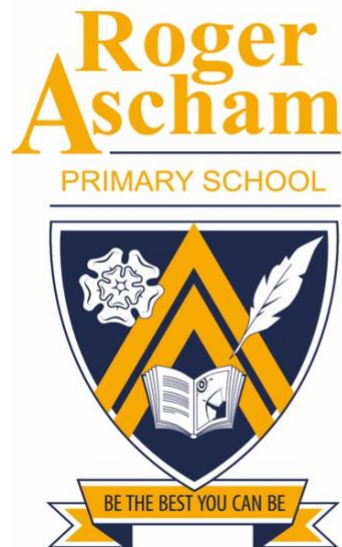


Attendance Policy

Roger Ascham Primary School



Approved by: CEO

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RAY Academy Trust Attendance policy

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1. Aims

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

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

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. 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 \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)

- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)
- It also refers to:
 - [School census guidance](#)
 - [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
 - [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

This policy also complies with our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing and challenging trends and benchmarking to comparator schools
- Prioritising attendance in the Trust's ethos, aims and strategy
- Evaluating the effectiveness of schools' processes and share effective practices between schools
- Ensuring that training on attendance is included in the Trust's continued professional development offer to staff and is covered in any trust wide induction pack

3.2 Local Governing Body (LGB)

The LGB is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure that staff training adequately provides all staff with an understanding of:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

3.3 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the attendance officer to be able to do so
- 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

3.4 The Trust Leadership Board

The Leadership Board is responsible for:

- Driving attendance improvement across the trust
- Working more intensively with schools who require support with attendance improvement

3.5 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Ms F Natai and can be contacted via attendance@rapsch.co.uk.

3.6 The school attendance officer

The school attendance officer at each school is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher or designated senior leader for attendance (when authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs L Bain and can be contacted via attendance@rapsch.co.uk.

3.7 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office as soon as the registers close.
- Informing the attendance office of concerns about attendance and punctuality.
- Maintaining appropriately positive and supportive interactions with pupils and parents to help minimise any potential in-school barriers to good attendance.

3.8 Office staff

Office staff will:

- Ensure the successful recording and maintenance of attendance data and any required transfer of school attendance data with the Local Authority and Department for Education.
- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Help parents to speak with the attendance officer, where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

3.9 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.45 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their children
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school attendance officer

3.10 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first morning and afternoon session of each school day.

The register will mark whether every 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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not (for pupils of compulsory school age)
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.15pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at the beginning of the first lesson and will be kept open for 30 minutes after that time. The register for the afternoon will be taken at the beginning of the first lesson and will be kept open for 30 minutes after that time.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45 am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school.

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.

If the absence is longer than 5 days or the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. 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 parent/carer will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

Parents should request leaves of absence by completing the leave of absence request form, available from the office. This should be completed and returned to the office prior to the planned absence. The headteacher will make a decision on the request and the office staff will relay this decision to the parents. The headteacher will not be able to authorise any planned absence that has not been requested in advance. The request should be made as far in advance as possible. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Lessons start promptly at the beginning of school. It is vital that pupils arrive at school punctually so they do not miss learning. A register of late pupils is kept. Pupils are expected to make up any work that is missed during the day of them arriving late.

In cases of persistent lateness (considered 3 days or more in a half-term) the school's attendance officer will contact parents to address the issue. If this is unsuccessful the Headteacher will contact the parents. Ultimately, a parental responsibility order may be issued by the Local Authority.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If we cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, we will visit the home address. If contact cannot be made we will inform the Local Authority Children Missing in Education team
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session missed
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will involve an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker
- Where appropriate, including where National thresholds for absence have been reached, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly progress reports and at least half-termly via letter if the school believes there is an issue with attendance.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as those that have a one-off, unique and significant value to the child that can only take place at the time requested. 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.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. However, the request will not be granted if a pupil's attendance is or will fall below 90%, or in the run up to or during national assessments.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence using the leave of absence request form. The leave of absence form is available from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. No consideration is given to retrospective applications – the absence will be unauthorised.

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- 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(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- 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

5.2 Legal sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice.

In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

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

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of 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 if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of 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

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- The need for good attendance and punctuality is a key feature of school and phase assemblies
- Teachers regularly extol the same values
- Full attendance is celebrated and rewarded on a half-termly basis (e.g. additional break time). This can be for individuals and/or classes
- Termly and yearly awards are given for full attendance to individuals (e.g. certificates, learning related items or vouchers)
- Class and year group attendance is publicly displayed on a weekly basis
- Pupils who miss learning time because of absence or lateness are given the opportunity to make this up

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Each school will:

- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Schools shall avoid headline percentages and instead make this understandable for parents (e.g. the amount of time missed and the impact on the pupil's learning).
- Write to and hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- One outcome of such meetings may be the drawing up of an attendance contract in line with the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). For full details see Appendix 2.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.

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

In order that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance, including those with mental or physical health issues or special educational needs and/or disabilities, each school will follow guidance set out in the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance. For full details see Appendix 3.

Professionals from the school – for example attendance officers, the school's SENDCO, teachers and phase leaders - will work in partnership with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil. Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

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

Each school will support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

Teachers will raise concerns about attendance, absence and punctuality with the attendance officer if they have any concerns.

The attendance officer will monitor attendance, absence and punctuality on a weekly basis across the school and at an individual pupil level.

The designated senior lead will monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.

Staff will identify whether or not there are particular individuals or groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

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

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

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

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and school leader, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Move along a support and prevention of absence process through discussion and support of parents and pupils. Where sufficient pupil attendance cannot be achieved the sanctions process will be applied.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Code of Conduct

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school

D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Attendance Contracts

Purpose of attendance contracts and when they may be appropriate:

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision.

An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. An attendance contract is not a punitive tool, it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.

There is no obligation on the school to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution.

The aim from the outset should be for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the local authority to work in partnership. Where a school and/or local authority decide to use an attendance contract, a meeting should be arranged with the parent(s). It should include the pupil if they are old enough to understand. The meeting should explain the purpose of an attendance contract and why using one would be beneficial in the family's circumstances. The parent(s) should be asked to outline their views on the pupil's attendance at school, any underlying issues and how they believe these should be addressed. The meeting should also allow them to share their views on the idea of an attendance contract and what type of support they think would be helpful to secure the pupil's regular attendance. Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts should be made to contact them and arrange another meeting but all attempts at support should be recorded.

One attendance contract may be arranged with all parents, or in circumstances where it is desirable to have different requirements for each parent then separate attendance contracts for each parent should be arranged.

Contents of an attendance contract:

All attendance contracts should contain:

- Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
- A statement from the school and/or local authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
- A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

The requirements specified, and the support provided, will depend on the individual case, and should be tailored to the needs of the individual parent and family. There is not, therefore, a prescribed list, but requirements may include:

- Measures to ensure the pupil attends school or alternative provision punctually and regularly
- Requiring the parent to attend meetings with the school and/or local authority
- Accessing or partaking in the support or programmes offered
- Working with or accessing other separate support provided to the pupil at school level (e.g. being on report).

The support provided to help the parent satisfy those requirements may include:

- Provision of a lead practitioner to support the family
- Signposting or referrals to wider local authority or health services that might support the family (e.g. housing needs, drug and alcohol support)
- Signposting or referrals to voluntary and community sector programmes or support (e.g. foodbanks or community support groups)
- Formal interventions such as family group conferencing, peer mentoring or literacy classes
- Support and advisory services (e.g. benefit support)
- Formal parenting programmes (e.g. a course with a specified number of sessions).

Attendance contracts do not have a minimum or maximum duration. Each individual attendance contract should set out the duration it will be in place, and most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed.

Once the requirements and support elements of the attendance contract have been agreed, the school and/or local authority and the parent should write up the contract together and sign it. The attendance contract should be written in language that the parent can easily understand (including a translation where necessary). All parties, including other partners working with the family, should be given a copy.

Non-compliance with an attendance contract:

The school and/or local authority should work in partnership with the parent to gain their cooperation and compliance throughout the attendance contract process.

Where a parent does not comply with the requirements set out in the attendance contract, the lead practitioner should contact the parent and seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable, and if the attendance contract remains useful. If the explanation shows that the attendance contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of the parent, then a meeting should be arranged with the parent to review and amend it. Where no explanation is given, or the lead practitioner is not satisfied with the explanation, they should serve the parent with a warning to explain that the attendance contract is not working and may be terminated, and another course of action pursued, if the parent does not engage.

This may be in the form of a letter, and record of it should be kept.

If there are further instances of non-compliance, they should arrange a meeting with the parent to review the attendance contract and discuss how it can be made to work. Following this meeting, the school and/or local authority should decide whether the non-compliance is undermining the contract to the extent that it is no longer useful in which case an alternative course of action (such as a different legal intervention) would need to be decided upon. The decision and reasons should be recorded.

Failure by the parent, school, or local authority to keep to the terms of the attendance contract cannot lead to action for breach of contract or for civil damages. There is no criminal sanction for a parent's failure to comply with, or refusal to sign, an attendance contract. If the pupil's irregular attendance continues or escalates to the point where prosecution is deemed appropriate, however, any failure or refusal may be presented as evidence in the case. It is therefore important that any non-compliance with the contract is recorded so that it can be presented in court if necessary.

Appendix 3: Additional Support for pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

School staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. They should also work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. Schools may also find it helpful to refer to DfE's non-statutory guidance on mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance for case study examples.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school staff are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil. They should:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.
- Make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, schools are expected to:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. Please see further details on SEN support.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under

section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a *disability*. *Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.*

- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

Attendance is everyone's business so in many of these cases the school will not be able to fully support a pupil without the assistance of a range of other agencies. The school should:

- Make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available.
- Consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals.
- Where external support is provided work together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

If the child has an education health and care plan, school staff should:

- Communicate with the local authority where a pupil's attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Where possible agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the education health and care plan in collaboration with parents.
- Where needed work with the local authority to review and amend the education health and care plan to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified.

Medical evidence for recording absences should only be needed in a minority of cases (see Code I). Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, schools can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance in supporting pupils at school with medical conditions or arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

Where parents do not engage in support, schools should work with the local authority or other local partners to formalise that support and as a last resort, enforce attendance through legal intervention.

Schools should ensure data is regularly monitored for pupils with long term illnesses and or special educational needs or disabilities including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. In some circumstances their education may be provided partially at school and partially at another educational setting or through education otherwise than at a school in line with section 19 of the Education Act 1996 or section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Time away from school to receive education in other ways must be recorded in the attendance register using the appropriate codes (see chapter 8).

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time

education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible.

A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process.

In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a part-time timetable for a prolonged period. Where the pupil has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process.

If the pupil has an education health and care plan, the school should discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence accordingly (normally using code X or C2).