

Attendance Policy

Approved by:	Zarah Gadatara	Date: 30/09/2025
Last reviewed on:	30/09/2025	
Next review due by:	September 2026	

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), 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
- 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

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 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 Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the head of school to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Senior leadership team is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
 - Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their
 - Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The head of school

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the board of trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the attendance officer to be able to do so
- Working with the parents 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
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance and can be contacted via Email SLTAdmin@justlearn.org.uk or Admin@justlearn.org.uk

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Jessica Gibson and can be contacted via email: SLTAdmin@justlearn.org.uk

3.4 Class tutors

Class tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

Parents:

- Ensure that children leave for school on time every day.
- Provide written explanation for children's absences from school.
- Endeavour not to take children out of school in term time.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when children are ill or are going to be late and provide a reason.
- If no letter has been sent in advance, telephone the school on the first morning, the child is absent.

Students:

- Arrive at 09:15 for registration every morning and 13:10 for registration every afternoon.
- Be on time for lessons.
- Make sure to have a note from parents explaining any absences or tardiness.
- If you need to leave early inform your tutor at the beginning of the lesson. The reason for leaving school early will need to be given with supporting evidence.
- Tell teachers if you are having any problems attending school.

Support Available:

- Attendance Reports (to combat lesson truancy).
- Attendance interviews and regular reviews.
- Meetings with Head of School, EWO and other external agencies to provide support for children and their parents.
- Re-integration programme on the first morning back in school after long-term absence.
- Re-integration timetables were appropriate.
- EWO involvement

Rewards:

- Half-termly, termly and annual certificates and letters home for individuals and form prizes for groups (student of the month).
- Good attendance references to potential employers/colleges.

Sanctions:

The school reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfill its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Detention
- Letters home
- Home visits
- EWO involvement and referral.
- Parenting Contracts

Penalty Notices issued by the school

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school issuing a penalty notice under section 23 of the Anti-social Behavior Act 2003 (by the head of school and deputy head of school).

Parenting orders or penalty notices can also be issued by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LEA.

Prosecution by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LEA.

CME: (Children Missing from Education)

- Phone calls are made daily when students don't attend school.
- If non-attendance continues, letters are sent home.
- If parents don't respond within 10 days, then a risk assessment is completed for a home visit.
- If the risk assessment is successful, then the home visit will take place.
- Staff members complete home visits to find out the reason for absence.
- If staff members are unable to access the home or if the home visit raises concerns, then a referral is made to the LA/EWO.

Parent guides to these measures are available on www.direct.gov.uk/parents

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **09:15** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 09:30 and will be kept open until **10:30**. The register for the second session will be taken at **13:10** and will be kept open until **14:00**.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil’s parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by **10:00** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

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 pupil’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 about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 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. Evidence such as a letter or appointment is required to be provided.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil’s parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

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

4.5 Following up 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 contacting the parent on a daily basis.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will send out letter regularly to advise parents/carers of any unauthorised absences.

Parents/carers are informed of students current attendance within half term report cards and termly reports.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

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

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one-off events which are unavoidable, examples may include **the death of a close relative**, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

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 (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveler pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travelers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travelers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveler family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

- Phone calls are made daily when students don't attend school.
- If non-attendance continues, letters are sent home.
- If parents don't respond within 10 days, then a risk assessment is completed for a home visit.
- If the risk assessment is successful, then the home visit will take place.
- Staff members complete home visits to find out the reason for absence.
- If staff members are unable to access the home or if the home visit raises concerns, then a referral is made to the LA/EWO.

5.3 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 headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not 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 pupil 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.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Rewards:

- Commendations.
- Half-termly, termly and annual certificates and letters home for individuals and form prizes for groups (student of the month).
- Good attendance references to potential employers/colleges.

Sanctions:

The school reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfill its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Detention.
- Isolation
- EWO involvement and referral.
- Parenting Contracts

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-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 governing board.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the school attendance management team. At every review, the policy will be approved by the school's board of trustees.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behavior Policy

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Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Codes and Description:

/	Present for Morning Registration
\	Present for Afternoon Registration
B	Off-site educational Activity
K	Attending education arranged by the local authority. (Schools must also record the nature of the educational activity)
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence for compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Suspended or permanently excluded, and no alternative provision made
G	Holiday not granted by the school
I	Illness
J1	Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
M	Attending a medical or dental appointment
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Q	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance
S	Studying for a public examination
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
D	Dual registered at another school
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school sit being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. (Schools must also record the nature of the unavoidable cause)
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
-	All should attend but No mark recorded

Appendix 2: Example Letter 1

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear [INSERT NAME],

Re: Attendance

According to our records, [STUDENT NAME] has recently been absent from school for [NO. OF DAYS] days.

You will be aware that it is the parent's responsibility to notify the school on the first day of a pupil's absence to explain the reasons why he/she is unable to attend school and an expected date when he/she should return.

I am therefore writing to you to give you an opportunity to explain the recent absences. Please complete the tear off slip below and return it to the school as soon as possible. Any absence that hasn't been explained within two weeks will be categorised as "Unauthorised" Absence.

If you wish to discuss this letter further, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Shaila Osman
Head of School

Please complete the slip and return to school as soon as possible.

Dates of unexplained absences: [INCLUDE DATES]

Explanation for the above dates of unexplained absence:

--

Parent/Carer Signature..... Date.....

Appendix 3: Home Visit Form

Home Visit Report

Please use this form as a basis for a discussion between parents/carers and to record initial agreed actions.
Please return this form to Kelly at reception.

* A copy of this report must be kept in the student's file, and one sent to the home address.

Date of visit:		Child's Name:	
Parents/carers:		Child's DOB:	
Address:		Parent's tel. no/mobile	
LAC (Y/N):		Social Worker Name:	
Referring School:		Type of Concern:	

1. Initial Observations

What sort of communication occurred between the parents/carers and child before the home visit?

How did the parents engage with Just Learn staff?

How did the parents react to the concerns raised by Just Learn?

How did the student engage with Just Learn staff?

How did the student react to the concerns raised by Just Learn?

Additional support or services which may be needed for the student and parent/carer:

2. Objectives for Parents/Carers

Additional or updated information shared by parents/carers on the home visit (e.g., recent changes in family, child development or health concerns, other issues or worries) :

Ideas for supporting parents to resolve the concerns raised by Just Learn. Please say whether you have discussed these at this point and if any have been agreed:

What do/does the parent/s hope to gain from the support for themselves? (e.g., improve attendance, attainment or general behaviour):

3. Agreed Plan:			
What Just Learn agrees to do to help student meet agreed target(s):			
What the parent/carer agrees to do to help student meet agreed target(s):			
Targets the student agrees to work towards:			
Review date for agreed targets:			
Parent has copy of report YES/NO		Date:	
Name of staff member completing report:		Date:	
Signature of Just Learn staff member:			
Signature of parent/carer:			
Signature of student:			

Additional Notes:

Appendix 4: Example Penalty Notice Letter

Our Ref: [INSERT REFERENCE]

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear [INSERT NAME]

PENALTY NOTICE – [INSERT] Year: [INSERT]

I have been notified that [INSERT NAME] attendance for the period of [INSERT DATES] was [INSERT %]. [INSERT NAME] absences are either without authorised permission or without a justifiable reason being given to **Just Learn**.

GOOD ATTENDANCE IS VITAL FOR [INSERT NAME] FUTURE

The reward for good attendance:

- The majority of good attendees will leave education with GCSEs, or a qualification that will help to support their future training and employment.

The cost of non-attendance:

- 2 in every 10 truants will leave education without a qualification.
- 2 in every 3 young people convicted in crime have been truants.
- Yearly attendance of less than 80% over the course of secondary education is the equivalent of at least one year's education, which will have a detrimental effect upon [INSERT NAME] future opportunities.

The government has introduced new powers for Local Authorities to issue Penalty Notices in cases where parent/carers do not take responsibility for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance. **The Penalty Notice incurs a fine of £120.** I need to inform you that the level of [INSERT NAME] absence, if continued, will place you at risk of this penalty and/or prosecution in court. In the event of court action, you could be fined up to £1000 and be subject to a Criminal Record.

I will commence formal monitoring of [INSERT NAME] attendance from [INSERT DATE] and will be in touch with you in due course. During the monitoring period any absence due to illness will not be authorised unless it is supported by appropriate medical evidence (please ask **Just Learn** for details). If you provide evidence of ill health in the form of a note from the medical health professional made in your child's planner, this must be endorsed using the practice stamp. If the stamp is not clear, then a second stamp should be requested. Evidence should be presented within 3 days of the return to education after the absence.

If there has not been an improvement, I will arrange for your details to be passed to the Senior Education Welfare Officer at Merton Local Authority who will issue a Penalty Notice to you on our behalf.

Yours sincerely

Shaila Osman

Head of School