

The Birches Specialist Support School

Pupil Attendance Policy



Reviewed by (name and role)	Farzana Shah Deputy Headteacher
Date reviewed (month and year)	December 2022
Date of next review (month and year)	December 2023
Date of submission for ratification (specific date)	02/12/22
Method of ratification (e.g. via email responses or at a specific Governors' meeting)	Emailed to SLT on 02/12/22 for SLT ratification

1. Introduction

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 The Birches Specialist Support Primary School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 The Birches Specialist Support Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school and identify the reasons for poor attendance

1.4 The Birches Specialist Support Primary School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding, anti-bullying, child protection, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

1.5 This policy aims to:

- Promote good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Promote early identification to address patterns of absence
- Promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

2.2 Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.

2.3 Legal proceedings are not used as a punishment to parents for their pupil's absence from school; they are a supportive measure intended to make parents realise the importance of attendance and to avoid further absence from school.

2.4 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.

2.5 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.6 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.7 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.8 The register must record whether the pupil was:

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

3. Safeguarding

3.1 Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

3.2 Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.

3.3. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti- bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

3.4 More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3.5 In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

3.6 It is also important for parents inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

4. Categorising absence

4.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

4.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher/principal/principal/principal and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

4.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

4.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

4.4.1 Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. This includes if a pupil is absent due to circumstances related to COVID-19.

4.4.2 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

4.4.3 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

4.4.4 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

4.4.5 Religious Observance The Birches Specialist Support Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.

4.4.6 Study Leave Study leave may be granted for Year 11 pupils approaching GCSE examinations. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels.

4.4.7 Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. This applies only when the family proves it is engaged in a trade or business that requires it to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

The Birches Specialist Support Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at The Birches Specialist Support Primary School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

The Birches Specialist Support Primary School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and

inform the school regarding proposed return dates

The Birches Specialist Support Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

The child is on roll and attending another visited school

Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service

The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

4.4.9 Late Arrival Registration begins at 9.30am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9.45am (*no more than thirty minutes after the opening of the register*) pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, (code U) this is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

School starts at **9.00am** with the arrival of pupils and buses. The register opens at **9.15am** and the register will close at **9.45am**. Teachers will complete the register between **9.15-9.30am**. Any pupil arriving after **9.30am** and before **9.45am** will be recorded as late by the school office. Pupils arriving after the close of the register will also be recorded as late (either unauthorised or authorised late). The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause and will count as an absence for that school session. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided. Afternoon registration opens at **1.15pm** and closes at **1.45pm**, with class staff completing electronic registers as close as practically possible to **1.30pm**.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment, with a letter/email/text message provided.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

4.4.10 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holidays
- Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the head teacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**.

4.5 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

4.5.1 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

4.5.2 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court.

5. Deletions from the Register

5.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

5.2.1 The Birches Specialist Support Primary School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The governing board

- The governing board is responsible for:
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

If you have a link governor for attendance, or a committee responsible for attendance, add details of their role in the monitoring of pupil attendance.

6.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

6.3 The designated Senior Leader responsible for School Attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Deputy Headteacher Farzana Shah and can be contacted via 0161 448 8895.

6.4 The Attendance Administrator

The school attendance administrator is responsible for:

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

- Advising the headteacher/attendance lead when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance administrator is Marie Shaw and can be contacted via 0161 448 8895.

6.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in a timely manner (see 4.4.9).

6.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents [and pupils] about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents and carers to the cohort lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

6.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am 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

6.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

7. Using Attendance Data

7.1 The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data monthly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school and/or local authority considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The school will use targeted strategies to reduce unauthorised absence depending on individual circumstances for example – meetings, letters, closer monitoring. Attendance case studies will be provided to Governors.

8. Support Systems

8.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with school to identify the anxiety-based school avoidance resources most appropriate for support and to accept the support that is offered or advised.

8.2 The Birches Specialist Support Primary School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

8.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance for all pupils. Strategies used will include:

For example

- Celebrating good attendance in assemblies and on displays
- WOW assemblies
- Certificates, medals and pick in the box prizes
- Class Dojo messages and points
- Recognising most improved attendance as well as 100% attendance
- Celebrating success with parents, carers and other professionals
- Attendance case studies shared anonymously with Governors

This is an opportunity to provide the school's escalation of intervention based on sessions missed or percentage attendance which will inform a distributed leadership model.

- Escalation of attendance approach / graduated approach
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies such as early help or Thrive Hubs
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Anxiety-based attendance avoidance materials
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Inclusion resources
- Reintegration support packages

8.4 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, The Birches Specialist Support Primary School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

9. Legal Interventions

9.1 Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will

provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

9.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

9.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

9.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

9.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

9.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

9.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

9.2.3 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

9.3 Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher/principal.

9.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

9.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

9.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Distributed Leadership Model

The following is an example of a school's 'escalation of attendance Intervention' based on agreed percentages and sessions missed. This can be adapted to include key strategies deployed by the school to support raising attendance and reducing overall persistent absence. This is not a definitive list but provides examples of 'escalation' linked to each attendance band.

The interventions can be adapted/modified to reflect bespoke intervention for targeted groups or vulnerable cohorts.

Please note a finalised version should be shared with parent/carers and pupils in a format which is accessible to all stakeholders to show the escalation of intervention. Roles and responsibilities can be added to support a distributed leadership model for attendance.

GREEN

Pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%

You may wish to consider any of the following:

- Parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance.
- Pupils will be rewarded within the school's award systems in recognition of good/excellent attendance.
- Pupils with this level of termly and annual attendance will receive a certificate of achievement and their names will be displayed on the school attendance notice/display board.
- The class teacher/form tutor will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes.
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team/the Head of Year will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school self-evaluation and impact of interventions.

AMBER - GREEN

Pupils with attendance between 96% and 94%

You may wish to consider any of the following:

- Class teacher/Form tutor will speak to the pupil to:
- Confirm with the pupil the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required.
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required.
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil to support improving their attendance
- Agree a review date
- In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Does the family need support through an Early Help Assessment?
- Is a referral needed or additional mentoring to support pupil?

RED - AMBER

Pupils with attendance between 91% and 93%

You may wish to consider any of the following:

- Cohort lead will monitor the pupil to:
- Identify underlying in school barriers that may be causing the pupil's absence
- Identify underlying any out of school barriers that may be causing the pupil's absence and consider appropriate support such as early help, Manchester Thrive Hubs etc.
- Review the pupil's academic progress and make links to the pupil's attendance
- Make arrangements for the pupil to catch up on work they have missed
- Implement a Pastoral Support Plan or review other existing pupil plans to include support and improve attendance. If other agencies are involved is a multi-agency meeting or review required to address concerns?
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil before the next review dates and agree a review date

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter will be sent to parent/carer advising of concern and possible future statutory action.

If improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed
- Penalty Notice 15 school day monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date
- Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Offer support through an Early Help Assessment (EHA) with the school acting as lead professional

- Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without providing a satisfactory reason, a minimum of two home visits with the purpose to engage with the parent will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority
- Consider who will be responsible for all action and outcomes and monitoring of attendance post meeting/panel etc.

RED Pupils with attendance below 90%

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are persistently absent and pupils below 50% are considered severely absent from school.

To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals, pupils may be grouped into any of the following categories to ensure they receive personalized support to meet need and address reasons for absence.

Looked After Children and Children on the Child Protection Register

Special Educational Needs

School age parents/expectant parents

Parental support/needs e.g. parental drug use, young carers, domestic violence

School issues e.g. bullying, poor teacher/pupil relationship, curriculum issues

Offended or have an Anti-Social Behaviour Order

English as an Additional Language

Ethnic minority

Mid-Year Admissions

Other

Attendance Lead will:

- Ensure that the pupil has already spoken to a member of staff at the stages preceding RED intervention (RED - AMBER intervention will occur in cases where the pupil has immediately fallen from GREEN into RED)
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in RED - AMBER and escalate accordingly
- Ensure that weekly contact occurs with the pupil either individually or within a small group to address themed issues.
- Ensure that weekly contact with the parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, behaviour and academic progress.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil
- Input into whole school strategies to address the needs of pupils within their group
- Each identified member of staff will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes. Records will be copied to a member of the Senior Leadership Team and headteacher/principal every fortnight/three weeks.
- Multi-agency meeting to address concerns
- Where appropriate statutory action

Attendance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team meetings where the progress of these groups will be reported and the effectiveness of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform intervention.

The headteacher/principal will report to the Chair of Governors/Governor for Attendance each half term and will report termly to the Governing Body on the percentage PA and SA.

A Whole School Strategy for Attendance

Working Together to Improve School Attendance Across Manchester

Introduction

This document provides guidance to schools to support them in improving school attendance from September 2022.

The first part of this document sets out the principles underpinning an effective whole school strategy for attendance.

The second part of this document outlines actions that school staff may consider taking to improve attendance for all pupils, pupils at risk of persistent absence and pupils who are persistently absent (PA).

The third part of this document provides a model attendance policy for schools to use as part of the transition to the new Department for Education (DfE) guidance ‘working together to improve school attendance’ and will replace the existing school attendance guidance.

This guidance is non statutory, and has been produced to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance. Following public consultation earlier this year, and subject to Parliament, the Secretary of State has committed to this guidance becoming statutory by September 2023.

Principles of an effective whole school attendance strategy

This section sets out the principles underpinning an effective whole school strategy for attendance, which requires commitment from every member of the school community.

Leadership and management

- ✓ Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils, and families.
- ✓ Make sure staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- ✓ Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that pupils understand its importance.
- ✓ Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing, and wider outcomes.
- ✓ Empower staff to take responsibility for attendance.
- ✓ Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build, and maintain systems and performance.
- ✓ Have a **designated attendance champion in the senior leadership team** with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures and school improvement plan.
- ✓ Make sure staff receive **professional development** and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.

- ✓ Governors should have an **accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures** where appropriate.

Relationships and communication

- ✓ Build respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- ✓ Communicate openly and honestly with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- ✓ **Liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.**
- ✓ Model respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.

All staff members should:

- ✓ treat pupils with dignity, build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
- ✓ take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence, handling confidential information sensitively
- ✓ understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
- ✓ communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being

Systems and data

- ✓ Use clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences.
- ✓ Make sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
- ✓ Make sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.
- ✓ Every member of staff should know and understand their responsibilities for attendance.
- ✓ Robust school systems provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:
 - children who have a social worker including looked-after children
 - young carers
 - children who are eligible for free school meals
 - children who speak English as a second language
 - children who have special educational needs and disabilities
- ✓ Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
- ✓ Attendance leaders may consider providing regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.
- ✓ School attendance, safeguarding and pastoral support policies should clearly outline:
 - the key principles
 - rules pupils need to follow
 - routines
 - consequence systems

8. The escalation of procedures to address absence needs to be:

- ✓ understood by pupils, parents and carers (consider parent/pupil friendly versions of guidance and policies linked to attendance).
- ✓ implemented consistently
- ✓ reviewed regularly

Intervention

- ✓ Deliver intervention in a targeted way, in response to data or intelligence.
- ✓ Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence (register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking).
- ✓ Use attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.
- ✓ Create action plans in partnership with families and other agencies that may be supporting families, for example, children's social care and early help services. Commission or deliver interventions to improve attendance.
- ✓ Monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy.
- ✓ Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention.
- ✓ Follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers / thresholds are met.

Actions for school staff and local authorities to improve attendance

The following sections outline the actions that school staff and local authorities may consider taking to improve attendance for all pupils, pupils at risk of poor attendance and pupils who are persistently absent.

Each school/setting has different staffing structures and policies, so the designated staff we have used as examples below may not be an exact match. However, the actions we are recommending are relevant to all settings.

School Leaders

All pupils

You may want to:

- ✓ deliver clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through prospectus and admission/transition events
- ✓ use physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure
- ✓ regularly communicate expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through your regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents
- ✓ establish and monitor implementation of rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness
- ✓ monitor implementation of policy and practice, for example through:
 - AM/PM registration time drop in
 - shadow late arrivals at the school office
 - Class Dojo checks

- ✓ monitor whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions
- ✓ establish, implement and monitor robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME)
- ✓ develop good support for children with medical conditions, mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND)
- ✓ engage pupils in consultation on attendance policy, practice, rewards and sanctions
- ✓ ensure that parents fully understand the demands and responsibilities of elective home education

Pupils at risk of persistent absence

You may want to:

- ✓ establish robust escalation procedures which are initiated before absence becomes a problem, for example by:
 - sending letters to parents and carers
 - having a weekly tutor review
 - attend local authority attendance clinics
 - engaging with local authority attendance teams and/or independent attendance organisations for support, advice & guidance
 - using fixed penalty notices as part of your statutory action and policy
 - engaging with children's social care staff, including virtual school Head and social workers where appropriate
- ✓ establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
- ✓ monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures (and intervention), for example:
 - having a review and clinic drop in
 - sampling of case files for quality assurance purposes and ensuring escalation of intervention, where appropriate.
- ✓ evaluate the impact of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work and that reflect the school context best
- ✓ attend or lead on attendance reviews and clinics in line with escalation procedures
- ✓ engage governors in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

Pupils who are persistently absent

You may want to:

- establish clear and effective service level agreements with external partners to support pupils with persistent absence, including:
 - One Education
 - independent attendance organisations
 - alternative providers
 - youth services
 - school nursing and mental health professionals

- children's social care staff where appropriate
- establish good relationships with a network of voluntary organisations and charities to support vulnerable pupils including those with persistent absence, for example:
 - mental health charities
 - mentoring organisations
 - young carers association

Teaching staff

All pupils

You may want to:

- rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually
- emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate pupils to be in the classroom
- promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions
- apply rewards and sanctions consistently
- follow up on absence and lateness with pupils to identify barriers and reasons for absence
- contact parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality
- review form or tutor group attendance weekly to share data, identify issues, intervene early and help set targets
- periodically review practice and consistency both across and between departments
- proactively promote attendance practice as part of staff induction
- consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of pupils

Pupils at risk of persistent absence

You may want to:

- welcome pupils back following an absence and provide a good catch-up support to build confidence.

This could include:

 - lesson resources
 - buddy support
 - one to one input
- meet with pupils to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems
- establish action plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets.

This could include:

- lunchtime arrangements
- support with uniform, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing
- lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- make regular contact with families to discuss progress
- consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

Pupils who are persistently absent

You may want to:

- ✓ prepare supporting resources to ensure pupils can access learning when they return
- ✓ develop targeted intervention to address gaps and build pupils' confidence (including considering small group additional support)
- ✓ contribute to action plans which attendance staff draw together where appropriate
- ✓ provide tailored praise and encouragement when pupils attend and arrive on time

Attendance officers, pastoral staff and family support workers

All pupils

You may want to:

- engage with feeder schools or organisations to access absence information in order to identify target cohorts prior to transfer, including mid-year transfers and managed moves
- provide appropriate support and challenge to establish good registration practice
- carry out robust first day calling procedures including priority routine for vulnerable children including children with a social worker
- undertake home visits in line with your policy to engage families and ensure children are safe
- identify and, where possible, mitigate potential barriers to good attendance in liaison with families and relevant support agencies
- implement punctuality routines such as late gate or sign in procedures
- implement children missing education (CME) procedures when appropriate
- where pupils have additional vulnerabilities which may require multi-agency meetings try to arrange those meetings outside of lesson time, where possible

Pupils at risk of persistent absence

You may want to:

- ✓ provide regular attendance reports to tutors to facilitate weekly reviews with leaders (including special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads) for monitoring and evaluation purposes
- ✓ initiate and oversee the administration of absence procedures.

This could include:

- letters home
- attendance clinics
- engagement with local authorities and other external agencies and partners
- work with families and the community to identify which methods of communication work best, recognising potential barriers in hard-to-reach families and find methods that work and are understood
- consideration if further interventions are required in line with the statutory guidance on [parental responsibility measures](#)

- ✓ provide regular reports to leaders on the at-risk cohort
- ✓ provide regular reports/caseloads to local authority attendance team or independent attendance organisations to raise awareness of emerging at-risk pupils

Pupils who are persistently absent

You may want to:

- ✓ develop and implement persistent absence action plans with pupils and families which address barriers and help establish positive attendance routines
- ✓ identify tailored intervention which meets the needs of the pupil, for example:
 - mentoring
 - careers advice and guidance input
 - college placement
 - alternative provision where appropriate
- ✓ lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and impact of support
- ✓ make regular contact with families to discuss progress
- ✓ liaise with school leaders (designated safeguarding, special educational needs coordinator and pastoral leads) on referrals to external agencies and multi-agency assessments
- ✓ coordinate and contribute to multi-agency meetings to review progress and agree on actions
- ✓ work in partnership with local authority attendance team and other agencies to ensure the appropriate use of statutory parental responsibility measures
- ✓ provide regular reports to leaders on the impact of action plans and interventions

Local authorities and external partners

All pupils

Manchester LA will:

- ✓ monitor and interrogate local and national data, feedback from schools and intelligence from partner agencies to develop an LA wide strategy to improve attendance and monitor impact (including join up with early help, children's social care and other LA services)
- ✓ monitor and share relevant absence information with schools for specific groups of pupils including those with protected characteristics
- ✓ maintain regular communication and build relationships with school leaders through local networks and forums, to share local and national data, disseminate best practice and respond to intelligence from school leaders
- ✓ use your children's services team to facilitate community strategies and initiatives, for example:
 - local authority messages on holidays
 - minimise mid-week starts to school term
 - shared agency messages to reinforce attendance
- ✓ engage partners from virtual school, early help and social care teams to ensure that they understand attendance expectations and ensure that the vulnerable cohort they serve are supported to sustain good levels of attendance

- ✓ work closely with local health services to ensure practitioners understand attendance requirements/responsibilities and work collaboratively with them to link families into the right support
- ✓ establish and implement robust children missing education (CME) procedures to follow up reports from school and other educational organisations within agreed timescales

Virtual School Heads will:

- ✓ monitor the attendance of looked-after children
- ✓ set aspirational targets for attendance within personal education plans
- ✓ provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting the attendance of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- ✓ provide advice and guidance to those services supporting previously looked-after children and their families about promoting and securing good attendance

School nursing teams may provide support to help implement care plans to support the attendance of pupils with healthcare needs.

Pupils at risk of persistent absence

Local authorities may want to have a clear process for how attendance issues should be managed and escalated if unresolved, making clear when to follow different steps of intervention and involving all relevant agencies.

Social workers and family support workers should:

- ✓ convey high expectations for attendance
- ✓ make sure school attendance is prioritised within multi-agency plans
- ✓ in line with local guidance, use children in need or other multi-agency plans to identify barriers to attendance and engage schools and services in providing early intervention support

For looked-after children, Virtual School Heads should ensure personal education plans identify and address any barriers to good attendance.

Pupils who are persistently absent

Manchester City Council Statutory Attendance team will:

- ✓ consider using a range of Parental Responsibility Measures (including penalty notices, and ultimately prosecution) using supportive measures alongside sanctions to change parental behaviour
- ✓ build relationships with families of persistently absent pupils, and provide practical support to unblock barriers to attendance
- ✓ coordinate strategies and services to ensure that messages on attendance are consistent and that information is shared appropriately
- ✓ Social workers and family support workers should convey expectations for attendance and support children and families to overcome barriers to attendance
- ✓ For looked-after children, Virtual School Heads should use personal education plans to identify barriers to attendance and secure appropriate intervention, reviewing regularly to monitor impact.

To help pupils return to school, school nursing teams can also provide support and advice on:

- **attendance routines**
- **hospital education provision**
- **home tuition**
- **medical needs provision**

Further resources available from Gov.uk

Statutory guidance

- School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures
- Children missing education
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school
- Keeping children safe in education
- Alternative provision
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school
- School exclusion

Guidance and resources

- School attendance: guidance for schools
- Checklist for school leaders to support full opening: behaviour and attendance
- Mental health and wellbeing resources
- Mental health and behaviour guidance
- Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying
- Respectful School Communities Tool
- Skills for care: toolkit for social workers to support conversations about returning to education settings in September
- Education Endowment Foundation: research on texting parents
- Education Endowment Foundation: research on parental engagement

This page has been left
intentionally blank.

Policy Information and Review

Review frequency: Annually

Date	Version	Changes made	By whom (name and role)	Due date for next review	Reviewed & Ratified by SLT (sign and date)
June 2018	1	Update to late arrival/Attendance Lead	Dani March AHT	June 2019	
July 2019	1	Policy info and review table moved to back page & Dates changed for ratification purposes – policy content same	F Shah Deputy Head	July 2020	
June 2020	1	Policy reviewed, and proof read.	F Shah Deputy Head	June 2021	
December 2020	2	COVID addendum added as Appendix 3 P16-22	F Shah Deputy Head	December 2021	
December 2021	3	Latest Manchester City Council Special School Attendance Policy content used and register guidance including COVID codes for 2021-22 to replace previous version – guidance specific to The Birches amended.	F Shah Deputy Head	December 2022	
December 2022	4	Latest Manchester City Council Attendance Policy content used and register guidance to replace previous version - reflects	F Shah Deputy Head	December 2023	

		the updated DFE guidance 'working together to improve school attendance' which was effective from September 2022. – guidance specific to The Birches amended for personalisation to our own school.			