OUR LADY OF LOURDES

CATHOLIC MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Pupil Attendance Policy

September 2026

Our Lady of Lourdes Mission Statement:

We are a partnership of Catholic schools.

Our aim is to provide the very best Catholic education for all in our community and so improve life chances through spiritual, academic and social development.

By placing the person and teachings of Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do, we will:

- Follow the example of Our Lady of Lourdes by nurturing everyone in a spirit of compassion, service and healing
- Work together so that we can all achieve our full potential, deepen our faith and realise our God-given talents
- Make the world a better place, especially for the most vulnerable in our society, by doing ***'little things with great love'*** *St Thérèse of Lisieux*

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TRUST-WIDE PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Pupil Attendance Policy 2026 is the centrally controlled Trust policy and applies to every school within Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. It sets out the common principles, statutory requirements, minimum expectations and Trust procedures that all schools must follow. The Policy must not be amended locally.

The Pupil Attendance Policy 2026 is published on the Trust website. Each school must provide a clear link to the current Trust Policy from its own website.

Each school must also complete, maintain and publish Annex B: School-Specific Attendance Information and Arrangements on its website. Annex B sets out the local operational information and arrangements specific to the school and should be read in conjunction with the Trust Pupil Attendance Policy.

Annex B must be kept up to date and must not remove, weaken or conflict with any requirement set out within the Trust Pupil Attendance Policy.

1. Core Principles

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT) is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all students. Rooted in our Catholic ethos and guided by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, we recognise the dignity and unique value of every child and our responsibility to support them in developing their God-given potential. This reflects Christ's promise: ***'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10).*** The Trust sincerely believes that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end, the Trust will do as much as it can to ensure that all students achieve maximum possible attendance and that any issues which may impede full attendance are acted upon as quickly as possible.

In keeping with the Catholic Social Teaching principles of the common good, solidarity and a preferential option for those who may be vulnerable, we are committed to working in partnership with pupils, families and external agencies to identify and remove barriers to attendance, enabling every child to flourish academically, socially and spiritually.
Pupil performance and wellbeing go hand in hand. Pupils cannot learn effectively if they do not feel safe or if health needs and other barriers are not identified and appropriately supported.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. Where a child is registered at a school, parents must ensure regular attendance. Schools, trusts and local authorities must work together to understand and remove barriers, provide appropriate support and, where support is unsuccessful, not engaged with or inappropriate, consider formal or legal intervention. For the purposes of this policy, regular

attendance means attending every session for its full duration unless a statutory reason for absence applies.

Penalty notices are one possible legal intervention under sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. They are considered in accordance with the DfE National Framework and the relevant local authority code of conduct, after the individual circumstances, support provided, equality duties and safeguarding factors have been considered.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust includes schools located within several local authority areas. Each school must follow the current attendance code of conduct, referral process and documentation requirements of the local authority in which the pupil is registered.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy has been prepared with regard to the DfE's statutory guidance, ***Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026),*** and other relevant legislation and guidance.

The legislation and guidance listed below are the principal sources underpinning this policy; the list is not exhaustive. Schools must have regard to the current versions of all legislation and statutory guidance applicable to their circumstances.

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

The 2007 penalty-notice regulations were amended in 2024 through:

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2024

The National Framework itself is contained in Chapter 6 of:

- Working together to improve school attendance – July 2026

It also refers to:

- Keeping children safe in education 2026 (effective from 1 September 2026)
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (September 2025)
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school

- Alternative provision: statutory guidance

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

- **Persistent** absence refers to pupils who miss 10% or more of school.
- **Severe** absence refers to pupils who miss 50% or more of school.

This Policy will be published on the Trust website, and each school will provide a clear link to the current Policy from its own website. Each school will also publish its completed Annex B: School-Specific Attendance Information and Arrangements on its website.

Parents/carers will be sent or signposted to both the Trust Pupil Attendance Policy and the school's Annex B when a pupil joins the school. They will be reminded of these at the beginning of each school year and whenever the Policy or Annex B is updated.

Schools will ensure that the Policy and their Annex B are made available in an accessible format where required.

3. Aims

Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT recognises that;

- Every child of compulsory school age is entitled to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Some pupils and families may require additional or individualised support to address barriers to attendance. The school will consider appropriate support and adjustments on a case-by-case basis and will make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- In developing and applying this policy, the Trust and its schools will also have regard to relevant principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the child's best interests, right to education and right for their views to be considered.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils, parents or carers may affect attendance. The school will work in partnership with pupils, parents and relevant agencies to resolve barriers wherever possible. Where consent is not required, or a safeguarding or statutory duty applies, the school will share information and make referrals lawfully and proportionately.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their society.

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 (July 2026), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The CMAT Board

The CMAT Board retains ultimate responsibility for the governance of the Trust and its schools. It sets the Trust's strategic expectations for attendance, approves and reviews this policy in accordance with the Trust's policy-approval arrangements, and receives appropriate assurance about attendance across the Trust.

The Board holds the Chief Executive Officer to account for the educational performance of the Trust's schools. Attendance information and assurance may be presented to the Board by the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Chief Executive Officer or another appropriate member of the Executive Team.

Through the CEO, DCEO and Executive Team, the CMAT Board will ensure that effective attendance practice is shared across the Trust and that Trust-level trends and the impact of attendance strategies are reviewed and challenged.

4.2 The Local Governing Body

In accordance with the OLOL Scheme of Delegation, the Local Governing Body is accountable for the school-level review and scrutiny of pupil attendance. The headteacher is responsible for undertaking that review and reporting attendance information to the Local Governing Body and as required, to the Executive Team and CMAT Board.

The Local Governing Body will:

- receive and scrutinise attendance and punctuality information at least termly, including persistent and severe absence, unauthorised absence, lateness and the attendance of relevant pupil groups;
- set high expectations for attendance and ensure that its importance is reflected across the school's ethos, policies and improvement priorities;

- support and challenge the headteacher regarding attendance priorities, agreed areas of focus, emerging patterns, barriers and improvement actions, recognising that absence may be an indicator of wider welfare, safeguarding or other difficulties;
- seek assurance that statutory attendance and safeguarding duties, accurate registration and statutory data-sharing requirements, and this policy are being implemented effectively;
- seek assurance that the school maintains high aspirations for all pupils and adapts attendance processes and support appropriately to individual circumstances and needs, including those of pupils with SEND, medical conditions or other known barriers;
- monitor the effectiveness and impact of school-wide and targeted attendance strategies and support and, where attendance is a significant concern, work with the headteacher to ensure that a comprehensive improvement plan is in place;
- seek assurance that all staff receive appropriate attendance training and that staff with specific attendance responsibilities have the necessary knowledge, capacity, resources and specialist training;
- seek assurance that the school works effectively with the Trust, local authority and other relevant partners and shares required attendance information appropriately;
- hold the headteacher to account for reviewing pupil attendance and reporting attendance information in accordance with the OLOL Scheme of Delegation; and
- escalate significant or continuing concerns through the Trust's agreed governance and assurance arrangements.

4.3 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Making good attendance a central part of our school's vision, values and ethos.
- Account for attendance in school improvement priorities and regularly reviewing our approach to improving attendance.
- Ensuring there is a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for improving attendance.
- Promoting and visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance.
- Recognising that children absent from education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues.
- 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 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
- Considering or requesting legal intervention, including penalty notices, only where appropriate and in line with the National Framework and the relevant local authority code of conduct
- Ensuring that attendance is included in staff induction and ongoing professional development. All staff will receive appropriate training on the importance of attendance, register requirements, school procedures and working with families and partners. Staff with designated attendance responsibilities will receive role-specific training, including attendance-data analysis and approaches to addressing common barriers to attendance.

4.4 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance (Senior Attendance Champion)

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

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

Each school must have a designated Senior Attendance Champion. The name, role and appropriate contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion must be recorded in Annex B, together with contacts for routine attendance enquiries and more detailed attendance support. Each school must complete, publish and maintain Annex B under the authority of the headteacher without altering this centrally controlled Part A.

4.5 Class teachers

Teachers must complete registers accurately at the time set by the school, using the marks available to them in the management information system, and immediately report any discrepancy or safeguarding concern to the school office or designated staff. Final coding decisions remain the responsibility of authorised attendance staff.

4.6 School office staff

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer enquiries to the appropriate attendance or pastoral lead where more detailed support is required

4.7 Parents / 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
- Report their child's absence by the time and method stated in Annex B on the first day and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when the child is expected to return
- Where reasonably possible, provide the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, to maintain good attendance by contacting the appropriate member of school staff using the contact details published in Annex B and on the school's website.

4.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

Attend school every day, on time

Parents and students can expect the following from Our Lady of Lourdes Trust;

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance, **electronically.**
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a reason
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us
- Inclusive and sensitive recognition of good or improving attendance, where appropriate
- A quality education

5. Recording attendance

5.1 Admission register

Each school will maintain an electronic admission register containing the information required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 for every pupil, regardless of age. A pupil's name will be entered on the expected first day of

attendance. The register will be kept up to date, required new-pupil and deletion returns will be made to the local authority, and a pupil's name will be deleted only when a statutory ground is fully satisfied. If a pupil does not attend on the expected first day, the school will establish the reason promptly and take appropriate attendance and safeguarding action.

5.2 Attendance register

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

The attendance register will be taken at the same designated time for all pupils at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Using the national codes in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current DfE guidance, the register will record whether each pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment
- Because the attendance register records the pupil's presence at the time it was taken, it will only routinely be amended where the reason for absence could not be established at that time, and the entry subsequently needs to be corrected.

Schools must use the current national attendance and absence codes set out in chapter 8 of the DfE statutory guidance, Working together to improve school attendance. See appendix B within the Trust Attendance Procedures, Templates and Resources for the DfE attendance codes.

Admission and attendance register entries, including preserved amendments, will be retained for 6 years from the date of the entry in accordance with the 2024 Regulations.

Each school must set out its start time, register-closing times, end time, absence-reporting arrangements and attendance contact details in Annex B and publish these on its website.

Where applicable, the attendance register will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Annex B will state when each register is taken and when it closes. The register will be taken at the same designated time for all pupils in the relevant session and will be kept open for no longer than 30 minutes.

6. Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for an unplanned absence on the first day, by the time and method stated in Annex B, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

The school day and registration information is set out in Annex B and published on the school's website.

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 not routinely request medical evidence or operate blanket rules requiring a doctor's note. It may request reasonable supporting information where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or where prolonged or repeated illness means, information is needed to understand the pupil's needs, identify support or reasonable adjustments, or record the absence accurately. The school will be flexible about the form of information requested and will begin by discussing the circumstances with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil.

If, after considering the available information, the school is not satisfied that an authorised absence code accurately describes the reason for absence, the absence will be recorded using Code O and the parent will be informed.

7. Planned absence

Leave for a medical or dental appointment may be authorised where the parent notifies the school in advance whenever possible. The school may ask for proportionate confirmation of the appointment where reasonable. Only the minimum time necessary should be authorised.

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.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

See sections 12 and 17 for the circumstances in which absence may be authorised.

8. Following up unexplained absence

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

- Contact the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to establish the reason. If the school cannot reach the parent or emergency contacts, it

will follow its risk-assessed attendance and safeguarding procedures. This may include a welfare visit carried out in accordance with the school's safeguarding and lone-working arrangements.

- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Identify the correct attendance code and enter it as soon as the reason is established and no later than five school days after the session. If the reason cannot be established within five school days, Code N will be replaced with Code O.
- Contact the parent on each day that unexplained absence continues and take prompt safeguarding action proportionate to the pupil's circumstances and known risks. This may include contact with additional emergency contacts, a welfare visit, the designated safeguarding lead, children's social care, police, the local authority attendance service or other relevant professionals
- Where relevant, inform the pupil's foster carer, social worker and/or youth offending team worker promptly about unexplained absence.
- Ensure the designated safeguarding lead is informed where absence is repeated, prolonged, unexplained or otherwise indicates a safeguarding concern, and work with local authority children's services where required.
- 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

9. Reporting to parents / carers

- The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence. Communication will make absence understandable by explaining, where appropriate, the number of days, sessions or lessons missed and the impact on the pupil's learning, wellbeing, friendships and participation rather than relying on a headline percentage alone. Messages will be timely, respectful, proportionate to the level of concern and adapted to the pupil's age, circumstances, SEND and known barriers. They will identify practical next steps and a clear route to support.

10. Promoting and supporting good attendance

10.1 Promoting good attendance

Schools will promote good attendance by:

- communicating high expectations for attendance and punctuality clearly and consistently;
- promoting the educational, social and wellbeing benefits of regular attendance;
- providing a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which pupils feel that they belong;
- building positive relationships with pupils and families;
- completing registers accurately and following up absence promptly;
- recognising improved attendance, engagement and the overcoming of barriers where this is appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to individual circumstances; and

- communicating positively about attendance without stigmatising pupils who experience illness, disability, SEND, caring responsibilities or other legitimate barriers.

10.2 Monitoring and analysing attendance

The school will monitor attendance and punctuality patterns at least weekly at individual-pupil, cohort and year-group level so that emerging concerns can be addressed early. It will undertake more detailed analysis half-termly, termly and across the full year, including patterns in attendance codes, particular days and, where relevant, lesson attendance.

The school will share attendance information securely with the Department for Education in accordance with statutory requirements, including through the daily automated collection and sharing of attendance data from the school's management information system. Attendance data may be used and published by the Department for Education as part of national and local-authority-level statistical releases, including underlying school-level data.

Schools will make the statutory register returns required by the 2024 Regulations. This includes new-pupil and deletion returns outside standard transition points; attendance returns containing the names and addresses of compulsory-school-age pupils who fail to attend regularly or have been absent continuously for 10 school days with one or more of Codes G, N, O or U; and sickness returns as set out in section 13.5. Attendance returns will be provided at the frequency agreed with the relevant local authority and at least once per calendar month.

Authorised local-authority officers may access the school's admission and attendance registers and take digital or physical extracts where this is necessary for their functions under the Education Acts.

Schools, Local Governing Bodies and the Trust Board will review and benchmark attendance and absence at whole-school, year-group and cohort level against appropriate local, regional and national comparators and, where useful, similar schools. Analysis will identify emerging patterns and key groups according to school context, including pupils with SEND, pupils eligible for pupil premium, pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children, young carers and pupils attending alternative provision. Schools will evaluate the impact of school-wide and targeted attendance strategies and report this through the Trust's agreed governance and assurance arrangements.

Analysis will also consider any other pupil groups indicated by the school's local context and Public Sector Equality Duty, including groups that currently have, or have historically had, lower attendance than their peers.

Schools will:

- develop targeted actions to address identified patterns at individual, group and cohort level;

- provide targeted support for pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence and their families;
- provide relevant attendance information to teachers, school leaders, the SENCO, designated safeguarding lead, pupil premium lead and Local Governing Body;
- monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions and adjust them where necessary;
- share information and work collaboratively with the Trust, local authorities, other schools and relevant partners where appropriate; and
- participate in regular Targeting Support Meetings with the relevant local authority, sharing information and agreeing coordinated action for pupils and cohorts requiring additional support; and
- provide attendance reports to support effective Local Governing Body scrutiny and Trust oversight.

10.3 Understanding and removing barriers

"Bear one another's burdens."
Galatians 6:2

In the first instance, schools will support pupils and parents by:

- listening to and understanding the barriers affecting attendance;
- working with families to address in-school barriers;
- meeting families of pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- agreeing appropriate actions, interventions and review arrangements; and
- helping families access relevant services and organisations.

Where absence intensifies, the school will provide additional support, including:

- holding more formal discussions with pupils and parents;
- regularly reviewing and adapting the attendance support plan; and
- working with the local authority School Attendance Support Team, children's services and other relevant partners, including through Family Help or a whole-family plan where appropriate.
- For a pupil who lives in a different local-authority area from the school, the school will work with both the School and Home Local Authorities to agree a coordinated pupil- and family-centred approach. Any penalty notice must follow the code of conduct for the School Local Authority and, if issued by a local authority, must be issued by the School Local Authority. Prosecution under section 444 will generally be led by the School Local Authority, while residence-based functions such as children's social care, transport and section 19 alternative provision remain with the Home Local Authority.

Where voluntary support has not been successful or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the local authority and other relevant partners to formalise support where appropriate. This may include an attendance contract or consideration of an education supervision order.

Where absence indicates a safeguarding concern, the school will respond in accordance with its safeguarding and child-protection procedures, including making referrals to children's social care where appropriate.

11. Punctuality

11.1 Recording and responding to lateness

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for pupils' learning, wellbeing and safeguarding. **Each school will publish the time by which pupils are expected to arrive and the time at which the attendance registers close.** The register will remain open for the same stated period for every session and **for no longer than 30 minutes**.

A pupil who arrives after the register has started being taken but before it closes will be recorded using code L. **Code L is classified as attending, but late**.

Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed but before the end of the session, the school will establish the reason for the lateness. Code U will be used where no reason is established, or the school is not satisfied that the reason should be recorded using an authorised absence code. Where another national attendance or absence code more accurately reflects the circumstances, that code will be used (see chapter 8 of the DfE statutory guidance, Working together to improve school attendance). Code U is classified as unauthorised absence for the whole session.

Schools will monitor lateness and identify emerging patterns. Where lateness is repeated, the school will contact the pupil's parents, seek to understand any barriers and agree appropriate support or actions.

Continued late arrival recorded as unauthorised absence will be considered alongside any other unauthorised absence. Where the national threshold is met, the school will consider the individual circumstances, support provided and whether formal support or referral to the local authority is appropriate. A penalty notice will not be requested or issued solely because the national threshold has been met. Each case will be considered individually in accordance with the National Framework and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.

12. Authorised and unauthorised absence

12.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend another school or setting, where the applicable statutory conditions are met.

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, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave for public examinations agreed in advance; study leave will not be granted for internal examinations or mocks

- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence and its duration are determined by the headteacher on the individual merits of the request and in accordance with regulation 11 of the 2024 Regulations. No category of exceptional circumstance is approved automatically. Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, using the school's form where provided. The headteacher may request reasonable supporting information where it is needed to determine the individual facts and circumstances; a request will not be refused automatically solely because a particular form of evidence is unavailable.

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

- Illness, including physical or mental ill health, and authorised medical or dental appointments. Medical evidence is not an automatic requirement; any request must be reasonable, proportionate and considered case by case.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent travelling for occupational purposes (Code T) – this applies only where the pupil is a mobile child with no fixed abode, the parent is travelling in the course of a trade or business that requires travel from place to place, and the pupil is travelling with them. Occasional or short-term travel will not normally meet the criteria. Evidence will be requested only where there is genuine and reasonable doubt. Where the family is travelling in England, the pupil is expected, where practicable, to attend another school and be dual registered. Although Code T is authorised absence, attendance enforcement may still be considered if attendance falls below an acceptable level.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

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
- Attending work experience

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

12.2 Attendance meetings

Where attendance concerns require further discussion, the school may invite the pupil and parents/carers to an attendance meeting and, where appropriate, involve relevant professionals. The purpose is to understand barriers, agree support and required improvement, and review progress. A meeting will not be required automatically in every case.

If absence persists or intensifies, the school will follow the graduated support and formal-action arrangements in sections 15 and 16. Any referral or legal intervention will be considered individually and proportionately, in accordance with statutory guidance and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.

13. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

13.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Our school will hold meetings with parents to ascertain and understand the barriers to attendance. Support will be offered in accordance with the issues identified.

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

The school will work with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals to understand any health- or SEND-related barriers to attendance, provide joined-up pastoral support, make reasonable adjustments where required and agree an appropriate support or reintegration plan. A time-limited phased return may be considered where appropriate. Medical evidence for recording illness absence will be needed only in a minority of cases; however, where health needs are complex, long term or frequently recurring, the school may seek proportionate medical evidence to understand the pupil's needs and identify suitable provision. Where a pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or barriers relate to their identified needs, the school will inform and work with the local authority.

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

"Encourage one another and build up each other."
1 Thessalonians 5:11

Our school will meet with the pupil and family to plan a suitable return following a lengthy or unavoidable absence. The plan may include reasonable adjustments to timings, entrance and dismissal arrangements, the environment and support to rebuild confidence and bridge gaps

in learning. Remote education will be considered only as a last resort, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, and as part of a wider, time-limited plan supporting reintegration. A pupil receiving remote education while absent will remain recorded as absent using the appropriate national attendance or absence code; engagement with remote education will be monitored separately.

13.4 Pupils who are young carers

Young carers will be identified and recorded in accordance with school-census requirements. Where caring responsibilities may be contributing to absence, the school will work with the pupil and family to understand the barriers and put appropriate support in place. Where needs extend beyond the school, the school will work with the local authority, early help arrangements and relevant organisations; where appropriate, the family will be informed about the right to request a young carer's needs assessment.

13.5 Provision of work during absence

The school does not routinely provide work for pupils during short-term periods of absence. Where a pupil is too unwell to attend school, they would not normally be expected to complete schoolwork at home. Pupils will be supported, where necessary, to address important gaps in learning when they return. Providing work at home is not an alternative to attending school and does not affect how the absence is recorded.

In exceptional circumstances, the school may agree to provide remote education or other learning activities. This will be considered individually and may form part of an agreed, time-limited plan for a pupil who is unable to attend but is well enough to learn. This does not affect the school's duties in relation to pupils with SEND, medical needs, suspensions or permanent exclusions, or education arranged by the local authority.

13.6 Sickness returns and continuity of education

The school will make a sickness return to the local authority where a pupil of compulsory school age is recorded using code I and there are reasonable grounds to believe that illness will result in 15 or more school days of absence, either consecutively or cumulatively during the school year. The school will work with the local authority to consider any provision required to maintain continuity of education.

13.7 Temporary part-time timetables

A temporary part-time timetable will be used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and will not be used to manage behaviour. It must be agreed with the parent with whom the pupil normally lives, form part of a wider support, health-care or reintegration plan, have a clear ambition for return to full-time education, regular review dates and a proposed end date, and remain in place for the shortest time necessary. The pupil

and parents/carers will be involved in reviews. Where the pupil has a social worker, they will be kept informed; where the pupil has an EHC plan, the school will discuss the arrangement with the local authority. Absence under the timetable will be recorded using the appropriate national code.

Flexi-schooling is different from a temporary part-time timetable. It is an arrangement under which a child is primarily electively home educated but attends school for part of their education by agreement with the school. Schools are not required to offer flexi-schooling. Where it is agreed, authorised sessions not attended at school will be recorded using Code C.

13.7 Anxiety-related non-attendance (ARNA)

Anxious feelings about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or other aspects of school do not automatically mean that a pupil is too ill to attend. The school will maintain the expectation of regular attendance while listening to the pupil and family, identifying barriers, making appropriate support or reasonable adjustments, and considering a time-limited reintegration plan where needed. Each session of absence will be recorded using the national code that accurately reflects the statutory reason; pastoral records may record the underlying barrier and support provided.

Should a parent/carer have any concerns regarding their child's mental health or wellbeing, they should contact our school immediately.

If a pupil has a long-term absence, the school will maintain regular communication with the pupil and family and will seek appropriate support from relevant professionals and agencies.

Schools must follow any relevant local pathway or guidance for emotionally based school avoidance or anxiety-related non-attendance.

13.8 Working with other agencies

In accordance with the Catholic Social Teaching principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, schools will work with pupils, families and relevant services to coordinate support at the earliest appropriate level and improve outcomes for pupils. Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

There are many support services with which schools can work to improve outcomes for pupils:

- Targeted Support; Family Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- School health
- Social care
- Youth Offending Team
- Police

- CAMHS
- Absent in Education Teams
- Admissions Team
- Education Welfare Service
- Children Absent in Education

14. 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.

Our 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 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 persistent and severe absence, the support available and any further action that may be considered.
    - 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
- Consider formalising support or taking further action where this is necessary, appropriate and proportionate.

15. Attendance Support, Monitoring and Formal Action

The school will respond to attendance concerns through a staged approach that combines early identification, appropriate support, monitoring and, where necessary, formal action.

The school and local authority will identify which parent or parents it is appropriate to involve in attendance support or formal action, taking account of the individual circumstances and in accordance with DfE guidance and the relevant local authority's code of conduct. Formal action will usually involve the parent or parents who have allowed the absence.

Relevant correspondence will be sent to each parent against whom formal action is being considered. Staff will not assume that every adult living in the household is a parent for the purposes of attendance law.

Information will be shared only where there is a lawful basis and in accordance with data protection law, safeguarding requirements and any applicable court order.

A separate Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates contains the approved operational procedures, letters, forms and templates used to support consistent implementation of this policy. It is an internal working resource and does not form part of this published policy.

Important note: local authority requirements
Local authorities may prescribe their own procedures, templates or wording for Notices to Improve, penalty notice referrals and other attendance action.

Schools must check and follow the current code of conduct, referral process and documentation requirements of the local authority in which the pupil is registered. Where the local authority requires a particular letter or template, this must be used instead of the corresponding Trust example.

The letters in the Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates may be adapted to reflect the circumstances of the individual case but must not be used where they conflict with a mandatory local authority process or template.

Attendance letters and stepped approach
See the Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates: Attendance Letters.

Recording attendance concerns and actions	Attendance reviews, communications, correspondence, meetings, attempts to contact parents, actions, support offered or provided, decisions, reasons for decisions, agreed outcomes and review dates must be recorded promptly on the school's designated attendance or pupil-recording system. Records must be clear, factual and accurate. Any safeguarding concern arising from absence must be recorded and responded to without delay in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including through CPOMS (**Please see the Trust Safeguarding Policy**). Sensitive safeguarding information should not be duplicated unnecessarily on general attendance records; an appropriate cross-reference should be made where required.

Optional beginning-of-year communication	Schools must communicate their attendance expectations, procedures and sources of support clearly to pupils and parents at the beginning of each academic year and reinforce these messages throughout the year. Schools may use the Trust templates or a Trust-approved school version: **Letter 1: Start of the Academic Year – Pupils of Compulsory School Age** and **Letter 2: Start of the Academic Year – Pupils Below Compulsory School Age**. The Trust letters are optional where the school provides equivalent approved communication through another suitable method.

Attendance monitoring bands

Attendance	Description	School response
100%	**No absence recorded**	Recognise positively where appropriate, while ensuring that any recognition is inclusive, applied sensitively and does not disadvantage pupils with legitimate absence.
95%–99.9%	**Attendance is broadly secure**	Maintain universal communication and monitor any emerging patterns, changes or concerns.
90.1%–94.9%	**Attendance requires monitoring**	Review the reasons and pattern of absence, consider the pupil's individual circumstances, understand any barriers and provide appropriate early support before patterns become established.

50.1%–90%	**Persistent absence**	Meet with the pupil and parent to understand the reasons and barriers affecting attendance. Agree and provide appropriate targeted support, involve the local authority and other relevant partners where necessary, and monitor and review progress regularly.
50% or below	**Severe absence**	Treat the pupil as a top priority for support. Work with the pupil, parent, local authority and other relevant services to provide intensive and coordinated support to address the barriers to attendance. Consider whether the absence indicates a safeguarding concern and respond in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. Where severe unauthorised absence continues after appropriate support and educational provision have been facilitated, the school will liaise with the designated safeguarding lead, the local authority and children's social care, as the circumstances may indicate neglect.

The descriptions above 90% are Trust monitoring bands and are not separate DfE classifications. Attendance of 90% or below is classified nationally as persistent absence. Attendance of 50% or below is classified as severe absence; pupils who are severely absent are also persistently absent.

Attendance percentages will be considered alongside the reasons and pattern of absence, the pupil's individual circumstances and any known barriers. The bands support monitoring, early identification and proportionate intervention. They are not automatic or sequential stages and do not create automatic sanctions, meetings or evidence requirements. The school may act at any point where the pattern of absence, safeguarding concerns or the pupil's circumstances require an earlier or more intensive response.

Emerging attendance concerns

Attendance below 95% is a Trust monitoring trigger rather than a statutory threshold. The school's response will take account of the reasons and pattern of absence, whether absence is authorised or unauthorised, the pupil's individual circumstances and any known barriers. The four-school-week review process will not prevent earlier action where safeguarding concerns arise, absence becomes severe, the national penalty-notice threshold is met or more immediate support or intervention is required.

Step	Action	School response
Step 1	**Initial attendance concern**	Where attendance has fallen below 95%, or another concerning pattern is identified, the school will review the accuracy of the attendance record, the reasons and pattern of absence, any recorded lateness, the

		pupil's individual circumstances and any known barriers. Where appropriate, the school will contact the pupil and parent to understand the circumstances and consider whether early support is required. **Letter 3: Attendance Concern – Four-School-Week Supportive Review** may be issued. This begins a four-school-week monitoring period. Issuing the letter is not automatic and does not imply that all absence is unauthorised or unjustified. For pupils below compulsory school age, **Letter 5: Concerns in Attendance – Non-Statutory School Age** may be used.
Step 2	**Two-week midpoint review**	After two school weeks, the school will review progress, any changes in the pattern or reasons for absence and whether further support is required. Where there has been insufficient improvement, further concerning or unauthorised absence has occurred, or concerns have increased, **Letter 4: Continued Attendance Concern – Midpoint Review** may be issued. Attendance will continue to be monitored for the remaining two weeks of the original four-school-week period. This does not begin a separate monitoring period. Where progress is being made or the circumstances are understood and appropriate support is already in place, monitoring may continue without issuing a further letter.
Step 3	**End-of-review decision**	At the end of the four-school-week period, the school will review the reasons and pattern of absence, the pupil's individual circumstances, support offered or provided, engagement with that support and progress made. Improvement will be assessed in the context of the individual case and will not be determined solely by the pupil's cumulative attendance percentage. Depending on the outcome, the school may conclude the formal review and return the pupil to routine monitoring; continue or adjust existing support; contact or meet with the pupil and parent; agree an attendance support plan using **Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates: Attendance Support Plan**; or progress to the persistent-absence or formal-support stages where the relevant criteria are met. A meeting or attendance support plan will not be required automatically in every case.

		Where attendance has improved, **Letter 6: Improving Attendance** may be issued. Letter 6 may also be used at another appropriate point where sustained improvement is identified.

Persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible school sessions, generally equivalent to attendance of 90% or below. Severe absence means missing 50% or more of possible sessions, generally equivalent to attendance of 50% or below. Pupils who are severely absent are also persistently absent. The school will review all pupils who are persistently or severely absent. Its response will take account of whether absence is authorised or unauthorised, the reasons and pattern of absence, known barriers, the pupil's individual circumstances and any safeguarding concerns.

The school will meet with the pupil and parent to understand the barriers affecting attendance and agree appropriate targeted support. Where barriers require wider intervention, the school will work with the local authority and other relevant partners. Pupils who are severely absent will be treated as a priority for intensive and coordinated support.

The review, engagement, safeguarding and voluntary-support elements of Steps 4 and 5 apply to pupils of any age. Attendance contracts and education supervision orders referred to in Step 5, and the formal attendance action described in Steps 6 and 7, apply only to pupils of compulsory school age. This does not prevent the school from seeking support or making a safeguarding referral for a pupil below compulsory school age where appropriate. All decisions will be made individually and proportionately, with regard to safeguarding and equality duties and, where formal attendance action is considered, in accordance with the National Framework and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.

Step	Action	School Response
Step 4	**Persistent-absence review**	Where absence is authorised and the circumstances are already understood, the school may continue existing support, monitoring and review arrangements without issuing a further standard letter. Where persistent absence includes significant unauthorised absence, **Letter 7: Formal Notice of Persistent and Unauthorised Absence** may be issued. The school will meet with the pupil and parent to understand the reasons for absence, identify and address barriers and agree the improvement required. The pupil's involvement will be appropriate

		to their age, understanding and individual circumstances. The meeting will normally take place face to face, although a telephone or online meeting may be used where this is more appropriate or would support effective engagement. Regular review meetings will be held where the pupil is considered vulnerable, persistently absent or severely absent, for as long as they are required. Where illness is a significant factor, reasonable adjustments and appropriate support will be considered. Medical evidence will be required only in a minority of cases. Supporting information may be requested where there is a genuine and reasonable need to understand the pupil's needs or identify suitable provision. Any request will be reasonable and proportionate.
Step 5	**Targeted attendance support**	Where barriers require targeted support, the school will work with the pupil and parent to agree appropriate actions. This may include reasonable adjustments and work with health professionals, the local authority or other relevant services. Where appropriate, actions will be recorded in an attendance support plan using **Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates: Attendance Support Plan**. Where voluntary support has not secured improvement or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the local authority to consider whether formal support is appropriate. This may include an attendance contract or an education supervision order. An attendance contract should be explored before progressing to an education supervision order or prosecution, although it may not be appropriate in every case.
Step 6	**Notice to Improve or other action**	Where the national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks has been met, the school must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in the individual case. This consideration will include the pupil's and family's circumstances; the support provided or available; whether a penalty notice is the best available means of improving attendance and changing parental behaviour; the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010; and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.

		Where support is appropriate but has not secured improvement or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve should usually be issued using **Letter 8: Notice to Improve – Final Opportunity Before Referral**, where this accords with the relevant local authority's code of conduct. The improvement period will be between three and six weeks. A Notice to Improve does not have to be issued where support is not appropriate or where it is unlikely to influence parental behaviour. Where support is not appropriate—for example, in a case involving an unauthorised term-time holiday—the school will normally request that the local authority consider issuing a penalty notice where the national threshold has been met, subject to individual consideration and the local code of conduct.
Step 7	**Referral to the local authority**	If the improvement required by the Notice to Improve is not secured, or it becomes clear that the required improvement is not being made and earlier action is appropriate under the relevant local authority's code of conduct, the school will review the case and may refer it to the local authority or request further action. Where action is sought before the end of the improvement period, the parent will be informed. The local authority will determine whether a penalty notice, education supervision order, prosecution or another form of action is appropriate. Once a referral has been submitted, the school may issue **Letter 9: Formal Confirmation of Referral to the Local Authority**.

Requests for leave of absence during term time

The following process applies to requests for discretionary leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Other forms of leave permitted under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 will be considered and recorded using the applicable national attendance code.

See section 17 of this policy and the Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates: Leave of Absence

Step	Action	School Response
Step 1	**Considering or granting a request**	Requests for leave of absence must be made in advance by a parent with whom the pupil normally

Step	Action	School Response
		lives, in accordance with the school's published procedure. A headteacher may grant discretionary leave of absence only where exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context. The school will not apply a blanket policy under which leave is automatically granted for particular circumstances or events. The DfE does not generally consider a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to constitute an exceptional circumstance. Where leave is granted, the headteacher will determine the period for which it is granted and **Letter 10: Granting a Request for Leave of Absence** may be issued.
Step 2	**Declining a request**	Where exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated, the request will be declined using **Letter 11: Declining a Request for Leave of Absence**. Parents will be informed that, if the leave is taken, the resulting absence will be recorded as unauthorised. They will also be advised that where the unauthorised absence, either alone or in combination with other unauthorised absence, meets the national threshold, the school will normally request that the local authority consider issuing a penalty notice in accordance with the National Framework and the relevant local authority's code of conduct. A separate penalty notice may be issued to each liable parent who allowed the absence, irrespective of which parent submitted the request.
Step 3	**Unauthorised leave taken**	Where a pupil is absent after a request has been declined, or a holiday or other leave is taken without the required advance permission, the absence will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code. Code G will be used where the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday that has not been granted by the school. Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively. **Letter 12: Unauthorised Leave of Absence Taken** may be issued to confirm the school's response. Where the national threshold has been met, the school will consider the individual circumstances and will normally request that the local authority consider

Step	Action	School Response
		issuing a penalty notice, subject to the National Framework and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.
Step 4	**Suspected leave taken without prior notification**	Where a pupil is absent and no reason has been established, the school will first follow its absence and safeguarding procedures to establish the pupil's whereabouts, safety and reason for absence. The school will not assume that the pupil is on holiday. While the reason remains unknown, the absence will be recorded using Code N. The correct code must be entered as soon as the reason is established and no later than five school days after the session. Where no reason has been established within five school days, Code N must be replaced with Code O. Where it is established that an unauthorised holiday or other leave was taken, **Letter 13: Unauthorised Leave Taken Without Prior Notification** may be issued. Referral to the local authority will be considered in accordance with the National Framework and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.

15.1 Recording and referring unauthorised absence

Schools must follow the DfE National Framework for Penalty Notices and the relevant local authority's current code of conduct and referral process.

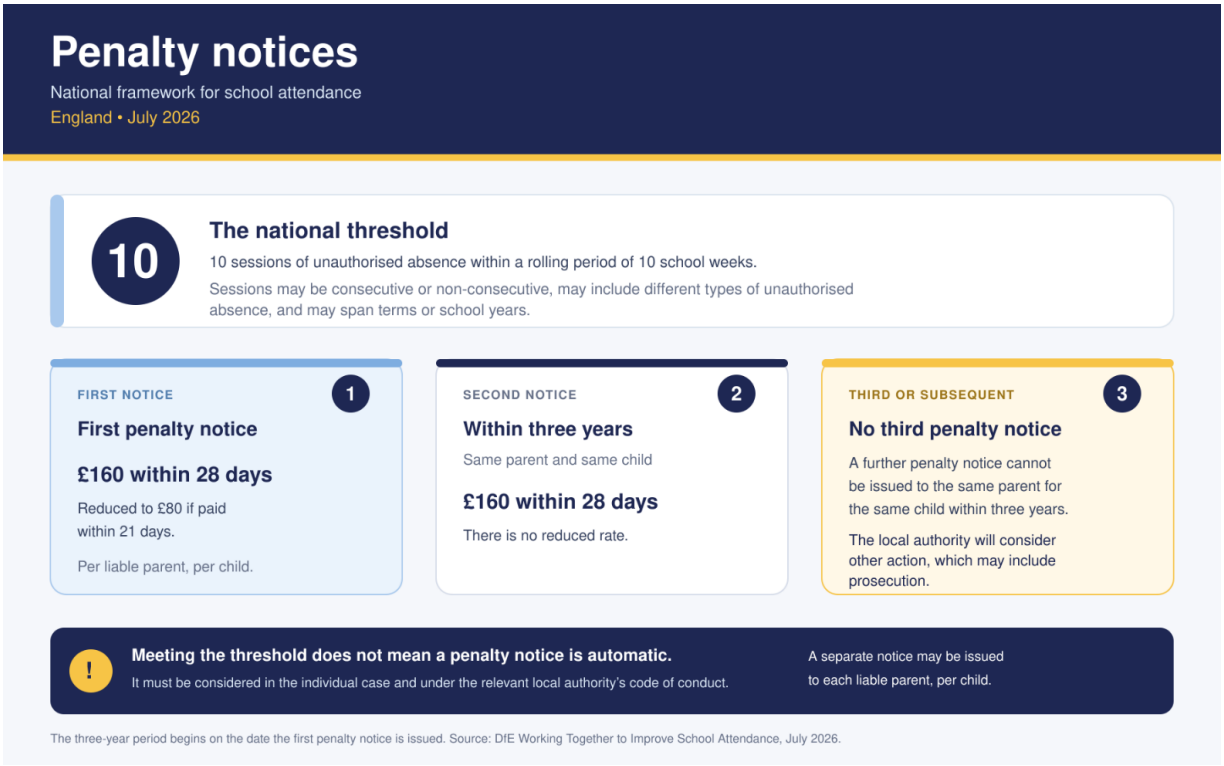
- All information relating to an unauthorised absence must be recorded accurately. This should include:
- the pupil's attendance record;
- any request for leave and the school's decision;
- correspondence with each parent;
- relevant telephone calls, emails, text messages and in-person conversations;
- what was communicated, by whom and when; and
- any support offered, actions taken and decisions made.

Records must be retained in accordance with the school's record-management arrangements. Where a referral is made, the school must submit the supporting evidence required by the relevant local authority.

15.2 National Framework for Penalty Notices

The following infographic summarises the national threshold, penalty notice amounts and escalation arrangements. It should be read alongside the DfE National Framework for Penalty Notices and the relevant local authority's code of conduct. Meeting the national threshold

does not mean that a penalty notice will be issued automatically; each case must be considered individually.



15.3 Related operational resources

The following controlled resources support implementation of this policy and are maintained separately:

- Trust Attendance Procedures and Templates, including approved attendance, leave-of-absence and punctuality letters;
- Attendance Support Plan;
- Parent/Carer Guide to Regular Attendance; and
- The relevant local authority's current attendance code of conduct, referral process and mandatory templates.

Operational resources do not override this policy, statutory guidance or mandatory local authority requirements. Schools must ensure that they use the current approved versions.

16. Formalising support and considering legal intervention

The school will work with pupils and families to understand and address barriers to attendance and provide appropriate support. Where absence persists or intensifies, support may be formalised through an attendance contract or another documented plan.

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school or local authority. It may be used where voluntary support has not secured improvement or has not been engaged with. It should set out the attendance requirements, support offered and review arrangements. An attendance contract is not punitive, is not legally binding and is not a prerequisite to another legal intervention.

Where support has not been successful, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate, the school and local authority may consider further action. This may include an education supervision order, a penalty notice or prosecution where the relevant legal requirements are met.

Where appropriate, the school will work with the local authority to consider an education supervision order. Only a local authority may apply for an education supervision order or bring a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Prosecution is a last resort where other routes have failed or are not considered appropriate.

Any decision will be made on an individual and proportionate basis, taking account of safeguarding, SEND, disability, physical or mental ill health, equality duties and wider family circumstances.

16.1 Penalty notices

A penalty notice may be issued by the headteacher, a deputy or assistant headteacher authorised by the headteacher, an authorised local-authority officer or the police, in accordance with the 2007 Regulations and the relevant local code of conduct.

Where the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so and provide the local authority with a copy of the notice.

Before issuing, or requesting the issue of, a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual circumstances of the case, including:

- whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met;
- whether a penalty notice is the most appropriate available intervention to improve attendance for that pupil;
- whether appropriate support has been offered and whether it has been engaged with;
- whether further support, a Notice to Improve or another legal intervention would be more appropriate; and
- whether the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 or any other relevant legislation make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.
- For the National Framework, support means any activity intended to improve attendance and does not include a penalty notice or prosecution. The local authority's decision on whether sufficient support has been provided before it issues a penalty notice will be treated as final.

National threshold for attendance-related penalty notices

The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The National Framework does not prevent an authorised officer considering a penalty notice before the threshold where an offence has been committed—for example, repeated unauthorised absences deliberately kept below the threshold—provided the same individual considerations are applied and the relevant local code of conduct permits this.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. The rolling period may span different terms and school years and may include any combination of unauthorised absence.

Meeting the national threshold does not mean that a penalty notice will be issued automatically. The school and local authority will consider the individual circumstances, support provided and whether a penalty notice is appropriate in accordance with the National Framework and the relevant local authority's code of conduct.

Where support is not appropriate, as will usually be the case for an unauthorised holiday in term time, and the remaining National Framework and local-code conditions are met, the school will normally request that a penalty notice be issued.

Each liable parent may be issued with a separate penalty notice for each child. Formal action will usually involve the parent or parents who have allowed the absence.

Payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issued the notice. If the notice is not paid within the required period, the local authority must either prosecute for the original offence or withdraw the notice. There is no statutory right of appeal against a penalty notice.

Attendance-related penalty-notice amounts

Penalty Notice	Amount or action
First notice within a three-year period	£160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
Second notice to the same parent for the same child within three years	£160, payable within 28 days. There is no reduced rate.
Third or subsequent occasion within the three-year period	A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child. The local

	authority will consider alternative action, which may include prosecution.

The three-year period begins on the date the first penalty notice is issued. Before a penalty notice is issued or requested, the school and/or local authority will follow the agreed local process to check whether the same parent has received a penalty notice for the same child during the previous three years, including where the pupil has moved school or local-authority area. Previous notices count whether paid or unpaid but withdrawn notices do not.

Penalty notices relating to presence in a public place during exclusion
A separate penalty notice may be issued where a parent allows a pupil of compulsory school age to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five school days of a suspension or permanent exclusion. This applies where the school has notified the parent that the pupil must not be present in a public place during that period.

This type of penalty notice is separate from a penalty notice issued for absence from school. It sits outside the National Framework for attendance penalty notices and does not count towards the limit of two penalty notices issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year period.
The penalty is £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the notice is not paid, the local authority must either prosecute for the original offence or withdraw the notice.

16.2 Notices to Improve

Where the national threshold is met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with or have not secured improvement, a Notice to Improve should usually be issued in accordance with the relevant local code of conduct as a final opportunity to improve attendance. A Notice to Improve is not required where support is not appropriate, where the authorised officer does not expect it to change parental behaviour—for example because a similar notice has already been issued—or where another legal intervention is more appropriate.

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 is registered.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and the relevant unauthorised absences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with

- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period, together with case-specific details of what sufficient improvement will look like
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

17. Leave of absence during term time

Except for the specific statutory circumstances set out in section 12.1, OLOL CMAT will grant leave of absence under Code C only where exceptional circumstances apply. The headteacher will decide whether leave is granted and determine its duration based on the individual facts and circumstances of each request.

Leave of absence is not a parental right. Requests should be submitted to the headteacher in advance and as soon as the need is known, using the school's form where provided. Each request will be considered on its individual merits. The headteacher must be satisfied that an applicable statutory ground is met and, for code C, that exceptional circumstances justify the leave; no blanket policy will automatically grant or refuse leave.

If a pupil is taken on holiday during term time, OLOL CMAT schools **will not provide additional work** specifically for the period of unauthorised absence. Pupils will be expected to catch up on missed learning when they return to school.

The following examples are illustrative only. They do not create an entitlement to leave and must not be used as a blanket policy. The headteacher will consider the individual facts, circumstances, evidence and relevant background, and will decide whether exceptional circumstances exist and, if so, the appropriate duration.

17.1 Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that the individual will not receive any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Circumstances connected with a parent's or child's medical or emotional rehabilitation, where absence has been recommended by a relevant health professional and is not more appropriately recorded using another statutory attendance code, such as Code I for illness.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- Other exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. The headteacher may consult the relevant Director of Performance and Standards where appropriate but retains responsibility for the individual decision and the duration of any leave granted.

17.2 Circumstances unlikely, on their own, to be exceptional:

- The family cannot afford to go on holiday in school holiday time or have a special holiday offer for term time.
- To visit family members abroad (unless they are severely ill which may be considered).

- To spend time with a family member who is visiting from abroad in term time.
- Because you or your partner cannot get time off work during school holiday time.
- You have a family tradition of going at a certain time of year.
- Going away for a birthday celebration (including the child's birthday)

17.3 Further examples unlikely, on their own, to justify leave:

- Availability of cheap holidays;
- Availability of desired accommodation;
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term.

Absence taken without approval will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code. Where the national threshold is met, the school will consider the individual circumstances and whether referral to the local authority or another intervention is appropriate.

18. Truancy

Where a pupil is believed to have missed school or lessons without permission, staff will take immediate steps to establish the pupil's whereabouts and safety and inform the designated safeguarding lead or other designated staff. Parents will be contacted as appropriate. If the pupil cannot be located promptly, the school will follow its safeguarding and missing-pupil procedures, including contacting the police or other agencies where required following an assessment of risk.

Once the pupil is safe, staff will listen to the pupil and seek to identify any safeguarding concern, bullying, SEND, mental health need or other underlying barrier. The absence will be coded accurately. Any support, safeguarding or behaviour response will be proportionate, consistent with the school's safeguarding and behaviour policies and sensitive to the pupil's individual circumstances. Missed time will not automatically result in an equivalent period of detention, and any recurrence will be monitored.

19. Off-Site and alternative provision

Where the school commissions off-site provision, the provider will be expected to:

- accurately record the pupil's attendance at the provision and provide this information to the commissioning school;
- confirm attendance to the commissioning school at the agreed time for every relevant session;
- notify the school immediately of any unexplained absence, discrepancy or safeguarding concern;
- provide attendance information to the nominated member of school staff at the frequency agreed within the placement plan; and

- alert the school's attendance officer or other nominated member of staff immediately if a pupil leaves the provider's premises without prior authorisation.

The commissioning school remains responsible for maintaining the pupil's statutory attendance record and applying the appropriate national attendance or absence code.
When the school places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, its responsibility for the pupil's safeguarding, welfare, attendance and educational progress does not transfer to the provider.

The school will ensure that:

- the placement is appropriate and meets the pupil's individual needs;
- the provider has robust safeguarding arrangements, including appropriate safer recruitment procedures, child protection policies and access to a trained designated safeguarding lead;
- a named member of school staff maintains regular contact with the pupil and the provider; and
- the pupil's attendance, engagement, progress, wellbeing and safeguarding are monitored.

Each placement will be reviewed **at least half-termly** and more frequently where the pupil's needs or level of risk require it. Monitoring will include direct contact with the pupil, communication with the provider and consideration of relevant attendance, engagement, progress, wellbeing and safeguarding information shared under the agreed information-sharing arrangements.

The school will have arrangements in place to respond immediately to unexplained or unexpected absence from off-site provision, in accordance with its attendance and safeguarding procedures.

The school will have regard to the following statutory guidance:

- Alternative provision: statutory guidance
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school

All off-site and alternative provision placements will be commissioned, approved, monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Trust's **Alternative Education Pathways Policy**. That policy sets out the Trust's detailed requirements for suitability, safeguarding assurance, attendance reporting, information sharing, quality assurance and review of placements. This attendance policy should be read alongside the Alternative Education Pathways Policy.

20. Children absent from education

- Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This is distinct from pupils who are absent from school.
- Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. A child going absent from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

- Designated staff will monitor all repeated, prolonged, unexplained or otherwise concerning absence, not only unauthorised absence. The school will make immediate, proactive enquiries following unexplained absence. The designated safeguarding lead will consider the pupil's known risks and take timely action under KCSIE 2026 and the school's safeguarding procedures, including working with local authority children's services where appropriate.
- Where the school reasonably believes that a pupil will no longer attend and has not received written notification that the pupil will attend another school or be educated otherwise than at school, it will promptly refer the case to the attendance or children-missing-education service of the local authority in which the school is situated. The school and the School Local Authority will undertake joint reasonable enquiries. Where the pupil lives in another local-authority area, they will liaise with the Home Local Authority. If the pupil's name is subsequently deleted from the admission register, the Home Local Authority should investigate whether the child is missing education.
- Where the pupil has a social worker and/or youth offending team worker, they will be informed promptly of unexplained absence and, where relevant, before the pupil's name is deleted from the admission register.
- A pupil will be removed from the admission register only where one of the statutory grounds for deletion is fully satisfied. A pupil will not be removed retrospectively. The school will make the required returns to the local authority when a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register outside the standard transition points.
- Staff must be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

21. Data protection and information sharing

Attendance information will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Trust's data protection policies and applicable statutory duties. Information may be shared lawfully and proportionately with the DfE, local authorities, safeguarding partners, police, health services and other relevant agencies where there is a legal basis, including to safeguard a child. Data protection law does not prevent necessary and proportionate safeguarding information sharing.

22. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or Trust arrangements.

When reviewing this policy and its implementation, the Trust and its schools will seek and consider the views of pupils and parents/carers. Schools will use appropriate local arrangements to gather these views.

23. Related guidance, policies and operational resources

The legal and statutory framework underpinning this policy is set out in **section 2**. Schools must have regard to the current versions of all applicable legislation and statutory guidance.

The principal external guidance and supporting resources relevant to implementing this policy are listed below:

- **Working together to improve school attendance – statutory guidance (July 2026)**
- **Communicating with parents about school attendance (updated August 2026)**
- **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**
- **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007**
- **Keeping children safe in education 2026**
- **Working together to safeguard children 2026**
- **Children missing education – statutory guidance**
- **Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions**
- **Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school**
- **Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance**
- **Providing remote education – guidance for schools**
- **Alternative provision – statutory guidance**
- **School suspensions and permanent exclusions – statutory guidance**
- **Sharing daily pupil attendance data**
- **Pupil absence statistics methodology**

This policy should also be read alongside the current versions of the following Trust-wide and school-level policies and procedures:

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**
- **Alternative Education Pathways Policy**
- **Behaviour Policy**
- **Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions Policy**
- **SEND Policy**
- **Data Protection Policy**