



REACH SCHOOL

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Policy Details	
Prepared by:	Matthew Thomas – Assistant Headteacher
Date reviewed:	September 2023
Approved by: Signature:	
Date of next review:	September 2024

Contents

1 Purpose, aims, intentions and ethos	3
2 Legislation and Guidance	5
3 Definitions.....	5
4 Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders	6
5 Strategies for encouraging and promoting attendance	9
6 The importance of punctuality	10
7 Medical or dental appointments	10
8 Religious Observance	10
9 Persistent Absence	11
10 Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances	12
11 Fining parents for persistent non-attendance	12
12 Reintegration after a period of absence	13
13 Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities....	14

Appendices

Appendix 1: attendance target setting form.....	15
Appendix 2: Working together to improve school attendance.....	17
Appendix 3: Fast Track to Attendance Quick Process Guide.....	18

1. Purpose, aims, intentions and ethos

Purpose

This policy is in place to ensure that students receive a full-time education which maximises the opportunities for each student to realise his/her true potential and supports the raising of standards of achievement.

We will endeavour to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby all students thrive and work with students and families to enable each student to attend REACH School regularly and punctually.

REACH School will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping, but we will challenge those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, we will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Safeguarding: Students may be at risk if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of students is everyone's responsibility within the context of this school. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter.

Statutory Duties

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive full time education by regular attendance at a school or by other arrangements. Parents have the responsibility for making sure their children attend REACH School and on time.

Register Codes

Students' attendance will be marked using the School Information Management System (IMS, Arbor) and the government's suggested codes will be used. Please see REACH School Attendance Support Plan overleaf in the document for our escalation and support procedures. The following codes are of particular significance for parents/carers and students when understanding attendance coding:-

- ^ Present at Registration**
- G Family Holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)**
- I Illness**
- L Late but arrived before register**
- O Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)**
- U Late and arrived after register closed (this will impact attendance percentages)**

The school is responsible for recording student attendance twice a day, one at the start of the morning sessions (10:00am) and once during the afternoon session (1.40pm).

Aims

1. To improve the overall percentage of students' attendance
2. To reduce the level of persistent absence (PA)
3. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all REACH School community.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students in line with REACH School Attendance Support Plan.
5. To continue to regularly monitor student attendance data patterns in order to provide targeted support and guidance to both parents and students.
6. To actively maintain positive and consistent communication between relevant parties (School, Home, Student, External Agencies and Home School)
7. To continue to recognise good punctuality and attendance by utilising rewards and sanctions.

At REACH School we have high expectations of each and every pupil. In line with government guidance we challenge every student to maintain their attendance above 96%.

	99-100%	Key Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly attendance check in's during assembly and reflection time • Regular positive communication home • informal support and guidance • Positive Merit points
	96-98%		
	90-95%	Head of Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 week monitoring period • Focused support and guidance • Short term target setting • Merit points on completion of targets • Local authority School Attendance Support Team
	85-90%	Attendance officer and Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 week monitoring period • attendance target set and agreed with parents/ carers, see Appendix 1 • Letter of concern sent home • Increased home visits • Identification of Early Help/ external support • Focused support and guidance • Local Authority School Attendance Support Team
	7 or more sessions per half term		
	Under 85%	Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental meeting • Close monitoring • Notification of persistent absence • SARM • Referral to external agencies • Focused support and guidance • ELIT designated Support Officer (TBC)

REACH School recognises the individual student. Where a student's attendance doesn't meet school expectations, we expect to see a positive effort from all parties (school, student, parents/ carers and external agencies) to make sustained improvements from pre-REACH attendance figures.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act
- Equality Act
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (as amended)
- DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance'.
- DfE 'Children missing education'.
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE)'.
- DfE 'Providing remote education'.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.

- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

4 Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.
- Ensuring the policy is implemented consistently, and that persistent and severe absence is tackled appropriately.

Deputy Headteacher is responsible for:

Ensuring robust measures and support is in place for families and pupils whose attendance is of "severe concern/ below 50%".

Reviewing support already provided and initiate any further targeted support that is suitable to the needs of the child and their family by liaising with the SENCO, pastoral Managers, DSL and early help team.

The attendance officer and Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for attendance are responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.
- Quality assure the clearance of N Codes; run weekly checks to ensure N codes are cleared within 5 working days.
- Work together with the local authority and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. This will be decided for each individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:
 - Parenting contracts
 - Education supervision orders
 - Attendance prosecution
 - Parenting orders
 - Fixed penalty notices
- Follow the Birmingham 'Fast Track Attendance' guidance to ensure that parents who do not fulfil their legal duty to send the child to school regularly are supported and held to account through the legal process.
- Continually reflect and evaluate the systems, to ensure procedures are implemented consistently and fairly.

DSL is responsible for:

- Monitoring persistent absences regularly and systematically to ensure the safeguarding of pupils who do not attend school well.
- Working with a particular focus on pupils who are absent more than they are present e.g., 60% attendance or below.
- Ensuring that the school register contains more than one contact detail for each pupil on roll.
- Co-ordinating relevant services to ensure that the young person and their families get the support necessary to deal with more complex issues.
- Where support and legal processes fail to bring about improvement, it is likely that this constitutes 'neglect' (KCSIE) and necessary safeguarding actions should be actioned.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.
-

Parents are responsible for:

- The a legal duty to ensure their child attends every day that the school is open, except when a statutory reason applies
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Contacting the school office via telephone as soon as possible when their child is to be unexpectedly absent (e.g., sickness,) before 9.30am, ensuring a reason is always provided on each day of absence.
- Refrain from allowing their child to take time off school for minor ailments.
- Arrange appointments and outings after school hours, or as late as possible in the afternoon, at weekends or during school holidays.
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, and do so in advance.
- Refrain from booking holidays during term time.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

5 Strategies for encouraging and promoting attendance

The following strategies are used to promote positive attendance:

- Attendance Reward Weeks to highlight the benefits of regular attendance, termly and half-termly recognition of 100% attendance, praise post-cards for improved and consistently good attendance.
- Monitoring of days taken off for religious observance/extended holidays.
- Monitoring of all pupils with low or declining attendance and short-term action planning where appropriate including proactive monitoring of specific pupil groups such as disadvantaged, SEND and EAL.
- Continuing improvement of the school environment.
- Working closely with parents of pupils whose punctuality is a problem, to ensure the right early help is in place.
- Continuing to develop a range of strategies aimed at addressing the Emotional Health and Well-being of our pupils.
- Continuing to develop in-school support for pupils who find regulating their behaviour more challenging.

The importance of regular attendance will be emphasised by including the table below regular communications with parents- developing an understanding that 95% attendance is not 'good.'

Attendance during one school year	Equals days absent	Which approximately weeks absent	is	Which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks		50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks		100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks		150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks		200 lessons
75%	48 days	10 weeks		250 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks		290 lessons
65%	67 days	13.5 weeks		340 lessons

6 The importance of punctuality

- All pupils should be on the school site by 9:30am.
- REACH School Breakfast Club runs daily from 8.45 until 9.25 to encourage and support students to arrive on time and ready to learn.
- Any pupil arriving late after 9:30 will be assigned a 15-minute end of day reflection on the same day.
- Persistent late marks will mean contact home and then meeting with parents.
- The school register will close at 10:00am. If pupils arrive after 10:00am they will be given a 'U code' which means pupils can be marked as having 50% attendance for that day- this absence is classed as unauthorised, unless there is medical evidence.

7 Medical or dental appointments

- Wherever possible, GP/medical, or dental appointments should be made outside of school hours or during the school holidays.
- The governing body understand that this may not always be possible in emergencies or for specialist/mental health/ consultant led appointments.
- Parents should try their best to arrange these appointments as early or late in the school day as possible, and for the shortest period of time possible, to minimise the impact on learning.
- If a pupil has to leave school for an appointment during the school day, we do need confirmation from parents of appointment time, travel arrangements and time expected to be out of school.
- All pupils signing-out will have to be authorised by a senior member of staff.
- We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily,

8 Religious observance

REACH School will 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, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- If pupils are absent on these days, and not a part of that religious body, the absence will be unauthorised.

9 Persistent absence

- Following the guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) any student whose attendance falls below 90% is classed as a Persistently Absent student. Therefore, if a student misses 15 or more days over an academic year they will be classed as 'persistently absent'.
- If a pupil is at risk of becoming persistently absent, and we are concerned about the number of absences for illness, parents will be informed by the Head Teacher in writing that we will no longer authorise any absence unless supported by medical evidence. We will also seek permission from parents for a school nurse referral to ensure there are no underlying conditions to be aware of. We will adhere to the guidance set out in the DfE guidance: Working together to improve school attendance (see appendix. 2)
- Informal offers of early help will already have been actioned by this stage.
- Where attendance continues to be a concern, parents will be informed of the school's concerns and a school attendance meeting will be arranged between the school, parents and the pupil to set targets for improvement, and formalise the offer of early help.
- If the school have any concerns that attendance is not improving following the initial school attendance meeting and offer of early help (any unauthorised absence following this meeting, and 10 sessions of absence in total,) the school will follow Birmingham LEA procedures for fast tracking attendance concerns, which can result in legal action being taken by the local authority:
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1839/school_attendance_and_absence_-_fast_track_information_for_schools
- If a child's absence becomes severe absence we will continue to support as for persistent absent pupils, but more intensively and we will agree a joint approach to all severely absent pupils with the local authority. This support may include careers advice, mentoring, work experience, Saturday school offer and/or early help assessments.
- The DSL will be involved in ensuring the appropriate action is taken to guarantee the safety and well-being of the pupil.
- Parents of pupils who are severely absent, will be expected to work with school and the local authority to help us to understand the barriers to their child's attendance, and to proactively engage with the formal support offered- including any parent contract or voluntary plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- Where engagement with support is proving challenging more formal actions will be taken e.g. a parenting contract or education supervision order may be used, as may a referral to children's services.
- The school keeps a detailed list of all persistent absentees and actions that have been taken to support them with attendance issues. This is regularly updated.

The following table shows estimated cumulative absent sessions thresholds for around 10 per cent.

	10 per cent
Half-term 1	7 or more sessions
Half-term 1-2 (autumn term)	14 or more sessions
Half-term 1-3	20 or more sessions
Half-term 1-4 (autumn term and spring term combined)	25 or more sessions
Half-term 1-5	31 or more sessions
Half-term 1-6 (full academic year)	38 or more sessions

10 Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

Only in exceptional circumstances will the school grant absence for pupils during term time.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

- The decision to authorise absence is at the Head Teacher's discretion based on the assessment of the situation.
- Evidence will be required where it is deemed appropriate. The safety of our pupils is paramount, and we will investigate each situation and outside agencies may be informed.
- Taking holidays during the school terms is strongly discouraged, and will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher, and all requests must be placed in writing.

11 Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

- Additional support will be put in place for pupils where necessary to help pupils who experience more complex barriers, to access their full-time education. This will involve making reasonable adjustments, ensuring a joined-up pastoral approach, working with external agencies and partners, and supporting families with routines to ensure the right support is actioned.
- Pupils with long-term illnesses/serious health needs may need additional support to continue their education. If a student does not attend school for fifteen continuous days due to significant/ serious illness, they may be referred to James Brindley (Birmingham's

hospital school.) James Brindley School provides education for children and young people whilst they are in hospital due to their medical conditions. This decision will be made in consultation with parents, the local authority and medical professionals.

- A part-time timetable may need to be part of the package for a pupil with medical needs- this must always be for the shortest period possible, have a formal arrangement for review, and should have an agreed time-limit. This will be agreed by the Headteacher, with parents and recorded with the local authority.
- The monitoring of data for these groups will be monitored regularly to ensure the right support at the right time.

12 Fining parents for persistent non-attendance

The school will follow LEA attendance policies and procedures. The LEA can fine parents for the unauthorised absence from school, if the child is of compulsory school age.

- The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Head Teacher following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account, but is not exhaustive:
 - 10 sessions of absence occurring within a rolling 12-month period can put parents at risk of legal action.
 - Unauthorised absence following a school attendance meeting (SARM.)
 - One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
 - Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

The legal consequences of non-attendance

Legal proceedings and Penalty Notices have been introduced to try and ensure the regular attendance of children in education; this is in line with Birmingham City Council's 'Fast Track' see Appendix 3: Fast Track to Attendance Quick Process Guide

Legal Proceedings

Legal proceedings will be considered after the School have tried to engage with, and offer support to, a family of a student who has attendance issues. If the poor/non-attendance of a student is not resolved REACH School may decide to take legal action against the parents or responsible adult of the child. If found guilty by a Magistrate a parent/responsible adult could be fined up to £2,500, or a Parenting Order could be issued, which lasts for up to a year.

Legal Proceedings Criteria:

- 1) Concerning levels of absence either authorised or unauthorised – (once a year we will send the ‘School Attendance’ whole school letter to parents and by placing it onto our REACH School website.
- 2) The pupil has at least one session of unauthorised absence - Early Help has been refused (this includes ‘no response’ to attempts by the school to engage the family); the circumstances of the family do not meet the threshold for Early Help/Social Care support; Early Help/Social Care strategies have not resulted in sustained attendance improvement.
- 3) The pupil has further unauthorised absence adding up to at least 10 sessions in total over the previous 12 calendar months.
- 4) The pupil has a minimum of 10 further sessions of unauthorised absence within 12 school weeks of the warning notice being issued.

Penalty Notices

REACH School can seek support from the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT) for parents who are not actively trying to support/improve their child’s attendance. The FAST TRACK procedure will be initiated and followed with the hope that attendance will improve. Failure to see any improvements could result in fixed penalty notices being issued.

13 Reintegration after a period of absence

At REACH School we will treat reintegration of a student who has been absent for a long period sensitively.

- This will begin with a meeting between key stakeholders and a discussion based on the barriers to a consistent attendance record.
- Reasonable adjustments will be applied in order to support attendance at the discretion of the Head Teacher.
- Part-time timetables are usually not permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances- this decision will be made in conjunction with the Head Teacher and the Local Authority.

Appendix 1: attendance target setting form.

Attendance target setting form.

Student name:	
Date of Birth	
Address:	
Base School:	

Present at meeting	
---------------------------	--

Current attendance	
New attendance weekly/ termly target:	
Timescale for improvement	

Actions agreed	
-----------------------	--

Date of review	
-----------------------	--

I agree to take responsibility for making sure that my child receives a full-time education.

I understand I have a responsibility to ensure that my child is safe and well even when they are absent from school.

I have received a copy of the REACH school attendance policy and agree to notify the school by telephone before 9:30am on the first day of absence. I understand the school will contact me by telephone if no message has been received by 9:30am.

I understand that if my child is absent from school a member of staff may make a wellbeing visit and ask to see the student.

I will wherever possible arrange for medical appointments to be outside of school hours to minimise the disruption to my child's education. I understand that if my child has a medical appointment, I will be required to give advance notice to the school and provide evidence.

I understand that if my child takes absence that has not be authorised by the Headteacher it will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. This may lead to a penalty notice and legal action being taken, and my child could lose their school place.

I confirm that this attendance target setting was agreed by all present:

Print name: _____

Parent/carer

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print name: _____

School representative

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print name: _____

Other Agency

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Has this attendance target setting been discussed with the student? Yes / No

A copy of the school attendance certificate should be attached to this target setting form.

Appendix 2: Working together to improve school attendance.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

Working together to improve attendance

13. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



