



Attendance Policy

The following policy is based upon *School Attendance, Guidance for Maintained Schools* from the Department for Education - May 2022.

1. Rationale

Providing safe and happy places to learn is essential to achieving school improvement, raising achievement and attendance, promoting equality and diversity, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community. Every member of the community has rights and responsibilities which enable us to work and learn in a school environment in which they feel safe and supported.

This policy outlines the underlying philosophy and management of attendance at the Synergy Schools Federation. It is a working document designed to promote positive attendance and reduce absence from schools within the Federation.

The policy reflects current practice within the Federation. Its fair and consistent implementation is the responsibility of all staff.

The Federation takes an active approach to promoting good attendance. With the support of parents, the wider community, the Local Authority and the pupils themselves, we take a positive approach to safeguard the well-being of all pupils and staff.

2. Aims

To improve the overall attendance of pupils in school we aim:

- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust including pupils, parents/carers, teachers and governors.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To develop effective partnerships with supporting services and agencies through the Local Authority Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- To recognise and address the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.



3. Definitions

It is the Head of School's discretion as to whether a pupil's absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example if a parent takes a child out of school and gives the reason that it was to go shopping for school shoes, this will not be authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a pupil has an attendance rate of less than 90% without a good reason, the school reserves the right to not authorise any absence.

Persistent absence (PA)

The Department for Education (DfE) defines a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence at 10% or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised. The PA status may change as the academic year progresses, but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes.

4. Registration

Codes

There are a series of codes which are used to denote authorised and unauthorised absence (Appendix A). These codes have been taken from 'Attendance Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities' Department for Education and Skills July 2019. It is the school's responsibility to ensure the correct codes are recorded and that patterns and trends in children's absence are analysed.

Close of registers

We need children to arrive at school punctually so that they can access all learning opportunities. For this reason, registration formally closes at 9.10am. Any pupil arriving late but before the register formally closes will be marked with the 'L' code. Any pupil arriving after the register closes (i.e. after 9.10am) will be marked with the 'U' code.

Medical appointments

We encourage families to book medical appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, the following codes are used:

- If a child arrives back in school before the official close of the register, this will be recorded as 'L' and therefore the child is marked as attending school.
- If a child arrives back after the official close of the register, the child will be marked as 'M' for a medical appointment.

Punctuality

If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the children, which may encourage further absence. We actively encourage all children to arrive at school on time. For any pupil who is regularly late to school, their attendance is discussed with them and their parent/carer and a late letter is sent home. Please see Appendix C.

Requests for leave of absence/taking holidays in term time

Please see Appendix B relating to leave of absence from school requests.

5. Intervening with Attendance Concerns

Start of the Day Procedures

- Without exception, the first job of the day is to take the register in each class. This is always completed by 9.10am via our online Management Information System.
- By 9.30am, each school's administrator has checked the register, established which pupils are absent and attempted to locate evidence of parental contact. This is usually either a phone call/message; an email or message left on a communication system or; a note sent in via a sibling or close relative.
- By 9.45am, each school's administrator has attempted to make contact with the parents/carers of any absent pupil who hasn't been in touch with the school.
- In the rare occasion that parents/carers can't be contacted, all other pupil contacts will be contacted, in order, to try to ascertain a reason for absence and to complete a welfare check.
- By 10.30am, if no contact is still forthcoming for an absent pupil, the administrator will alert the Head of School (or Deputy DSL in their absence). This senior member of staff will arrange for a welfare check to be carried out at the pupils' home.
- By 12.00pm, if no contact has still not been made, the issue will be referred to the Police.

Strategies when dealing with Attendance Concerns

We use a range of strategies when dealing with pupils whose attendance is causing concerns. For instance:

- Conversations with Pupils
- Conversations with Parents/Carers
- Warning letters (Appendix D)
- Early Help Assessment

- Fixed Penalty Notices

It is up to the Head of School (in partnership with the Executive Headteacher) to make the decision as to which strategy to use when in order to support and improve a pupils' attendance.

Long Term Poor Attendance

In a small number of cases and when all reasonable strategies have been exhausted, it will be necessary to commence the 'Formal Attendance Procedure' with the Local Authority.

Although the commencement of the procedure is at the discretion of the school on a case by case basis, the threshold for the Local Authority to take legal action is 10 unauthorised sessions in the previous 4 month period. This means that a PACE Formal Caution Interview cannot be held until this threshold has been reached.

Unauthorised leave of absence in term time (holiday)

Under usual circumstances, Penalty Notices **will** be issued for unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time if there has been a minimum of 10 sessions in a block or accumulative over a four-month period.

There is no requirement for the Formal Attendance Procedure to have been implemented for a Penalty Notice to be issued for unauthorised leave, as this only refers to a specific type of absence, rather than on ongoing issue which the family may need support to address.

To meet the criteria for the issue of a Penalty Notice, the leave of absence would have been requested by the parent, refused by the school as the reason given did not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, then taken without the school's permission. If the leave was not applied for then it would automatically have been taken without the permission of the Headteacher who has full discretion regarding authorisation of the absence. If the Penalty Notice is issued in accordance with the LA's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices, and not paid, a prosecution through the Magistrate Courts may be pursued by the LA.

For further information, please refer to the 'School Attendance Support Pathway', accessible via the CYPs website.

Appendix A: Absence and attendance codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes are:

Present at school

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

- Registration code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm
- Present in school during registration.
- Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an approved off-site educational activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision.

Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: dual registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: at an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised absence from school

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**Code C: leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised absence from school

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

For the school year 2021 to 2022, a new category was added to record instances when a pupil is 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. See this addendum (refer to the School Attendance Guidance – May 2022) for further information, including advice on the application of Code X.

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

(This code is not counted as an absence in the school census)

This code was used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with:

- guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from the United Kingdom Health and Safety Agency (UKHSA) or the Department of Health and Social Care¹²
- any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with our transition to living with COVID-19 and the latest public health advice, we are no longer advising schools to record pupils who are not attending school because of COVID-19 using Code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus).

Where a pupil is not attending because they have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had a positive test schools should record this using Code I (illness) unless another more appropriate code applies. Schools no longer need to record pupils who do not attend for reasons related to COVID-19, using Code X.

Schools should also continue to use code X to record when a pupil not of compulsory school age is not expected to attend as detailed below.

Administrative codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census.

Code X: not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- the school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- the transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance
- a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity)

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Different term dates for different pupils

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for ‘staggered starts’ or ‘induction days’. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.

Appendix B – Application for pupil leave of absence in exceptional circumstances during time time

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and at least 6 weeks before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right. The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

Please note: Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional.

This is not an exhaustive list and Headteachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Where a Headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term time without the permission of the school risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

If your permission is granted and your child(ren) do not return to school on the agreed date, further absences will not be authorised. This means that you may be issued with a penalty notice. A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will take legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent.

If permission is not granted and your child(ren) do not attend school during the dates you requested the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a request to issue you with a penalty notice will be made. A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will take legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer.

A copy of this letter will be placed on your child(ren)'s school file.

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE
IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DURING TERM TIME

Name of pupil(s):

Class(es):

Address:

Telephone No:

I request permission for my child to be absent from school

From.....To.....Total school days.....

Exceptional circumstances for request: (this section must be answered in full and against stated criteria)

Signature of parent/carer.....Date.....

For school use only

Current attendance: This is:- Excellent Above average Average
 % Below average Poor

I have considered carefully your request for leave in term-time and on this occasion I will/will not be authorising your child(ren)'s absence for the following reason(s):-

Seen by Headteacher (signature).....Date.....

Decision reached..... Date reply returned.....



Appendix C – Late Letter Template

Dear *****,

According to our records, XXX has been late to school every day this week/ xx times this week.

As I'm sure you can understand, arriving late for school is very disruptive for the class teacher as well as the rest of the class. Often the teacher or teaching assistant has to take time away from working with other children to explain the task and allow them to catch up on the input that children have missed.

Your child may feel embarrassed about walking into the class later than the other children and these feelings can affect the way that they start the school day.

Missing the dinner register can cause further disruption and put the class behind their already stretched timetable. If the register has been taken by the time your child arrives at school, then they are recorded as 'Late'. This is an absent code, which means that although your children might have only missed 5 minutes of the morning session, they are recorded as if they weren't here. This affects their overall attendance rate. An attendance rate of below 90% causes the school concern and further action is taken. The Department for Education also classes any child who attends school for less than 90% as being a persistent absentee, and children are often referred to children's social care as a result of poor attendance.

To clarify the school's timetable, we have a staggered bell at the start of the day:

- 8.45am – Busy Bees & FS
- 8.50am – Class 1 & Class 2
- 8.55am – Classes 3, 4, 5 & 6

Our final bell sounds at 9.00am. At this time, lessons begin, and all children should be in the classroom, ready to learn.

We do understand and appreciate that accidents can and do happen in terms of arriving late but when it is happening regularly then we need to try and address this. Please remember that we are always here to help. If you would like to discuss this matter further, do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher, ***** or Mr. White.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

Appendix D – Warning Letter Template

Dear

I am writing to you regarding your child's current attendance in school which is currently:

%

An attendance rate of below 90% causes the school concern and further action is taken. The Department for Education also classes any child who attends school for less than 90% as being a persistent absentee, and children are often referred to children's social care as a result of poor attendance.

The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of this and ask you to support us in trying to improve this figure by the end of the academic year. There is very strong evidence that clearly shows how poor attendance at school can impact children's attainment at GCSE level, even from as far back as their time in primary school. At Brompton we want the very best for the children and ask for your support here to help us achieve this.

Moving forward, we will continue to monitor attendance regularly and hope to see improvements. If your child's attendance figure does not begin to improve, then we will make further contact and ask to arrange a meeting to discuss this further.

We do understand that children will be ill from time to time and pick up various bugs/ infections. However, an attendance figure of 96%+ should allow flexibility for any unprecedented illness that may occur. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to get in contact with myself or your child's teacher at the upcoming Parent Teacher Consultations.

Yours sincerely

Head of School