improving attendance and establishing positive routines for learning. A pupil who arrives late before the register closes will be recorded as late using the appropriate attendance code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be recorded as absent for the session using the appropriate attendance code. Schools will monitor patterns of lateness and work with pupils and families where punctuality concerns emerge. Persistent lateness may result in further intervention or support. Further details regarding punctuality procedures and responses can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

3.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where a pupil expected to attend school does not attend, or stops attending without explanation, the school will follow up the absence promptly and proportionately. This may include:

- contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence to establish the reason for absence;
- making reasonable attempts to contact all emergency contacts provided;
- identifying whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised;
- recording the correct attendance code as soon as the reason for absence is established;
- continuing to follow up unexplained absence where necessary;
- considering safeguarding concerns where a pupil cannot be located or where absence is unusual;
- making referrals to relevant services or agencies where appropriate;
- offering support to remove barriers to attendance; and/or
- considering formal intervention where support has not been successful or engaged with.

Where a pupil is missing from education or there are concerns regarding their safety or welfare, schools will follow their safeguarding and children missing education procedures and may involve the local authority, police or children's social care where appropriate. Attendance concerns will be considered alongside wider safeguarding, wellbeing and contextual information.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Schools will regularly communicate with parents/carers regarding attendance and punctuality. This may include:

- attendance percentages;
- information regarding patterns of absence or lateness;

- communication regarding attendance concerns;
- invitations to attendance meetings; and
- recognition of positive attendance or improvements in attendance.

Schools will seek to ensure attendance communication is clear, supportive, accessible and solution-focused. Further details regarding attendance reporting arrangements can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

Section 4: Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only authorise absence from school in line with statutory regulations and Department for Education guidance, including the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'. Leave of absence during term time will only be granted where there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are expected to be rare, specific to the individual case, and not a norm. The headteacher may authorise absence for:

- participation in a regulated performance or regulated employment;
- attendance at an interview;
- study leave in relation to public examinations (where appropriate);
- a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable agreed as part of a support plan; and
- exceptional circumstances, as determined by the headteacher.

4.2 Granting a leave of absence

Leave of absence is granted at the discretion of the headteacher, taking into account the individual circumstances of each request, the pupil's attendance history and any wider safeguarding or welfare considerations. Each school will define and apply the meaning of 'exceptional circumstances' in a consistent way, as outlined in **Part B** of this policy. In line with statutory guidance, it is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday. Where a request is refused and absence is subsequently taken, this will normally be recorded as unauthorised. The school may request evidence to support any application for leave of absence where appropriate. Requests should be made in advance using the school's agreed procedures, details of which are set out in **Part B** of this policy. Where a pupil is over compulsory school age (for example in sixth form), requests for leave of absence may be made by the pupil or by a parent/carer with whom they normally live, in line with school procedures.

4.3 Other valid reasons for authorised absence

Absence may be authorised for the following reasons, in line with statutory guidance:

- illness (including physical and mental health-related illness);
- medical or dental appointments that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours;
- religious observance where the day is set apart by the relevant religious body;
- travel for occupational purposes, including for families who are recognised as travelling for work (for example, showmen, travellers or other occupational travellers), where agreed with the school;
- unavoidable circumstances that prevent attendance, including but not limited to:
    - disruption to travel caused by emergency or severe weather;
    - school site closure;
    - lack of access arrangements where the local authority is responsible; or
    - other circumstances beyond the control of the pupil or family.

Schools will consider each case individually and will apply authorisation decisions consistently, fairly and in line with statutory expectations.

4.4 Sanctions

The Trust is committed to ensuring that attendance concerns are addressed through a graduated response, which prioritises early help, support and engagement with families. Formal sanctions will only be considered where support has been offered and either not engaged with or not effective. Attendance processes are not intended to be punitive in isolation. Meetings, letters and interventions are part of a wider support pathway designed to improve attendance. Decisions regarding escalation will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances of the pupil and family.

4.4.1 Notices to improve

Where the national threshold for persistent absence or unauthorised absence has been met and support is deemed appropriate, but engagement with support has not been sustained, the school will normally issue a Notice to Improve where support has not been engaged with and attendance remains a concern. A Notice to Improve will be issued in accordance with the relevant local authority code of conduct and will include:

- details of the pupil's attendance and any relevant absence patterns;
- information on statutory parental responsibility for attendance;
- details of support already offered or provided;
- further support available to address attendance barriers;
- a clear improvement period, typically between 3 and 6 weeks;
- the expected level of improvement required; and
- a warning that failure to improve attendance within the agreed timeframe may result in further legal intervention, including a penalty notice.

4.4.2 Penalty notices

Penalty notices may be issued by the headteacher (or authorised staff), the local authority or the police in line with local authority codes of conduct. Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will ensure that:

- the national threshold for consideration has been met (typically 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period);
- appropriate support has been offered or considered;
- a Notice to Improve has been considered where appropriate; and
- issuing a penalty notice is the most appropriate and proportionate response in the individual case.

Penalty notices will be issued in line with local authority procedures and current statutory guidance. Where issued, penalty notices are payable to the local authority. Current national framework levels are:

- First penalty notice: £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid within 28 days;
- Second penalty notice (same pupil within 3 years): £160 if paid within 28 days;
- Third penalty notice within a 3-year period: no further penalty notice will be issued; alternative legal action will be considered.

Penalty notices may also be issued in relation to unauthorised absence during exclusion periods where a pupil is present in a public place during restricted days, in line with statutory regulations. All decisions regarding penalty notices will be made in line with the principles of fairness, proportionality and equality, including consideration of duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Section 5: Monitoring attendance

5.1 The Trust's approach

The Trust adopts a graduated model of attendance support and intervention, aligned with a three-tier approach of universal, targeted and intensive support. This reflects national best practice and the expectation that attendance improvement should be rooted in early identification, proportionate response and sustained partnership with families.

- **Universal support** focuses on creating a strong culture of belonging, high expectations, positive relationships, clear routines and consistent messaging about attendance. Attendance is promoted as part of the school's wider ethos and personal development offer.
- **Targeted support** is provided for pupils whose attendance begins to fall or who are at risk of persistent absence. This includes early identification, family engagement, mentoring, attendance plans, and personalised support strategies.
- **Intensive support** is implemented for pupils experiencing persistent or severe absence. This may involve multi-agency working, individualised reintegration planning, formal attendance contracts and the use of statutory interventions where appropriate.

This graduated approach ensures that support is responsive, proportionate and focused on removing barriers to attendance as early as possible.

5.2 Strategies for promoting attendance

Each school will implement a range of strategies to promote and improve attendance. These will be tailored to context and set out in **Part B** of this policy. Strategies may include:

- clear and consistent communication of attendance expectations to pupils and families;
- celebration and recognition of good and improved attendance;

- early identification of attendance concerns using daily and weekly data;
- structured family engagement, including attendance meetings and support discussions;
- mentoring, pastoral support or key adult check-ins for pupils at risk of poor attendance;
- targeted interventions for specific cohorts or year groups;
- use of attendance contracts or agreements where appropriate;
- coordinated support with SEND, safeguarding and pastoral teams;
- use of external agencies and local authority support where required; and
- removal of in-school barriers to attendance where identified.

Schools will ensure that attendance communication is consistent, relational in tone and focused on support and partnership.

5.3 Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

Schools will provide appropriate support for pupils who are absent or returning following a period of absence. This includes pupils with medical needs, mental health difficulties, SEND, or other complex barriers to attendance. Support may include:

- phased or supported reintegration back into school;
- temporary adjustments to timetables where appropriate;
- additional pastoral or key adult support;
- coordination with external agencies and health services;
- reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND;
- strategies to rebuild confidence, belonging and routine; and
- targeted academic or emotional support to reduce the impact of missed learning.

Where a pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan and attendance becomes a concern, or where barriers to attendance are linked to their needs, the school will consider whether the local authority should be informed and involved in reviewing support arrangements. The focus will always be on enabling sustained attendance in a safe, supportive and inclusive way.

5.4 Using data to monitor attendance

Schools will use attendance data systematically to identify patterns, trends and areas for improvement at whole-school, cohort, year group and individual pupil level. Attendance data will be monitored:

- daily (operational safeguarding and follow-up);
- weekly (pattern identification and early intervention);
- half-termly and termly (strategic analysis and evaluation); and
- annually (trend analysis and strategic planning).

Schools will ensure attendance data is:

- accurate and consistently recorded within the management information system;
- used to identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- used to identify vulnerable groups and cohort trends, as well as students with intersectional risks;
- shared appropriately with senior leaders, safeguarding leads, SENDCos and governors; and
- used to inform intervention planning and resource allocation.

Schools will also benchmark attendance against local, regional and national data to identify relative performance and areas for improvement. Further information about how the school monitors attendance and absence data (including punctuality data), and systematically and regularly analyses it can be found in **Part B**.

5.5 Analysing attendance data

Schools will analyse attendance data to:

- identify emerging patterns of absence, including lateness and partial attendance;
- identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- recognise cohort-level trends (for example year groups, disadvantaged pupils or pupils with SEND);
- understand contextual and historical patterns of attendance; and
- identify barriers to attendance that may require further investigation or support.

Analysis will be used to inform targeted action rather than reporting alone. Where concerns are identified, schools will ensure that attendance data is triangulated with safeguarding, pastoral and academic information where appropriate.

5.6 Using data to improve attendance

Attendance data will be used to drive timely and effective intervention. Schools will:

- implement targeted actions in response to identified attendance concerns;
- ensure pupils and families receive appropriate support based on need;
- provide regular attendance information to staff to support conversations with pupils and families;
- report attendance concerns to relevant leaders, including safeguarding, SEND and pastoral teams where appropriate;
- evaluate the impact of interventions and adjust approaches where necessary; and
- share relevant information with external partners and agencies where appropriate and lawful.

Data will be used to support early intervention rather than solely to monitor compliance. Impact of interventions will be evaluated not only through attendance percentages but also through engagement, reintegration and sustained improvement over time.

5.7 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%. Severe absence is defined as attendance below 50%. Reducing persistent and severe absence is a key priority for the Trust and will be addressed through early, sustained and coordinated action. Schools will:

- identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence as early as possible;
- investigate underlying barriers to attendance, including safeguarding, SEND, medical, emotional or contextual factors;
- ensure timely and appropriate support is put in place;
- engage parents/carers in structured and supportive discussions;
- provide targeted interventions aimed at improving attendance and re-engagement;
- use a consistent but relational approach to follow-up and monitoring;
- work collaboratively with external agencies where required; and
- consider statutory interventions where support has not been effective or engaged with.

All responses will be proportionate, individualised and focused on improving attendance through support wherever possible. Schools will ensure that persistent and severe absence is treated as both an educational and safeguarding concern, with appropriate escalation where necessary. Further details of the school's approach towards targeting unauthorised absence, for example via meetings, letters and closer monitoring can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

Version history

First issue/revision date	Approved by	Summary of changes if not first issue
May 2026	BoT	Strengthened alignment with DfE statutory guidance ('Working together to improve school attendance'), including early intervention and multi-agency working. Strengthened links to Ofsted EIF expectations across behaviour, attitudes, safeguarding, leadership and personal development. Reframed attendance as a safeguarding, inclusion and curriculum access priority throughout. Significant revision of Section 2 (roles and responsibilities) to clarify accountability, relational practice and Trust-wide expectations. Improved consistency of terminology and expectations across all roles, particularly attendance leadership and family engagement. Refined Sections 3.2 and 4.3 to strengthen clarity on illness, authorisation and safeguarding-sensitive escalation. Enhanced focus on early intervention, relational practice and family engagement (Sections 3.5, 5.2, 5.6). Improved proportionality and clarity in Section 4.4

		(Notices to Improve and penalty notices). Strengthened graduated response model in Section 5.1 with clearer practice alignment. Enhanced expectations for attendance data use, monitoring and benchmarking (Sections 5.4–5.6). Updated Appendix 1 codes for clarity, safeguarding context and statutory alignment.
July 2025	BoT	Minor language adjustments to reflect guidance. Section 2.2: Information regarding the headteacher's responsibility to share information from the attendance register with the local authority. Section 4.4.2: Information about penalty notices issued where parents/carers allow their child to be present in a public place. Section 5.1: Information regarding a tiered approach to attendance intervention. Section 5.3: Clarity that where a student has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that are related to the student's needs, the school will inform the local authority.
July 2024	BoT	N/A - new policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance. Attendance codes must be used consistently and in line with statutory guidance. Incorrect coding may affect safeguarding decisions, census returns and school accountability measures.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Student is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent - leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable (temporary)	Student is on a temporary, agreed reduced timetable as part of a support plan and remains formally on roll
C	Exceptional circumstances	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances as defined by the school in line with statutory guidance
Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Traveller families known to be travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (physical or mental health)	Student is unable to attend due to illness.

E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Student is excluded or suspended and no alternative provision is in place.
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Student is unable to attend because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Student is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Student is unable to attend as they are: · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent - unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes. Code N should only be used temporarily and updated once the reason for absence is known.
O	Unauthorised absence	Student is absent without authorisation and no acceptable reason has been provided or accepted by the school
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not on admission register	Student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays