**Policy Document for**: Attendance

**Due for Review**: Summer 2027

**Additions/amendments in this version**

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|---|---|
| | *Full review* |
| *Sept 26* | *Changes in line with KCSIE 2026* |
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## 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
- Recognising attendance as a key safeguarding responsibility and protective factor that supports children's welfare, wellbeing, safety and educational achievement.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

**This document includes a section setting out information for parents plus the full attendance policy.**

## Key Information for parents about school attendance

At Bourne Alliance MAT, we encourage good attendance in all our schools and promote attendance for all pupils to be 100% as we know that high attendance levels impact positively on a child's educational and social opportunities. We understand that some children suffer with long-term health/medical conditions and so they will not be able to be in school every day, but we support and encourage as much attendance as their health conditions allow – the policy named 'children with medical needs who cannot attend school' sets out what support we offer for long term absence. In our schools, we use our Family Liaison Officer and wider support teams to support and work with families where attendance is a concern. Parents and carers hold a legal duty to ensure their child/ren attend school regularly and arrive on time.

It is parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a **safeguarding** requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents must regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning. The school will follow up with the parents on the first and every subsequent day of a child being absent without reason. If a child is absent without contact, the absence will be recorded as unauthorized. The school may take additional steps for safeguarding (such as home visits) if no contact can be made with any emergency contacts, or there is no explanation for the absence.

We ask that all our parents and carers:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time (doors close at 8.45am)
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:45 am on their first day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence unless you have already specified a planned return date (i.e. medical isolation for chickenpox or Covid).
- When calling to report absence, provide a specific reason e.g. high temperature, rather than 'poorly' or 'unwell'
- Send children to school unless they are too ill to attend. If a child has a mild symptom e.g. a headache, the school will contact parents if the child becomes too ill to stay at school
- Bobbing Village School: This can be via email – bobbing@ba-mat.org.uk or by calling the school office after 8am.
- Iwade schools: This can be through leaving a voicemail on the school answerphone system each day, or calling the office directly or via email Iwade@ba-mat.org.uk
- Grove Park: please email gpattendance@ba-mat.org.uk, or you can call the Office to report absence.
- Aspire school has an aspire@ba-mat.org.uk email address which can be used to report pupil absence or you can call the Office to report absence after 8am
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. If your appointment is in the school day, please provide evidence. Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences with either the appointment letter or card.

Not only does low attendance impact significantly on their social and educational achievements and progress, but it will also result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for prosecution in line with the statutory Attendance Framework (live on 19th August 2024).

Penalty notices are issued by the Local Authority who also collect the fines. The schools DO NOT gain any revenue from referrals. Schools have to comply with the statutory instructions regarding penalty notice referral to the Local Authority.

Penalty notices will be issued for:

| **Per parent, per child** | **5 consecutive days of term time leave** |
|---|---|
| Penalty notices will now be issued for each parent, for each child that was absent.<br><br>For example, 3 siblings absent for term time leave would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines | Penalty notice fine will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.<br><br>Penalty notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. |

| **First offence** | **Second offence – within 3 years** |
|---|---|
| The first time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:<br>£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days<br>Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days | The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:<br>£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days |

**Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance, a penalty notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Magistrate's fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. The offence is prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 - a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on the parents future DBS certificate.

**Local Authority DO NOT accept the following as exceptional circumstances:**

- My work does not allow me to take holidays during the school holiday periods, even if they provide a letter
- My child needs a holiday at quieter times due to their need
- Our holiday has been gifted and paid for and we did not have a choice of dates
- My child has good or 100% attendance
- I will report my child as being unwell – schools are expected to – and do – carry out home visits, if a child is absent (as part of safeguarding) and where a holiday is suspected. The school is then obliged to report this to the Local Authority for a penalty notice.
- My child needs a wellbeing day*/Birthday*

This is the impact of absence over time.

| No Absence | 10 days absence | 12 days absence | 19 days absence | 29 days absence | 38 days absence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 190 days of education | 180 days of education | 178 days of education | 171 days of education | 161 days of education | 152 days of education |
| 100% | 95% | 94% | 90% | 85% | 80% |

| If a child misses | that equals... | which is... | and over 13 years of school that's... |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 day per fortnight (90% attendance) | 19 days per year | ≈ 4 weeks per year | Nearly 1½ years |
| 1 day per week (80% attendance) | 38 days per year | ≈ 8 weeks per year | Over 2½ years |
| 2 days per week (60% attendance) | 76 days per year | ≈ 16 weeks per year | Over 5 years |
| 3 days per week (40% attendance) | days per year | ≈ 24 weeks per year | Nearly 8 years |

It is also important that pupils arrive on time for school – being frequently late for school impacts on lost learning for the child:

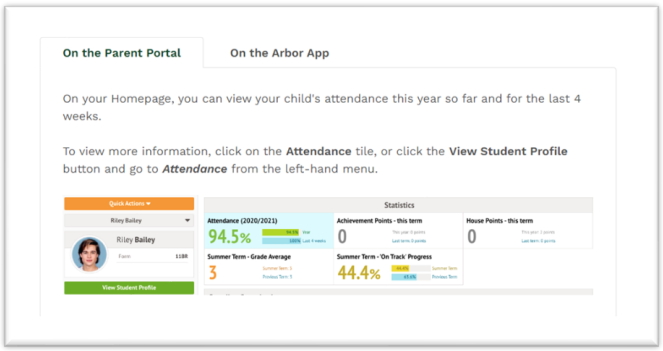
- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day adds up to 2 weeks absence a year
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day adds up to 19 days absence a year.

Additionally, children arriving late have missed early morning work set out by their class teacher, may miss the teaching inputs and often feel unsettled by this.

If a child has a significant number of lates, or there is a notable pattern, a member of the school team will be in contact with the parent or carers to discuss the reason and the ways the school can support in improving punctuality. If this continues, this could provide grounds for a penalty notice or prosecution.

## How can parents view attendance?

Attendance will be reported to parents twice yearly in reports. However, attendance will be discussed with parents and carers when concerns are raised. All parents can see their child's cumulative attendance on their Arbor profile page




Attendance on the Parent Portal and Arbor App – Arbor Help Centre (arbor-education.com)

## School day: Bobbing , Grove Park & Iwade schools

Pupils are expected to arrive between **8:30 - 8.45 am.** Arrival after this time is considered **late.** If your child arrives after 8:55am registers are closed and therefore will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45am and will be kept open until 8:55am. The register for the second session will be taken at the end of their lunch period (1pm).

All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

## School day: Aspire school

Pupils are expected to arrive between **8.45 and 9.15am.** Arrival after this time is considered **late,** unless pupils are working from reduced or bespoke timetables which will have been pre-arranged with the class teacher and Headteacher.

The register for the morning session will be taken by 9:30am and therefore any pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The register for the second session will be taken by 1:50pm.

On Friday afternoons, the school has the earlier finishing time of 1pm. Children that come to school by Local Authority transport are collected at 1pm. Parent collections take place from **1.15pm to 1.45pm.** On Fridays, the register for the second session will be taken by the earlier time of 1:00pm.

## Approval for term-time absence

The CEO or Head of School/Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Heads can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

The Head of School is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and a letter, email or telephone message from a parent does not authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised. The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child or parent is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip/Special reward
- Family holidays, including those where a SEND need is declared and/or where employers will not allow alternative dates
- Wellbeing days

**Commented [LB1]:** Add the highlighted bit?

**Commented [TW2R1]:** Yes if that's the guidance. I know Aspire don't authorise!

**Commented [LB3R1]:** Cool

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head's discretion.

Pupils who may need an absence from school due to a **professional employment** booking – such as modelling or acting will need to apply with a leave of absence form and relevant licences shared with school. The school will authorise a maximum of 12 sessions of absence each academic year for such reasons. In exceptional circumstance, should a more sustained consecutive period of absence be required, please make an appointment to discuss with the Head of School/Headteacher.

**Valid reasons** for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained on page 12.
- 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.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes, is of no fixed abode, and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. Proof of occupational purpose may be requested e.g. booking confirmation.
- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend the day of a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions.
The Headteacher/Head of School reserves the right to request additional evidence to support this application.

## Full policy information

### Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) ( August 2024)from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to

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

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## Attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

Regular attendance is a vital part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The school recognises that children who are absent from education, particularly those who are persistently absent, severely absent or missing education, may be at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), mental health difficulties, substance misuse, forced marriage, radicalisation or other safeguarding concerns. The school will therefore consider attendance information as an important part of its wider safeguarding responsibilities.

Attendance concerns will be routinely shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and considered alongside other safeguarding information to ensure that children receive the right help at the right time.

The school recognises that school attendance is a significant protective factor and works proactively with children, families and partner agencies to remove barriers to attendance and reduce safeguarding risks.

### Roles and responsibilities

At BA-MAT schools, there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

#### Governors & Trustees

The governing board 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 role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the Head to account for the implementation of this policy
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools

### The Head of School/Head Teacher

The Head of School/Head Teacher is responsible for:

- 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
- Working with the School Liaison Officer to tackle persistent absence and issuing penalty notices
- 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 responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader in each school 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 is:

- Aspire: Tracy Taylor, Neil Dipple and Claire Stephens
- Bobbing: Miss Heudebourck
- Grove Park: Mrs Flain
- Iwade:  Mrs Bunning

### Attendance officer

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- 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 Head when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer in each school is:

- Aspire: Claire Stephens
- Bobbing: Miss Heudebourck and Mrs Pressnell
- Grove Park: Mrs Flain and Mrs Savage
- Iwade:  Mrs Piper and Mrs Deadman

## Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Work alongside attendance staff to monitor attendance patterns and identify safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure attendance information is considered as part of wider safeguarding assessments and decision making.
- Consider whether poor attendance may indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health concerns, family difficulties or other vulnerabilities.
- Ensure appropriate referrals are made to Children's Social Care, the Local Authority, Early Help services or other agencies where attendance concerns identify safeguarding risks.

- Monitor attendance of vulnerable pupils, including children with a social worker, children subject to Child Protection Plans, Child in Need Plans, Looked After Children and pupils with SEND.
- Oversee and support safeguarding actions relating to Children Missing Education (CME).

### School office staff

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the FLO where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Follow up with First Day calling where children fail to attend school as expected
- Check the registers as they are submitted
- Where there has not been communication, or evidence has not been provided when requested, sending letters to parents to request reasons for absence
- Identifying and alerting the Head of School/Head Teacher/Designated Senior Leader/FLO to concerns around attendance of individual pupils

### Family Liaison Officers (FLO)

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level on a regular basis
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Head of School/Designated Senior Leader
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Devises specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Delivers targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

### Class teaching staff

Class teaching staff are responsible for recording attendance twice a day, on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office via Arbor. If there is an IT based issue which prevents access to Arbor, these will be completed on paper registers and taken to the main school office.

### Parents and carers

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, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before the times specified for each school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the FLO or Head in your child's school
- When a child is under 5 and is registered at school, the parent has a legal duty to ensure their child attends school every day.

## Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken 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

Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

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

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made. The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

We will also record:

- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

## Unplanned absence

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

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. The school will 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 if the appointment is during the school day. 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.

## Following up unexplained absence

Unexplained absence is treated as both an attendance and safeguarding matter. Where concerns arise, the school will assess the level of risk and determine appropriate action proportionate to the circumstances of the child and family. Attendance concerns may be discussed with the DSL and other agencies where appropriate.

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first and subsequent days of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may take additional measures as non-attendance raises safeguarding concerns. This may involve;
    - A home visit where staff will need to see and talk to pupils
    - A telephone call where staff will need to speak to the pupil
    - Referral to the Front Door due to Safeguarding concern, Persistent or Severe absenteeism
    - Referral to LA Attendance Officer due to Safeguarding concern, Persistent or Severe absenteeism
    - Involvement of the Family Liaison Officer to develop a plan for the child to return to school
- 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 ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- 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 refer to the Local Authority for penalty notice.

## Children Missing Education (CME)

The school recognises that children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation and becoming vulnerable to a range of safeguarding concerns.

The school will follow Local Authority Children Missing Education procedures where a pupil:

- Fails to start at the school as expected.
- Ceases attendance without explanation.
- Cannot be located despite reasonable enquiries.
- Has prolonged unauthorised absence.
- Is at risk of being removed from roll.

Before removing a child from roll, the school will undertake all actions required by the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations and will notify the Local Authority as required.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of all pupils considered at risk of becoming Children Missing Education and appropriate referrals will be made where necessary.

## Planned absence

### Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences with either the appointment letter or card.

However, we encourage parents 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 and evidence of the appointment will be requested.

### 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

It is important that children come to school on time every day; valuable teaching and learning takes place at the start of the school day. Missing this due to lateness has a negative impact on children. We also expect staff/children to be on time throughout the school day such as going back to class from break time, collecting their children from lunch break and so on.

### Working with and supporting parents

The Trust is committed to working with parents and carers to ensure that their children attend school regularly and in line with expectations. Where there are ongoing issues for the family, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO)/Deputy Head Teacher/Assistant Head Teacher and/or Community Lead will be in contact with the family to offer support and to understand the barriers which are leading to limited attendance or lateness, for example, with homelessness. This may include recommending an application for Early Help to support the whole family or accessing wider support for the family.

The school adopts a support-first approach and seeks to understand the barriers affecting attendance before considering formal escalation. Attendance support will be individualised and may include Early Help, family support, pastoral support, mental health support, SEND support, attendance mentoring or multi-agency intervention.

A member of the team will meet with the family where necessary to offer support and to gain an understanding of the absence period or lateness of children.

### Attendance Contracts

In line with the Trust's support-first approach to attendance, the school may use Attendance Contracts where a pupil's attendance continues to cause concern and voluntary support has not secured sufficient improvement. Attendance Contracts may be used as a formal support intervention to help parents, carers, schools and partner agencies work together to improve attendance. [Attendance...s-guidance | PDF]

An Attendance Contract is a voluntary written agreement between parents/carers and the school (or, in some circumstances, the Local Authority) which sets out:

- The attendance concerns and identified barriers.
- The actions that parents/carers agree to take to improve attendance.
- The support that the school and/or other agencies will provide.
- Timescales for improvement and review arrangements. [Attendance...s-guidance | PDF]

Attendance Contracts are not legally binding and parents/carers are not required to enter into one. However, they provide a structured opportunity for all parties to work collaboratively towards

improved attendance and may form part of the evidence considered should statutory attendance intervention become necessary at a later stage. [Attendance...s-guidance | PDF]

Where appropriate, Attendance Contracts may be developed alongside Early Help, Children's Social Care or other multi-agency support plans to avoid duplication and ensure a coordinated approach. The school will review Attendance Contracts regularly and work with families to adapt support where required.

### Notices 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 offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

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 any Attendance Contract, support plan, Early Help intervention or other formal attendance support that has been offered or implemented.
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of 4 weeks for the improvement period
- Details of the cost of a penalty notice

### Reporting to parents

The schools will inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels through the Arbor app. This is also included in parent consultations/EHCP reviews and in end of year reports.

## Approval for term-time absence

The Head will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Head's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". **The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:**

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays
- Need for a family holiday at a quiet time due to the needs of a pupil
- Holiday requested as being the only time a parent's employer will grant them leave
- Wellbeing day

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Heads discretion. **A leave of absence is highly unlikely to be granted for a term time holiday.**

The CEO or Head of School/Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. The Head of School is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

**Evidence will be requested, and it is a parent/carers duty to prove this absence.**

Pupils who may need an absence from school due to a professional employment booking – such as modelling or acting will need to apply with a leave of absence form and relevant licences shared with school. The school will authorise a maximum of 12 sessions of absence each academic year for such reasons. In exceptional circumstance, should a more sustained consecutive period of absence be required, please make an appointment to discuss with the Head of School/Headteacher.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 1 week before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the Office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other reasons the school **may** allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite 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
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, or because the school premises are closed

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining **'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short**. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

## Valid reasons for authorised absence

This includes:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained on page 12.
- 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

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes, is of no fixed abode and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. Proof of occupational purpose may be requested e.g. booking confirmation.
    - If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

## Sanctions

Our schools will make full use of the sanctions authorised included, but limited to those below, to tackle poor attendance. Decisions are made on an individual, case by case basis.

### Penalty notices

The Local Authority issue the penalty notices and collect fines. The following thresholds are used:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Per parent, per child**<br>Penalty notices will now be issued for each parent, for each child that was absent.<br><br>For example, 3 siblings absent for term time leave would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines | **5 consecutive days of term time leave**<br>Penalty notice fine will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.<br><br>Penalty notice fines will be considered when there has been *10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **First offence**<br>The first time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:<br>£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days<br>Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days | **Second offence – within 3 years**<br>The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:<br>£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days |

| |
|---|
| **Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years)**<br>The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance, a penalty notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Magistrates fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. The offence is prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 - a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school.<br><br>Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on the parents future DBS certificate. |

## Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

### Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Our aim to support our families to engage in school life by identifying any in-school barriers to improve attendance.

Some families experience complex barriers to attendance, it is important that a relationship is built with these families including key people – FLO, Office Staff, Class Team.

Working to explore barriers and locate support and write a supportive plan should be an outcome for this relationship so expectation of attendance is clear and how the school can support this.

The team will consider multi-agency support when required and will work collaboratively with LA Attendance Officers also to provide opportunities to improve attendance.

### Pupils absent due to mental health or SEND

The school have an inclusion and wellbeing team who can support or signpost families for support. Our SENCo works within this team to be able to support families effectively.

Should a pupil experience attendance difficulties due to a mental health concern or SEND need, parents/carers should inform the school. The Inclusion Team will work with the family to understand the barriers to attendance and identify appropriate support, which may include therapeutic intervention, multi-agency involvement, a wellbeing plan, or a parental engagement plan. The school recognises that attendance difficulties may sometimes be a symptom of unmet needs rather than the primary issue; therefore, all support arrangements will be child-centred and developed collaboratively with families and relevant professionals. Following discussion with those involved, the school may also consider a temporary timetable variation or phased reintegration plan to support a successful return to full-time education. Any reduced or alternative timetable arrangements will be time-limited, regularly reviewed and used only where they are in the best interests of the child.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

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

To support pupils back into school after a long period of absence, it is important that an informal meeting is held with the family including the child.

The meeting should consist of any transitional support and/ or adjustment requirements to support a smooth transition.

A consideration of reduced timetable with a plan to build successful time in school.

A wellbeing plan would be considered with the family if this would most benefit the pupil.

A mentor to check in with the pupil through reintroduction to class

Each case will be individualised dependant on what would be most beneficial to allow success.

## Attendance monitoring

The Bourne Alliance MAT schools monitor and analyse school attendance and absence data including punctuality on a regular basis. This enables the school to identify patterns of attendance and any pupils whose families may need support to improve attendance. Analysis will be half termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

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 benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement and share this with the governing board.

### Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### 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 that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

### Trust Attendance Team

The Trust maintains a dedicated Attendance Team, comprising attendance leads and relevant staff from all four schools within the Trust. The team meets at least termly to review attendance data, identify emerging patterns and trends, evaluate the impact of attendance strategies and monitor the attendance of key pupil groups.

Through regular collaboration, the Attendance Team shares effective practice, develops consistent approaches, reviews areas of challenge and promotes continual improvement in attendance across all Trust schools. The team works collectively to identify successful interventions, support vulnerable pupils and families, and ensure that attendance procedures remain aligned with current legislation, guidance and best practice.

Findings and recommendations from the Trust Attendance Team are used to inform school improvement planning, staff training and the ongoing development of attendance provision across the Trust.

## 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.

Particular priority will be given to supporting:

- Children who have a social worker.
- Children subject to Child Protection Plans.
- Children in Need.
- Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.
- Pupils with SEND.
- Young carers.
- Pupils with significant medical needs.
- Pupils who are known to other support agencies.

These groups may experience additional barriers to attendance and will receive targeted support where required.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary.

The school will share attendance information with relevant agencies where there is a lawful basis to do so and where doing so supports safeguarding, welfare or educational outcomes. This may include the Local Authority, Children's Social Care, Early Help, Health Professionals and other safeguarding partners.