



Attendance Policy

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date:	September 2024
Last reviewed on:	October 2023		
Next review by:	September 2025		

Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly.

We try to promote the concept that “Small numbers make a big difference,” through our communications to children, parents, governors and other stakeholders around good attendance.

Working Together

Attendance is everyone’s business. The barriers to accessing education are wide-ranging and can be complex, both within and beyond the school gates. They are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn. For more complex cases, the ethos of the Working together to improve school attendance guidance is that pupils and families should receive holistic, whole-family support to help them overcome the barriers to attendance they are facing. For these more complex cases, a traditional linear or pathway process is unlikely to work. Instead, the guidance expects the best placed service to lead a ‘support first’ approach with schools working together with local authorities and wider partners, including the voluntary and community sector where needed

In all cases the school – as the best placed service – should work to understand the reasons for absence.

In most cases, the school will continue as lead practitioner. Where barriers to attendance go beyond the school gates and cover multiple needs, schools should work with the local authority and other agencies to provide wider-holistic support. If the case meets the local thresholds for early help or family support, this may involve completing an early help assessment. In some of these cases a local authority team will be best placed to act as lead practitioner. If attendance is a single need or the case does not meet the local threshold, schools should still follow early help principles in their approach.

Where a pupil or their family already have another lead practitioner working with them, the school should work alongside their practitioner, to help make attendance a key element of their existing plan. This includes pupils with a social worker, early help practitioner, youth offender team worker or with an education, health and care plan.

Legislation & Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

School Procedures

Attendance Register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. Pupils are of statutory school age from the term after their 5th birthday to the June after their 16th birthday.

The school gates open at 08:30 and close at 08:45. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day (the register closes at 09:00) and after lunch (13:00). It will mark whether the pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site activity
- Absent (absences will be indicated by the correct code – see appendix – and a comment if relevant)

First Day Contact System

Parents must notify the school on the first day on an unplanned absence (e.g due to ill health) by 09:00 or as soon as practically possible. There is a dedicated absence message line through the school's main telephone number (01935 436736). The first call can cover 48 hours if the child is suffering from sickness or diarrhoea or as specified by the parent. If the absence continues, daily contact should be made with the school office, class teacher or attendance officer.

Lateness / Punctuality

Children are encouraged to arrive at school for when the gates open at 0830. The school employs a 'soft' opening to the school between 0830 and 0900 (when the first register of the day is taken) Children who arrive late to school are required to sign in at the Front Office. Children who are persistently late to school will be monitored and the appropriate action will be taken by the school – sequence of letters, face-to-face meetings, Early Help Assessments, external help requested etc (see Appendix B)

Medical / Dental Appointment

Advance notice is required for absences due to medical or dental appointments to be authorised. The school encourages parents to make these routine appointments out of school hours where possible. When not possible to do so, the child should be absent from school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Medical appointments can be reported to the school office, the class teacher or the attendance officer. In some cases, evidence such as an appointment card or letter may be requested.

Following Up Absences

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensuring proper safeguarding action is taken where appropriate, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If an absence message has not been received by 10:00, the school office will send a text reminder via ParentPay. If there is no parental contact, the child's data collection sheet may be used to contact other relatives / carers. On the child's return to school, if there is no appropriate reason given for the absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised.

Reporting to Parents

Attendance % so far in the academic year are available for discussion at Parent / Teacher consultations in the Autumn and Spring Terms. The annual attendance certificate is sent home with the End of Year Annual Report. If a child's absence is concerning, parents will be contacted individually, appropriately and timely.

Granting Approval for Term-Time Absence

Headteachers may only authorise term-time absences in 'exceptional circumstances.' This can be defined as Family Bereavement, Service Family Commitments and other individual circumstances:

- Illness and medical / dental appointments
- Religious observance (where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong)
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes (Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen [fairground people] and Circus people, Bargees [occupational boat dwellers] and New Travellers)
- Family Holiday following the death of a family member or other catastrophic family situation
- Family Holiday for Service Personnel either before or following deployment

Unauthorised Absences

Absences will be unauthorised if:

- Child's attendance is below 90% unless Medical Evidence is provided
- Child's attendance is below 95% and monitoring shows initial signs of concern
- Family holiday because it is cheaper in term-time.
- Family holiday when a child's attendance is below 95% and there are no exceptional circumstances

See Appendix A for authorised / unauthorised codes for the school's registration system (BromCom)

Legal Sanctions

Link for Somerset's Penalty Notice Protocol:

<https://somersetcc.sharepoint.com/sites/SCCPublic/Schools/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FSCCPublic%2FSchools%2FSchool%20Attendance%20Penalty%20Notice%20Protocol%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FSCCPublic%2FSchools&p=true&ga=1> (SEE APPENDIX C)

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

Children Absent from Education (Formerly Children Missing in Education – CME)

'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024' identified children absent from education as the following:

- Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and / or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation – particularly county lines.
- It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identify such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

'Children Missing Education' 2016 states that the school's responsibility is:

- Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.
- When the school suspects a child of being absent from education, the appropriate paperwork is generated from SIMS and the Local Authority is informed. The school then works with the Local Authority in tandem.

See Appendix B for the school's graduated response to persistent absences.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met.</p> <p>If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Hold a regular conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. Regardless, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner in cases where threshold is met and all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.</p>

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Year Group attendance % will be added to the weekly Well Done Assembly PowerPoint and the cohort with the highest % will receive a biscuit treat. One child with 100% attendance for the week will be the recipient of the Attendance Cup for the week.
- School's attendance compared to the National Average will be added to Newsletters to inform parents of the importance of good attendance.

APPENDIX A (BromCom CODES)

/ - Present at the school when attendance register begins to be taken

B - Attending a place for any other approved educational activity

D - Attending another school at which they are a registered pupil

E - Excluded (no alternative provision made)

G - Absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday

O - Absent - other circumstances

P - Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity

Q - Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements by LA to facilitate their attendance

R - Day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs

W - Attending a place for an approved education activity that is work experience

Z - Pupil's name entered in advance of start date

K - Attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by LA

L - Absent from the school when attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended

M - Absent with leave for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment

N - Absent - circumstances not yet established

S - Absent with leave for the purpose of studying for a public examination

T - Mobile child whose parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and is travelling with that parent

U - Absent for registration - arrived in school after registration closed

V - Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a visit or trip

APPENDIX B (School Procedure)

- Attendance is monitored weekly for Celebration Assembly / Attendance Cup Winner highlighting children with 100% attendance.
- Half-termly attendance identifies children with low attendance.
- Children with <90% receive Letter 1 explaining that future absences may be unauthorised.
- If the attendance of these children does not improve, parents receive Letter 2 inviting them to a face-to-face meeting to identify any other needs or steps required to improve attendance.
- If attendance still does not improve, an Early Help Assessment will be completed and the family will be referred to the PFSA.
- If after a set period of time working with the PFSA still does not have a positive impact, assistance from Somerset County Council will be sought and their protocol put in place (see Appendix C)

A This flow chart outlines the process educational settings are expected to follow when there are concerns about a child's attendance. The chart assumes that attendance concerns continue throughout.

At every stage, due consideration must be given to any safeguarding concerns and the suitability of any statutory or legal work in relation to absence from school. The decision to instigate and pursue any legal proceedings rests with the Education Safeguarding Service.



Somerset County Council – Penalty Notice Information for Parents

Supporting Good School Attendance

Information about Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence from School



Following the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absences recorded after 19 August 2024.

This information refers to penalty notices that are considered for both irregular attendance and unauthorised term-time leave.

What is a Penalty Notice?

A penalty notice is a fixed penalty fine issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution in relation to unauthorised school absence.

Who can be a Penalty be issued to?

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent or carer of each child whose unauthorised absence meets the national threshold.

For example, in a family with two parents and three children taking unauthorised term-time leave, each parent could receive a penalty notice for each child resulting in six penalty notices being issued.

The National Threshold

Schools are required to consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a child reaches 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

Absences do not have to be consecutive and can be a combination of any unauthorised absence codes (G, O, N or U).

The rolling ten school week period can span terms, school years and schools.

The First Offence

The first time a parent is issued with a penalty notice in relation to a child's absence, they will be able to pay the reduced amount of £80 if they pay within 21 days.

After 21 days, the full amount of £160 is payable within 28 days.

The Second Offence

If a parent is issued with a second penalty notice within three years the amount payable will be £160 within 28 days.

The reduced amount will not be available.

Further Offences

A parent cannot be issued with more than two penalty notices in relation to each child within a three-year period. Where this threshold is met and further offences occur, the Local Authority will consider other measures to address attendance concerns.

This may include prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and the parent having a criminal record. In rare cases, parents may receive a custodial sentence. If convicted, the offence will also show on any future DBS checks.

Appealing a Penalty Notice

There is no statutory right for parents to appeal penalty notices for unauthorised school absence.

If a parent believes a penalty notice has been issued in error, they should contact their child's school as quickly as possible. If an error has been made, the school may request a withdrawal.

Not Paying a Penalty Notice

If a penalty notice is not paid within the payment period, Somerset Council may prosecute the parent for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

The Law

Penalty notices are issued in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 when a parent has failed to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

Penalty notices can only be issued when:

- ✓ a child's absence meets the national threshold
- ✓ issuing a penalty notice is compliant with the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct

Every local authority has a Penalty Notice Code of Conduct that outlines how, and when, it will issue penalty notices relating to unauthorised school absence.

Somerset's Code of Conduct is available online and describes the circumstances when issuing a penalty notice is appropriate.

Penalty notices will only be issued in line with the Code of Conduct.

Useful Links

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Somerset Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct
- The Education Act 1996

