



Polegate School Attendance Policy

Date Approved: September 2025

Next Review Date: September 2026

AIMS

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

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all learners
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every learner 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 learners have the support in place to attend school

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

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

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Learner Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) It also refers to:
 - [School census guidance](#)
 - [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
 - [Mental health issues affecting a learner's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all learners have full access to their learning. Valuable learning time is lost when learners are absent or late. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all learners. For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. **Promoting positive school attendance and punctuality is everyone's responsibility.**

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL Governors:

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school staff, learners and parents/carers

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

The Headteacher:

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual learners
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to learners and parents through all available channels
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with learners and their parents/carers

The Attendance Officer:

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- To meet regularly about attendance patterns and concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Working with relevant agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Designated Safeguarding Lead when a fixed-penalty notice has been issued
- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on Arbor
- Liaise with parents/carers around any concerns around attendance, or to celebrate noticeable improvements
- Will follow all Local Authority procedures for any children potentially missing in education, or when a parent/carer has completed a written notification to home educate their child
- Liaising with learners, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Working with the parents of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for learners with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where learners with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a learner with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the learner's needs

All staff that complete a daily register are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, in a timely fashion.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS AND CARERS

- Make sure their child attends school every on time
- Contact the school via the school telephone 01323482404 to report their child's reason for absence by 8.30am 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 one emergency contact number for their child

- Ensure school are kept up to date with any changes of address or any family circumstances relevant their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day – any child that does leave the school site for a medical appointment must be collected, returned, and signed in and out by a parent or carer
- Keep to any attendance contracts or agreements that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school
- Parents and Carers will receive a termly attendance if their child's attendance falls below 95%. Attendance will also be shared through interim and end of year reports.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES Attendance Register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all learners onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. The school day starts at 8:40am (KS1) 8.30am (KS2) and ends at 3.10pm (KS1) 3pm (KS2).

It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every learner is: present, absent – including the reason for absence, attending an approved off-site educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a learner is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a learner is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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

Absence Procedures

The learner's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am by contacting the school office 01323 482404 or via parent mail.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this. Where the school have reason to believe that the absence is due to a holiday and the absence is for 5 days or more, the family will receive a letter from the Headteacher requesting evidence to the contrary. Please note, in these circumstances, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide suitable evidence. If satisfactory evidence is not received a penalty notice will be requested.

Punctuality

- The school day begins at 8:30am (KS2) and 8.40am (Reception and KS1) and all learners are expected to be in school at this time
- Learners arriving after 8.40am must go through the office entrance and sign in through the front office.
 - Morning registration is at 8.40am (Reception and KS1) 8.30(KS2) and it closes at Reception and KS1 9.05am and KS2 8.55am. Any child who arrives between 8.30-8.55am (KS2) 8.40-9.05am (KS1) will receive an L code in the register.
- All lateness is recorded daily
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in-line with East Sussex County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence and therefore affects the child's overall attendance mark.
- If a learner is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence for that session, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays

Parents/carers of learners who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting at the school to discuss the problem and offer any support as needed.

Where late collection from school is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected learner to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies such as Children's Services.

REDUCED TIMETABLES

All schools, academies and free schools have a statutory duty to provide full time education for all learners from the term after their 5th birthday. In general, schools should not place learners on a reduced timetable; however, there are times when this may be appropriate and in the best interests of the learner:

- There is a specific need for a pupil – for example, a medical condition prevents them from attending full-time education and is part of a planned re-integration
- It is in the pupil's best interests
- It is on a short term, temporary basis, stating when they're expected to return to school full time.

At Polegate Primary School:

- There will be a clear and evidenced rationale for considering a reduced timetable as an intervention aimed at supporting the needs of the learner and the maintenance of the education placement
- The school will not pursue a reduced timetable without parental permission, equally parents cannot pursue a part time timetable without school consideration and permission. A part time timetable cannot take effect until all parties are in agreement that the use of it is proportionate and in the best interests of the pupil.
- The school will have signed parental permission, evidenced on the learner file prior to the commencement of a time limited reduced timetable. If the parent does not agree, the reduced timetable arrangements will be implemented
- The school will regularly review the arrangements with parents and carers, demonstrating a clear path of planned reintegration from part time to full time provision
- The school will undertake a risk assessment of the learner's needs to assess the impact that a reduced timetable would have on the learner. It is essential that the learner's welfare during any absence from school is considered

Attendance and loss of nursery place

If a child is to benefit fully from their time at our Nursery, it is important they attend regularly and on time. If your child is ill, parents must contact the school nursery by 9.00am at the latest. You can either leave a message on our absence phone line, giving your name, your child's name and the reason for their absence. You need to tell us what the illness is, not just they are ill. You can also come to the school or nursery office and report your child's absence to a member of staff. The same attendance procedures are followed for Nursery as for the rest of the school. Of course we recognise that all families may have times when it is difficult to get to the Nursery on time; however, if parents are having difficulties with attendance we would expect them to talk to the nursery

teacher- Mrs Trent, or to our school attendance officer who is in the school office. If a child is persistently late, or persistently fails to attend, we will discuss this with parents and try to find a solution to any difficulties. In some cases of non-attendance we may decide that the child's place should be offered to another child who could benefit from it more.

My child is under 5 – do they have to attend?

Yes! If you choose Polegate Nursery for your child and are fortunate to secure a place, we expect your child, regardless of age to attend every day unless they are ill.

ATTENDANCE AND SAFEGUARDING

Learners should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Parents/carers must also ensure that their child is collected promptly at the end of the school day.

A child not attending school for an unavoidable reason may be considered safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. The Attendance Officer will ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is kept informed of attendance patterns, and where there are concerns for individual learners, the response to this will be considered within the context of safeguarding.

All staff are aware that children going missing and children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. The school follows all Local Authority procedures around any children they consider 'missing in education' (CME).

It is the responsibility of all parents/carers to inform the school on a daily basis if your child is going to be absent from school that day.

If a child does not attend school and the reason for the absence is unknown, the school will:

- Contact the learner's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason
- Contact the learner's other emergency contacts if they are unable to contact the parent/carer
- Inform any relevant agencies who may be working with the child or family
- Consider a home visit taking into consideration potential safeguarding concerns
- Consider a referral to relevant agencies such as the police or Children's Services

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

The national threshold for a Penalty Notice has been met when a learner has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- (a) code G - requested/planned holiday
- (b) code O – unauthorised absence
- (c) code U – persistent unauthorised lateness

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their learners reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.

The school must review whether a learner has special educational needs, whether these have been properly assessed and that the provision made is appropriate and after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010, such as where a learner has a disability.

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. -Working Together to Improve School Attendance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance - August_2024.pdf

1.1 Requested / Planned Absence (e.g. a holiday – G Code)

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers determine the number of school days that will be authorised for a child who is absent from school if the withdrawal from learning is to be granted.

Procedure:

1. (a) In all cases a parent wishing to request a withdrawal from learning during term-time should complete a Withdrawal from Learning Application
2. (b) Headteacher makes decision whether to authorise the absence or not, following the guidance of the Department for Education, which states this can be given in exceptional circumstances only. The Headteacher should then complete the form and sign and date it.
3. (c) School returns the completed, signed and dated form to parents/carers
4. (d) A penalty notice should be requested for all parents who are liable; this includes a step-parent or other carer and can include an absent parent.

Failure by a parent/carer to pay the penalty notice may result in a prosecution. If a parent is found guilty by the Court of the offence, possible outcomes could be; a fine, costs and victim surcharge, conditional discharge, parenting order as set out by the Magistrates. The parent will also have a criminal conviction against their name.

There may be occasions where a headteacher has reason to believe that a holiday has been taken or extended but a different reason, or no reason, has been provided by the parent. In these circumstances the headteacher should unauthorise the absence and ask the parent to provide evidence of the reason for absence, e.g. a GP appointment card or prescription, holiday booking form, flight tickets. If the parent provides evidence, the headteacher should then consider if the absence should be authorised.

If the headteacher receives no response and can provide supporting paperwork showing the evidence has been requested from the parent, a penalty notice can be requested.

Penalty Notice

A limit of no more than 2 penalty notices will be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within a 3-year rolling period.

The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days.

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice will not be issued within a 3-year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued, and alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

1.2 Persistent Unauthorised Lateness (U Code) and Unauthorised Absence (O Code) – Requesting a Notice to Improve/Penalty Notice

Unauthorised absence and/or lateness after the close of registration, causes disruption in class. The registers at Polegate Primary School are open for 25 minutes from the start of registration. Learners who arrive in this time will receive an L code. A learner arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, which counts as a whole session absence.

Where a learner is absent from school without prior authorisation or notification from the parent/carer (i.e. illness), the absence should be marked with code O.

Procedure:

Once attendance has been identified as a concern, the parent/carer should be invited to attend a meeting to discuss any barriers there may be which is impacting on their child's attendance. The attendance meeting is an opportunity to discuss and agree support and expectations regarding school attendance moving forward.

Parents will be asked to sign an attendance support plan detailing school, parental and pupil actions to work together to improve attendance.

Following the attendance meeting, the school would then monitor the attendance for a set period. During this period schools are expected to continue to engage and attempt to address barriers to regular attendance.

Schools should prioritise the support first approach in all cases. A range of support must be evidenced before escalating to requesting the issue of a Notice to Improve/Penalty Notice including an Attendance Support Plan, relevant referrals and learner voice.

If, during the monitoring period, the national threshold has been met and the learner has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions within 10 school weeks, a request for a Notice to Improve/Penalty Notice can be submitted to the Local Authority.

The Local Authority will consider the request for a Notice to Improve/Penalty Notice on a case- by-case basis at a weekly triage meeting and determine the appropriate next step. Discussions will be held with the school if there are any queries.

During this period all supportive measures by the school should continue and approaches to be adapted where necessary. Regular reviews should be documented through existing Support Plans.

If despite all supportive measures and relevant referrals, attendance does not improve, school will liaise with East Sussex County Council Attendance Support Lead who will advise of next steps which may include formal parenting contracts and the issuing of penalty fines.

KEY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PERSONNEL

- Natalie Dicker – Family Liaison & Attendance Officer
- Deborah Jones – Headteacher
- Sally Barnard – Safeguarding Lead

In line with Local Authority guidance, all attendance support strategies and interventions will be implemented on a case by case basis.

Attendance 95%+	Attendance 94%-90%	Attendance 89%-85%	Attendance 84%- 80%	Attendance 79%-51%	Attendance Below 50%
Attendance discussed at weekly Attendance Meetings with Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead, DDSLs and Attendance Officer	Attendance discussed at weekly Attendance Meetings with Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead, DDSLs and Attendance Officer	Attendance discussed at weekly Attendance Meetings with Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead, DDSLs and Attendance Officer	Attendance discussed at weekly Attendance Meetings with Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead, DDSLs and Attendance Officer 10 week monitoring cycle	Attendance discussed at weekly Attendance Meetings with Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead, DDSLs and Attendance Officer 10 week monitoring cycle	Attendance discussed at weekly Attendance Meetings with Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead, DDSLs and Attendance Officer 10 week monitoring cycle
Attendance officer to alert parents that attendance is beginning to become. Concern if attendance is 95%	Attendance officer to alert parents that attendance is beginning to become. Concern if attendance is 90%	Attendance officer to alert parents that attendance is beginning to become. Concern if attendance is 89%	Attendance officer to alert parents that attendance is beginning to become. Concern if attendance is 84%	Regular face to face meetings with parents/carers and Headteacher and attendance officer	Regular face to face meetings with parents/carers and Headteacher and attendance officer
Weekly attendance sent to class teachers Class attendance reward shared during celebration assembly	Weekly attendance sent to class teachers Class attendance reward shared during celebration assembly	Local Authority Attendance guidance to be consulted and implemented on a case- by-case basis	Attendance Phone Call made to parents/carers by Headteacher when attendance is 84% Meeting held by attendance lead and Headteacher with parent/carers- attendance plan started	Attendance Plan to be implemented and reviewed at each parent/carer meeting	Attendance Plan to be implemented and reviewed at each parent/carer meeting

100% attendance certificate sent to all children achieving 100% attendance	Class teacher to discuss attendance with child and parents/carers at Parents' Evening if appropriate		Local Authority Attendance guidance to be consulted and implemented on a case- by-case basis	Local Authority Attendance guidance to be consulted and followed on a case-by-case basis	Local Authority Attendance guidance to be consulted and implemented on a case- by-case basis
97% end of year raffle for all children achieving 97% year school attendance					