

Attendance Policy



Pride
Passion
Partnership
Professionalism
Positivity

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Should you have any queries regards this policy, note an omission or wish to propose an amendment, please email mattheweldon.lake@thebridgetrust.academy

1. Philosophy and aims

Regular and punctual school attendance helps drive pupil progress and achievement, often strengthens wellbeing, and increases the life chances and opportunities for children and young people. This policy reflects the fact that the vast majority of The Bridge Trust (the trust) pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan. Therefore, while expectations must remain high, the design and application of this policy requires nuance. For example, demonstrating due consideration and sensitivity for pupils with complex medical needs and their families. Likewise, a sophisticated approach to managing some of the attendance issues that may stem from social, emotional and mental health difficulties and autism is required. We are highly committed to promoting excellent attendance through whole-school culture. Indeed all schools must make all reasonable endeavours to:

- promote excellent attendance
- reduce absence, including persistent absence (greater than 10%) and severe absence (greater than 50%)
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- act early to address patterns of absence
- build strong relationships with families and pupils so they have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance 2024
- The Education Act 1996 and 2002
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Equality Act 2010
- Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

This policy relates to many other trust policies and, in particular, the following:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Child Missing in Education Policy
- Managing Medical Conditions
- Behaviour Policy

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of [Working together to improve school attendance 2024](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to [Resources for families](#), composed by the Children's Commissioner for England.

3. The law relating to attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

4. Safeguarding

- All staff should be aware that children being absent from school, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. It is important that staff are aware of their school or college's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.
- Where reasonably possible, schools should hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This goes beyond the legal minimum. It is good practice to have additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing education. When a registered pupil fails to attend school for a period that causes concern, and the school have been unsuccessful in tracing the child, the school will report the child to the local authority as Missing from Education. Further information for schools can be found in the department's Working together to improve school attendance guidance 2024 and:
 - [Children Missing Education](#)
 - [Children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)
 - [Missing Children and Adults Strategy](#)

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- promoting the importance of school attendance across trust policies and ethos
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data, trends and actions to improve attendance
- ensuring trust leaders and headteachers provide their staff with effective training on supporting pupil attendance and dealing with connected safeguarding matters
- making sure trusts leaders and headteachers implement this policy

Monitoring of pupil attendance features in the regular meetings between the members of the trust Safeguarding and Attendance Committee and the Head of School Improvement.

5.2 Headteachers and Executive Headteachers are responsible for:

- implementation of this policy at the individual school within the trust
- ensuring monitoring and analysis of weekly attendance patterns and trends and enabling targeted intervention and support to pupils and families. This should go beyond headline attendance percentages and should look at individual pupils and cohorts. The Safeguarding and Attendance Officer supports schools with this.
- supporting their staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- offering a clear vision for the 'what' 'how' and 'by when' of improving attendance
- issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

Each school within the trust has a designated person responsible for attendance who can be contacted via the school.

Fen Rivers Academy	Amanda Fewkes and Judith Henson
The Bridge Easton	Natalie Dores
Hungerford School	Jo Stephens
The Bridge Satellite Provision	Rosie Whur
The Bridge School	Stephen Chatterjee and Sharon Rabinarain
The Integrated Learning Space	Edward Ashcroft

5.3 The trust safeguarding and attendance officer is responsible for:

- supporting schools to effectively analyse absence and persistent absence rates for all pupils, and for different groups
- working with schools to develop a clear strategy to improve attendance that focuses on the causes of absence
- ensuring that records of attendance, including the use of codes, are consistently accurate across all schools
- ensuring that pupils being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions is treated as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues

5.4 Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in a timely fashion

5.5 School admin staff will:

- take calls from parent/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- communicate key absence trends that they may observe, and any other salient attendance information, to school leaders. This helps ensure the right action can be taken at the right time

5.6 Parents/carers are expected to:

- take reasonable and necessary action to promote excellent attendance and punctuality, including telephoning on the first day of any absence to explain the nature and length of absence
- ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

6. Equal opportunities

- Whilst every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance expectations should be set for all pupils, this attendance policy also accounts for the specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts. This policy should be applied fairly and consistently but in doing so schools should always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In the implementation of policy, schools consider their obligations under [Equality Act 2010](#).

7. Medical and dental appointments

- These should be made outside school hours. If medical and dental appointments are authorised, families must ensure they collect the pupil from visitors' reception as no pupil will be allowed out of the school unaccompanied unless there is prior agreement with the school. Families must also ensure that the pupil is aware of the appointment (when this is a reasonable given the pupil's age and understanding). Schools may ask parents/carers for evidence of the appointment.

8. Leave of absence during term time

- Pupils are not entitled to be away from school during term time as a result of a family holiday. Such absences will be recorded as unauthorised. Leave of absence will be granted in very exceptional circumstances on application to the Headteacher. These requests should be made by writing in advance to the Headteacher and permission is subject to his or her discretion. Holidays taken during term time without agreement may lead to a fixed penalty notice in line with the local authority's code of conduct and the national framework for penalty notices.

9. Absence due to sleep deprivation

- Some pupils with autism and other special needs experience sleep difficulties which can impact how they feel and function. However, we expect pupils who have not slept well to still attend school the next day. We can adapt learning activities to make provision for tired pupils. If a lack of sleep becomes a reoccurring reason for a child not attending school, then the family should be supported and advised to see their GP.

10. Complex medical needs

- The trust provides for a relatively high proportion of pupils with complex medical needs. These pupils may be unavoidably absent from school more often than other pupils. Leaders and staff will be sensitive to pupils' needs and support families to maximise their child's attendance. Good attendance may look different for pupils with complex medical needs.

11. Special needs, including social, emotional and mental health needs

- Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools should work in partnership with pupils and parents/carers collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium.
- 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.
- 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.
- Schools may not be able to fully support pupils with SEND without the assistance of a range of other agencies. 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.
- School should consider removing any in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime

arrangements. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents/carers.

- Further information about mental health can be found within
 - [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#)
 - [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance](#)

12. Registers

- Class registers are to be completed by the agreed time (for each school) at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. While in some schools admin teams have a role in completing the registers, it is the legal responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the register is completed.
- All schools follow the Department for Education guidance on the use of attendance codes (see appendix) and do not deviate from this.
- If a member of staff suspects that a student is missing from the lesson or activity, then they should immediately follow the school's local procedure.

13. Penalty Notices

13.1 Overview

- Penalty notices are issued to parent/carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.
- As a trust we do not believe that the issuing of penalty notices is a supportive measure to improve pupil attendance, but recognise that in exceptional circumstances this may be required. For example, if there is no improvement in a child's attendance after the school has completed a fulsome programme of support.
- Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended and can only be issued by a Headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. They must also be issued in line with Local Codes of Conduct which are drawn up and maintained by each local authority.
- Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness
- A penalty notice may also be issued where parents/carers allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The school must have notified the parents/carers of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place.

13.2 Meeting the threshold to issue a penalty notice

Headteachers must be able to answer 'yes' to all of the below questions in order to issue a penalty notice.

1. Have letters been sent to the pupil's parent/carer and conversations and/or meetings held to convey concerns, provide support, and give sufficient time for improvement? Is this demonstrable?
2. Has a final 'Notice to improve' been sent explaining to parents/carers the risk of a penalty notice and has high absence remained.
3. Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family, or would further support be more appropriate?
4. Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010 such as where a pupil has a disability?

5. This is the first or second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period?
6. Have school leaders spoken with the local authority, sharing their intention to fine and checking that their procedures are in line with Local Codes of Conduct?
7. Has the Headteacher spoken to the trust Safeguarding and Attendance Officer, who has given their support to issue a penalty notice?

13.3 Notices to improve letter

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent/carer to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. It is important that the notice to improve is clear, contextual, personalised and fair. The Notice to Improve is expected to include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents'/carers' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period.
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

14. Promoting strong attendance

School leaders and their teams should:

- **make the school an appealing place** for pupils to be. Strategies may include:
 - **Universal support:** The culture of the school precipitates excellent attendance. For example, excellent relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils, a curriculum that pupils want to access, and high importance placed on strong attendance.
 - **Targeted support:** Additional actions for specific pupils to increase school enjoyment and promote improved attendance.
 - **Intensive support:** A detailed plan for those pupils with the highest absence linked perhaps to emotionally based school avoidance and feelings such as fear and anxiety.
- **create a culture in which attendance is everyone's business**, so that all colleague's expectations and actions consistently promote strong attendance.
- **listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate avoidable absence**
- **make all reasonable endeavours to understand patterns and trends – the cause – of absence for individuals and groups.** This includes understanding which pupils with persistent and severe absence are improving their attendance over time or whether their attendance is consistently low. For example, is absence on a Monday related to weekend use of social media, an unpreferred lesson on a Monday, etc?
- **consider absence alongside other data an insights.** This allows school leaders to ask questions and act before things start to slide. For example, checking attendance against bullying and behaviour records.
- **recognise small improvements in attendance**, for example through parental recognition and/or pupil recognition. This helps ensure expectations are not lowered but broken down to small steps.
- **place high importance on supporting pupils' return following a period of absence**, with due focus on filling gaps in curriculum content and knowledge, and reestablishing routines and relationships.

- where necessary schools should make efforts to engage in multi-agency work with the local authority and other partners.
- accept that they may have limited influence on some factors affecting attendance and punctuality, and **do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance.**

15. 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 or 61 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 appendix).
- 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.
- Headteacher are required to notify the Head of School Improvement if they wish to implement a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's needs.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent/carer 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/carers 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).

Appendix 1

Attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Child is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Child is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Child arrives late before register has closed

Attending a place other than school		
Code	Definition	Scenario
K	Attending an approved educational activity arranged by the local authority	Child attending provision arranged by LEA
V	Educational trip or visit	Child is on an educational visit / trip organised, or approved, by the school
P	Sporting activity	Child is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the academy
W	Work experience	Child is on a work experience placement
B	Off-site educational activity	Child is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the academy
D	Dual registered	Child is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered

Absent – leave of absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
C1	Regulated performance/employment	Child has been granted a leave of absence to participate in regulated performance or regulated employment abroad
M	Medical / dental appointment	Child is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Child has an interview with a prospective employer / educational establishment
S	Study leave	Year 11 child is on student leave during their public examinations

X	Not required to be in the academy	Child of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	School age student has a part time timetable	School aged child with temporary part-time timetable
C	Authorised leave of absence	Child has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Other authorised absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Child from a Traveller community whose parents are travelling for occupational purposes and have been granted leave of absence by the academy
R	Religious observance	Child is taking part in a day of religious observance set aside by the religious body the parent(s) belong to
I	Illness	School has been notified that a child will be absent due to illness
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Child has been suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision has been made
Q	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements	Child is unable to attend school because an LEA has a duty to make access arrangements but has failed to do so
Y1	Unable to attend due to normal transport not being available	Child is unable to attend due to academy not being within walking distance and transport normally provided by academy or LEA not being available (walking distance via nearest available route for a child under the age of 8 is 2 miles and 3 miles for 8 and over)
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Child is unable to travel due to disruption caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of academy premises being closed	Part of school premises is unavoidable out of use and child cannot be practicably accommodated in parts of premises in use
Y4	Unable to attend due to whole academy site being closed	School was planned to be open but closed unexpectedly
Y5	Unable to attend due to student criminal justice detention	Child is unable to attend due to police detention, youth detention or detained under a sentence of detention

Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Child is prohibited from travelling or attending due to legislation or guidance relating to the transmission of infection or disease
Y7	Unable to attend due to any other avoidable cause	Child is prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause not covered by code Y1 – Y6 (nature of unavoidable cause will be recorded)

Unauthorised absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
G	Unauthorised holiday	Child is on a leave of absence that was not approved by the academy
N	Reason not established	Child is absent for an unknown reason (this code will be amended when the reason emerges or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided within five school days)
O	Unauthorised absence	The academy is not satisfied with reason for child's absence or reason for absence is not established
U	Arrival after registration	Child arrived at the academy after the register closed but before the end of the session

Administrative codes		
Code	Definition	Scenario
Z	Child not on admission register	Register set up, but child has not yet joined the academy
#	Planned academy closure	Whole or partial academy closure due to half term / bank holiday / INSET day

Policy Owner and Contact Details

Barney Geen, Head of School Improvement

For further information on the Policy, please phone 020 7619 1000

Next Review Date: September 2026