St. John the Baptist R.C. Primary School

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

'Love One Another'

St John the Baptist RC Primary School is a place of learning in which each individual is encouraged to fulfil their own unique potential. We try always to remember that everyone is special and should be treated with respect. Our Catholic faith touches every part of our school life and we try to be a community which has Jesus at the heart of all we do.

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1. Aims

In law every parent of a child of compulsory school age has a duty to ensure that their child attends full-time education (**section 7 of the Education Act 1996**). Parents of a registered pupil whose child fails to attend school regularly are committing an offence under **section 444(1) Education Act 1996**. In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school "regularly" means attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not "sufficiently frequent attendance". This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so, and failure to do this may lead to the commission of an offence.

At St John the Baptist we are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the DfE's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance. We aim to achieve this through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, which includes:

- **Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils**
- **Developing and maintaining a whole-school culture that promotes the benefits of high 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 understand and remove barriers to attendance**
- **Ensuring our school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment**
- **Promoting and supporting punctuality**

The word 'parent' is used throughout this policy. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' widely to include:

- A biological parent of the child (even if they do not have Parental Responsibility and even if the child does not reside with that parent)
- Any person who is not a parent but has Parental Responsibility for the child (for example through a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order, Step-Parental Responsibility Order, Adoption Order or Care Order)
- Someone who has care of the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Therefore, all the above people have the duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education. Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools, 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 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2026 State-funded Schools Inspection Toolkit
- Lancashire County Council's Local Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy meets the expectations outlined in the DfE's statutory guidance, and is published on the school website and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff
- Actively supporting and prioritising attendance improvement, and working together with school leaders to establish a whole-school attendance culture
- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties and comply with the law on school attendance, including:
    - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and the 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
- Recognising that improving a pupil's attendance is part of improving the pupil's overall welfare. This can be achieved by prioritising attendance in strategies around attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs (SEN) support, supporting pupils with medical needs or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing and support for disadvantaged pupils

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for the pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources, including working effectively with the local authority's school attendance support team and wider local partners and services
- Making sure high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils, including:
    - Those with long-term illnesses, or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
    - Pupils with a social worker
    - Pupils who are young carers
    - Pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance (e.g. those eligible for free school meals)
- Regularly reviewing attendance data at governing body meetings, including a thorough examination of recent and historic trends at school level, and benchmarking against comparator schools within the local authority area, region and nationally
- Paying particular attention to the attendance of pupil cohorts within the school that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance, and providing support and challenge around delivering against those focus areas
- Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance, which is evaluated and reviewed regularly
- Making sure training on attendance is included in the school's continued professional development offer for all staff so that, as a minimum, all staff understand:
    - The importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances
    - The law and requirements of the school, including on the keeping of registers
    - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance
    - The processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including the skills needed to interpret and analyse attendance data
- Making sure, as part of staff induction, that staff are aware of the school's safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods, and that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Requesting penalty notices from the local authority, where necessary
- Working with the parents of pupils with SEND to develop specific support approaches for attendance, 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
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
    - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the admission register outside of standard transition times
    - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
    - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') 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
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents and external agencies, where needed, including to explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence, and the potential need for legal intervention in the future where engagement in support is proving challenging
- 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
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader for attendance will take part in regular 'targeting support meetings' with the local authority school attendance support team to review data, and to discuss and agree multi-agency action plans for persistently and severely absent pupils.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Deputy Headteacher, Mrs L. Baird, and can be contacted through the school office on 01282 771146

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 9)
- 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 the local authority's attendance support team and education welfare officers to tackle persistent and severe absence
- Advising the headteacher when to request a penalty notice from the local authority

The attendance officer is the Deputy Headteacher and can be contacted through the school office on 01282 771146.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office. Attendance registers are taken at 9.00am and 1.15pm.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the designated senior leader for attendance, where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Check that registers are completed on time each session, follow up any that are missing, and update absence codes in SIMS as soon as the reason for absence is known (no later than 5 working days after the session)
- Prepare and submit the paperwork, including the School Attendance Support Checklist, when the school requests a penalty notice or notice to improve from Lancashire County Council

3.7 Parents

Parents (see the definition of 'parent' in section 1) are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence and explain the reason for it before 9.15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return. Parents can also report an absence at the school office in the morning
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child. If their child is in Nursery or Reception (the Early Years Foundation Stage), provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers, where possible
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Work together with the school to achieve high attendance, including attending meetings with the school to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Deputy Headteacher through the school office on 01282 771146

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session, at the start. The attendance register will be taken at the same time for all pupils and kept open for a maximum of 30 minutes. It will mark, using the national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present at the school
- Attending a place other than the school
- Absent – leave of absence
- Absent – other authorised reasons
- Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause
- Absent – unauthorised absence

The attendance register is a record of the pupil's presence at the time it was taken. It will only routinely be amended if the reason for absence isn't known at the time it is taken, and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. 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 also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of the circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school gates open at 8.45am. The school day starts at 8.55am and ends at 3.15pm. We expect your child to be on the yard by 8.55am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.25am. Pupils who arrive after the register has been taken but before it closes at 9.25am will be marked as late (code L), which counts as present. Pupils who arrive after 9.25am will be marked as late after the register has closed (code U), which counts as an unauthorised absence.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open until 1.45pm, with the same rules applying to pupils who arrive late.

Where a pupil attends alternative provision, the school will verify their attendance daily with the provider and review the safety of the placement and the pupil's attendance at least half-termly.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office on 01282 771146 or reporting it at the school office in the morning (see also section 4.5).

Parents are required to contact the office each day until their child returns, unless the illness requires a set number of days off school (e.g. chickenpox, norovirus).

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.

Where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 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 notifies the school in advance of the appointment and shows an appointment card or letter to the office.

Where possible, the pupil should:

- Be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary, and attend school before and/or after their appointment
- Wear school uniform to their appointment, to make it easier to return to school afterwards

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

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

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 (code U). This will not count as a present mark and will count as an unauthorised absence

If our monitoring shows a problem with punctuality, we will write to you to let you know. If your child has a persistent record of lateness, you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

If punctuality does not improve, the school may refer the matter to the local authority, and late arrivals after the register has closed may count towards the national threshold for legal intervention (see section 7).

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call or text the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to find out the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact relevant services, e.g. children's social care and/or the police
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is established – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent

- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, request a notice to improve or penalty notice from the local authority, or use another legal intervention (see section 7), as appropriate
- Treat repeated or prolonged unexplained absences as a potential safeguarding issue and report them to the designated safeguarding lead, Mrs K McKeating

Schools have a safeguarding duty, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, to investigate any unexplained absences. The school recognises that children missing education are at significant risk of underachievement, abuse, neglect, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE) and other safeguarding concerns. The school will:

- Take all reasonable steps to identify pupils at risk of becoming children missing education
- Investigate unexplained absence
- Undertake appropriate welfare enquiries
- Work with the local authority and other agencies
- Comply with statutory pupil registration requirements
- Ensure that no pupil is removed from the school roll unless the lawful grounds for deletion are met and all required notifications have been made

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Where possible, we will describe absence in terms of the days and learning missed, rather than only as a percentage.

- At the end of every half term you will receive an attendance report
- At the end of Spring 1 and Summer 2 you will receive a copy of your child's attendance certificate
- At the end of Autumn 1 and Spring 2 you will be given your child's attendance during Parents' Evening

If your child's attendance falls below 94%, they will be placed on the attendance monitoring register and you will receive a letter every 4 weeks while they remain on it.

5. Authorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

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 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Study leave for a public examination
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

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

In very exceptional circumstances, and if it is in the pupil's best interests, a temporary part-time timetable may be arranged, for example if a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school full-time. Any part-time timetable will be short-term and have a defined end point, with a clear plan for supporting the pupil's return to full-time education. Part-time timetables will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare, one-off events which are unavoidable and unlikely to reoccur. Examples include:

- The death and funeral of a close relative
- A medical or family emergency
- Respite care for a looked-after child or a child with a serious medical condition

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday, or other leisure or recreation. Holidays will not be authorised if there are no exceptional circumstances. The school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent does not apply in advance, a leave of absence will not be granted.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The school will not apply a blanket policy or automatic approval/refusal.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Requests must be made in writing using the 'request for absence' form, available from the school office. Please add as much detail as you can to your application and explain why exceptional circumstances apply. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for a leave of absence.

If a request for leave of absence is refused, the school will inform parents in writing. If a pupil is taken out of school without a request being made, or after a request has been refused, the school will inform parents in writing that the absence has not been authorised and that the school intends to request a penalty notice from the local authority.

5.2 Other reasons for authorised absence

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

- Illness (including mental health 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 parent(s) belong(s). The school considers this to be a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by their religious body to stay away from their employment. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Pupils should attend school on the days surrounding those set apart for religious observance
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – a pupil is a 'mobile child' if they are of compulsory school age, have no fixed abode, and are travelling with their parent(s) whose trade or business requires them to travel from place to place
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

5.3 Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. These are not classified as absences. Reasons include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an off-site approved educational activity, sporting activity, or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not attending school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We want our pupils to succeed and develop their skills. To do this, pupils need to avoid missing lessons and days of school as much as possible. As a school, we want to reward high attendance and not just respond to poor attendance.

- Class attendance is celebrated weekly in assembly
- At the end of the school year, 100% attendance is celebrated at Prize Day
- Attendance certificates are sent home at the end of Spring 1 and Summer 2

7. Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Attendance legal interventions can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age. The school will always work with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or the support is not engaged with, the school will make use of the full range of support and potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis, after considering the individual family's circumstances. The school will make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on penalty notices or prosecution.

7.1 Attendance contracts

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance. It is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not appropriate.

Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and the school cannot agree an attendance contract in a parent's absence. Where an attendance contract would be appropriate, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent (and pupil, if they are old enough to understand) to explain its purpose and why it would be beneficial. Parents will be asked for their views on their child's attendance, any underlying issues, and what support they think would help. If a parent fails to attend the meeting without good reason, further attempts will be made to arrange another meeting.

The school may enter into 1 attendance contract with all parents, or have separate contracts for each parent. Where parents fail to comply with an agreed contract, the school will first discuss this with them to understand why and decide whether the contract remains useful. If a parent cannot comply through no fault of their own, the contract will be reviewed and adjusted. If non-compliance continues without a valid reason, the school will issue a warning that the contract may be ended and alternative action taken. The school will keep a record of its decision-making and of any non-compliance.

7.2 Education supervision orders

Where voluntary early help plans and attendance contracts have been unsuccessful, we may work with the local authority to apply for an education supervision order. If this is considered, the local authority will inform the parent(s) in writing and set up a meeting.

An education supervision order is a formal intervention, but not a criminal prosecution. It initially lasts for 1 year, but can be extended within the last 3 months for up to 3 years at a time. Parents who persistently fail to follow the directions given under the order may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority, with a fine of up to £1,000 on conviction.

7.3 Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may ask the local authority to issue a notice to improve, to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

The national threshold is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least 1 school session. The threshold can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (for example, unauthorised holiday, late arrival after the register has closed, or other unauthorised absence). The sessions do not need to be consecutive, and the 10-week period can span different terms or school years.

Notices to improve are issued by Lancashire County Council in line with its Local Code of Conduct. They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously offered support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued, or prosecution considered, if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with what sufficient improvement looks like
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

7.4 Penalty notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly and the national threshold has been reached.

In Lancashire, penalty notices are issued by Lancashire County Council, not by the school, in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, and the Lancashire Local Code of Conduct for issuing education-related penalty notices. The school may request that the local authority issues a penalty notice. The request must include all the information the local authority requires, including a completed School Attendance Support Checklist (except for unauthorised leave of absence or holidays), and must be submitted within 3 school weeks of the offence. The local authority will then decide whether to issue a penalty notice. Penalty notices are issued to each parent individually in respect of each child, and are sent by post to the child's home.

The school will only request a penalty notice where it is likely to change parental behaviour, and where support to secure regular attendance has been provided and has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

The school will consider whether to request a penalty notice in each individual case where a pupil reaches the national threshold. We do not have a blanket rule for requesting or not requesting penalty notices. Before requesting a penalty notice, the school will consider:

- Whether the national threshold has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil and change parental behaviour for the particular family
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be more appropriate
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make requesting a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent(s) who allowed the absence (regardless of which parent applied for a leave of absence).

Payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice:

- **First penalty notice:** £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days
- **Second penalty notice** to the same parent in respect of the same pupil: £160 if paid within 28 days
- **Third time within 3 years:** a third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the first. If the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead, which may include prosecution

If payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice. The local authority can also prosecute parents for non-attendance without first issuing a penalty notice.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not subject to the same considerations about support, and do not count towards the limit on repeat penalty notices for non-attendance. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120 within 28 days.

If the pupil has moved school or local authority area in the previous 3 years, a check will be made to find out whether previous penalty notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the pupil. If this information cannot be obtained, it will be assumed that the parent has not previously received a penalty notice.

8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

8.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil's, and our attendance ambition for them is the same. In working with their families, we are mindful of the barriers they face and will put additional support in place where necessary. This may include:

- Meeting with parents to understand the barriers to attendance and agree an action plan of help and support, including around routines and transport
- Establishing strategies for removing in-school barriers
- Pastoral support, including home visits and support from our CARITAS Social Worker
- Referral to outside agencies and early help

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to a pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

Where a parent expresses an intention to educate their child at home, the school will meet with the parent and any relevant professionals before a final decision is made, to make sure the best interests of the child have been considered.

8.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

The school recognises that worries about friendships or schoolwork can cause anxiety about attending school. However, regular attendance remains mandatory. Staff will communicate to parents that pupils are still expected to attend school regularly, and will work with families to reduce anxious feelings in school as much as possible and remove barriers to attendance.

In cases of long-term physical or mental ill health, the school will:

- Provide relevant pastoral support, with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible while supporting the underlying health issue
- Put in place an individual healthcare plan, where appropriate
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability
- Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate
- Make a sickness return to the local authority where a pupil is recorded as absent using code I (illness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will miss 15 consecutive school days or more because of illness, or that their total school days missed through illness in the current school year will reach 15 or more

Where a pupil has SEND, the school will:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance, including making sure the provision in the pupil's EHC plan is accessed
- Work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed, and work with other partners to encourage additional support interventions or medical appointments to be scheduled outside of the school day
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements
- Make sure joined-up pastoral care is in place where needed, and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate

In some cases, the school will not be able to fully support a pupil without the help of other agencies. The school will make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available, consider whether support from other partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals, and work together with those services to deliver any support.

If a pupil has an EHC plan, the school will:

- Communicate with the local authority if the pupil's attendance falls, or if we become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Where possible, agree adjustments to our policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision in the EHC plan, in collaboration with the parents
- Where needed, work with the local authority to review and amend the EHC plan to include the additional or different attendance support identified

Parents should consult the NHS guidance 'Is my child too ill for school?' when deciding whether to keep their child at home due to illness. We will share this guidance with parents and help them to understand it.

8.3 Pupils absent due to other barriers to attendance

We monitor and support the attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged, who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, who are young carers, or who face other barriers to attendance. For these pupils, the school will:

- Monitor attendance closely, including on our vulnerable pupils monitoring sheet and at our weekly welfare briefing
- Make sure any reasonable adjustments and interventions are timely, appropriate, well-chosen and targeted
- Work with parents, the Virtual School Head, social workers and other relevant professionals to understand and remove barriers to attendance
- Inform the pupil's social worker of any unexplained absences

8.4 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where a pupil returns to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, the designated senior leader for attendance will work with the pupil, their parents and any relevant professionals to agree a reintegration plan. This may include a time-limited phased return, pastoral support, catch-up support for learning missed, and regular reviews of attendance until it is secure.

8.5 Prolonged absence for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception)

In cases of prolonged absence, or when a child is absent without notification, we will attempt to contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts.

When deciding whether a child's absence should be considered prolonged, we will consider:

- Patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances
- The vulnerability of the child and their parents, as well as the circumstances of their home life

We will also follow our safeguarding procedures (see our child protection and safeguarding policy) and refer any concerns to local authority children's social care and/or request a police welfare check.

9. Attendance monitoring

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with us to resolve any problems together. We use the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality:

- Keeping a detailed monitoring register of all pupils whose attendance is below 94%, and reviewing these pupils every 4 weeks
- Carrying out whole-school attendance reviews every half term and informing parents
- Discussing attendance issues on a weekly basis in the welfare briefing
- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, teachers and the headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- Referral to outside agencies for support
- Home visits
- Attendance contracts
- Use of notices to improve, penalty notices and referrals for legal action (see section 7)

9.1 Monitoring and analysing attendance data

The school will monitor and analyse attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly, across the school and at individual pupil, class and cohort level. This will enable early identification of attendance concerns and the delivery of targeted support before absence patterns become embedded.

This analysis will include patterns in the use of certain codes, days of poor attendance, and groups of pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern.

The school will:

- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data – for example, a class with higher than average absence, or pupils eligible for free school meals whose attendance falls behind that of their peers
- Monitor the impact of whole-school attendance efforts, including any specific strategies or targeted cohorts, and use the findings to evaluate approaches and inform future strategies
- Benchmark attendance data at whole-school, class and cohort level against local, regional and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Record young carers in the school census and, where a pupil's caring role may be contributing to absence, work with the pupil and their parents to put appropriate support in place, including through local early help arrangements
- Make sure data for pupils with long-term illnesses and/or SEND is regularly monitored, including at governing body meetings and in targeting support meetings with the local authority
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and develop strategies to address these patterns
- Provide data and reports to the governing body to support its work

Attendance data will be submitted to the DfE, and specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. Pupil-level absence data is published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases, with the underlying school-level data published alongside. The school will compare its attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing body.

9.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts identified through data analysis
- Provide targeted support to pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those with patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 9.3)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing body and school leaders (including the SENCO, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions, in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, the local authority and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

- Work with parents, the Virtual School Head and other relevant professionals to monitor and support the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils known or previously known to children's social care, and pupils who face other barriers

To support timely joint working, the school will share information from its registers with the local authority, including new pupil and deletion returns, attendance returns and sickness returns. Where a pupil has a social worker, the school will inform the social worker of any unexplained absences from school.

9.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Make patterns of persistent and severe absence a focus of our regular data monitoring and our weekly welfare briefing, and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted support as quickly as possible
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education. If all avenues of support have been offered but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect, and the school will be especially alert to safeguarding concerns in these cases
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of persistent or severe absence, or persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand the 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
- Record attendance on our vulnerable pupils monitoring sheet
- Work with the local authority to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage the pupil
- Sensitively explore the reasons for absence, recognising school as a safe, supportive space and prioritising early help over immediate sanctions
- Prioritise support for severely absent pupils, including tailored attendance strategies, whole-family support and, where needed, EHC plan referrals
- Use sanctions where necessary (see section 7)

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year by the designated senior leader for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body and published on the school website.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions policy
- SEND policy
- Pupil mental health and wellbeing policy
- EYFS policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Code	Definition	Scenario
Present		
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before the register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil 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	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil 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	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

Code	Definition	Scenario
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil 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	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency

Code	Definition	Scenario
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil 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 pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil 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	Pupil'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	Pupil 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
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of the session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil 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