



The Oak Partnership

Attendance Policy

Version 2.0

We are committed to safeguarding and ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all pupils in accordance with safeguarding procedures and guidance for staff outlined in the schools' Health and Safety, Child Protection, Security and Safeguarding policies.

Attendance Policy

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1.0	6.3.2023	Created by BR	New policy based on new DfE attendance guidance.
2.0	20.6.204	BR	The attendance guidance table (page 16) was amended so schools are clear it is guidance and decisions should be taken locally based on family context. Letter templates produced as guidance to accompany policy. Schools need to make appendix bespoke to school- generic appendix removed. No other changes made

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Trust Attendance Policy Statement

All schools in the Oak Partnership Trust are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils (EYFS through to Key Stage 5) and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all.

By attending school regularly and punctually children and young people will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

We believe that improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents 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.

We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems. We will provide effective and efficient communications with pupils, parents, and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support to meet our objectives.

As schools, we will:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- ensure all staff, pupils and parents understand our expectations for attendance
- accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence
- regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- build strong relationships with families, listen to, and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

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This policy is based on current government guidance, [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) (May 2022) and other statutory regulations.

Developing a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance

We recognise that ensuring good attendance is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture.

In building a culture of high school attendance, we will:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Responsibilities should include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. Where possible this should include attendance or pastoral support staff (either school based or contracted) who can work with families, school leaders, the local authority's School Attendance Support Team and other partners.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels. In doing so, schools should help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It should also include clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Definitions

In this policy there are some key definitions which will be used. We have referenced the meaning of these terms below for ease of understanding:

Persistent Absence

When a pupil's attendance figure reaches 90% or below, they are deemed as 'persistently absent' from school. Pupils whose attendance is below 90% are likely to achieve lower educational outcomes and are at increased risk of harm and exploitation. A pupil with 90% attendance will be absent for the equivalent of: one session per week, six sessions per six-week half term or 38 sessions per school year.

Severe Absence

When a pupil is absent from school with an attendance figure of 50% or below, they are deemed as 'severely absent'. Pupils in this group are at increased risk of exploitation and education outcomes are poor. A pupil with 50% attendance will be absent for the equivalent of: five sessions per week, 30 sessions per six-week half term or 190 sessions per school year.

Parent

Within this policy, a parent is defined as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not or any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person and any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e., lives with and looks after the child).

Vulnerable pupils

Within this policy, vulnerable pupils are defined as those that: have a social worker or have previously had a social worker; are a Child Looked After (CLA); have an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan); are severely absent, as defined above.

Local Authority

Within this policy the Local Authority refers to Somerset County Council. From 1 April 2023, the Local Authority will refer to Somerset Council.

Session

Schools are required to take attendance registers twice a day for all pupils. Each of these attendance marks counts for one session. Each day is made up of two sessions; morning and afternoon. In a typical school year, a pupil will can attend for a maximum of 190 days, or 380 sessions.

Statutory and Legal Guidance

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 to make sure their child/young

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person receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

When parents decide to have their child/ young person registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child/ young person attends that school regularly.

This means their child/ young person must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This policy aligns with the following statutory guidance and regulations:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations \(Amended\) 2013](#)
- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 was amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations in 2013 only allowing head teachers to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

In line with these regulations, requests for term-time leave will not be granted.

Additional legal requirements relating to school attendance can be found in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Safeguarding

Knowing where children are during school hours is an important aspect of safeguarding. Absence can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children/ young people.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will always contact parents when pupils are not at school to ensure their whereabouts are known. It is essential that we have at least two up-to-date contact numbers for each pupil.

Parents should remember to inform the school as soon as possible if their contact details change. This includes home addresses, email addresses and phone numbers.

The Oak Partnership recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for absence is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

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Where necessary, The Oak Partnership will challenge parents about the reasons for their child/ young person's absence and will always encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a parent does not guarantee that the absence will be authorised.

The decision to authorise absences rests with the Head Teacher/ Head of School and will be made depending on the reasons given. In some cases, evidence may be requested to support this decision. If no reason is given for an absence, it cannot be authorised.

Children Absent from Education

In line with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023), school leaders have ensured that:

- all members of staff are aware of attendance guidance and expectations
- all members of school staff understand what to do when a child/ young person's attendance becomes a concern
- the school has in place required and appropriate policies, and robust procedures and responses for pupils who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions)
- all staff are aware of the risks of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the legal requirement to take immediate action if there is reason to believe a child is at risk or that it has taken place.

Removing Pupils from the School Roll

Schools are required to inform their local authority when a pupil is removed from roll.

Procedures are in place to ensure this information is shared in a timely manner when we plan to take pupils off-roll, or when they:

- leave the school to be home educated
- move beyond a reasonable distance from the school
- remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
- are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards)
- are expelled (permanently excluded).

Pupils who are expected to start attending school but fail to take up the place will be referred to the Local Authority.

When a pupil leaves school, the pupil's new address, school, and expected started date will be recorded. This information will be passed to the Local Authority.

Vulnerable Pupils

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The Oak Partnership routinely monitors the attendance of vulnerable pupils. If we have concerns about a pupil, we work closely across our staff and with support services to ensure parents understand the importance of good attendance and attendance procedures.

Additional measures are in place to monitor the attendance of vulnerable pupils.

- Regular school contact with parents (and any external professionals such as social workers) in relation to absences of vulnerable pupils or those at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- Pupils with complex needs (including those with medical needs) will be supported to ensure their attendance is maximised and its improvement is planned for. The attendance of pupils in this group will be monitored daily.
- When a pupil is dual registered or accessing learning off-site, their attendance at that provision will be monitored daily. The school holds the legal responsibility for these pupils' attendance and safeguarding.
- Pupils with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND) whose attendance is poor are monitored through the internal school processes and offered additional support in line with their needs.

The leadership and staff supporting attendance at school will hold regular meetings, where attendance is discussed and tracked, so that suitable support and interventions are put in place as quickly as possible.

Pupils whose attendance becomes a cause for concern will be supported by dedicated members of our staff who will make regular contact with them. This will support them to identify and remove any barriers, improve their attendance and to re-engage with learning. This work is robustly recorded and the impact of it is monitored regularly.

When a pupil's attendance continues to decline despite the support that is put in place, additional support may be requested from several support services. This may include the use of multi-agency work and support being discussed at a Team Around the School meeting. These discussions can lead to additional support being identified and support from the Education Engagement Service being agreed.

The Education Engagement Service (EES) forms part of the Local Authority's Early Help Framework. It supports schools and families to improve attendance and fulfils the Local Authority's statutory duties to improve and promote school attendance. The EES may consider legal action against parents in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

How we monitor attendance and the support that is offered is determined on a case-by-case basis. These decisions are regularly reviewed between the attendance,

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safeguarding and pastoral teams in school. Support from Team Around the School or Education Engagement Service may also be requested and implemented.

Modified timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary modified timetable to meet their individual needs. A modified timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A modified timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a modified timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

Informing Parents about Attendance

Parents will be informed of their child's attendance routinely via school reports.

The table below also shows the stage at which you will be informed of your child/young person's attendance becomes a cause for concern.

Daily Attendance Procedures

Schools are required to take a register twice a day for every pupil. This happens at the beginning of our morning and afternoon sessions. These sessions form the basis of each pupil's attendance record.

Absence reports are run following each registration period so parents can be contacted if necessary.

Following our morning registration, if a pupil is absent and a reason for that absence has not been provided, the following action will be taken:

- a phone call will be made to the parental contact number(s) listed on our system
- if no response is made, we will ring down all contacts listed on a pupil's record
- if it is not possible to get a response, a home visit will be considered
- vulnerable children, including those at PFSA/FIS/CSC are prioritised for contact if not in attendance and the DSL is made aware

When children with a social worker are absent and no reason provided, the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform their social worker.

Absence and Punctuality

Parents are required to inform the school as soon as possible if their child is absent or due to be absent. This should be done on every day of absence.

Pupils' punctuality will be regularly monitored. Parents will be contacted to discuss persistent lateness and lateness after the close of the registers could result in a request for support from the Education Safeguarding Service.

When parents make daily contact regarding their child's absence, that contact and the reasons for absence will be recorded. Absences will be coded on the child's register in line with the reason for that absence.

The decision about how absences are coded rests with the Head Teacher/ Head of School and in some cases, absences may not be authorised even when a reason is provided.

Additional information or evidence may be requested before an absence is authorised. This may occur when there are concerns about a pupil's attendance, even if it is related to illness, or when the reason provided is believed to be false.

Unexplained absences may result in contact being made with parents and a home visit being made to speak with the parent or the pupil and put support in place, as needed.

Authorisation of Absence

In line with legislation and Local Authority guidance, pupil absences can only be authorised when:

- a pupil is too unwell to attend school
- a pupil is attending a medical appointment that is unavoidable
- a pupil is taking part in a recognised religious observance
- a pupil is prevented from attending due to school transport not being available (this only applies to transport that is arranged by the Local Authority or the school)

Absences may also be authorised at the discretion of the Head Teacher/ Head of School when:

- term-time leave is requested, and its circumstances are exceptional
- a pupil has one or more medical appointments
- the parent of a pupil is engaged in a trade that requires them to travel and they have previously attended school as often as the nature of that trade permits (this relates only to families with Traveller status)
- other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a close family bereavement, hospice)

Medical Appointments

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Where possible, medical appointments should be made outside school hours or in school holidays. However, we realise this is sometimes not possible. Pupils should come into school before and after appointments to ensure they miss as little lesson time as possible. Pupils should be signed out before leaving for appointments and sign in when they return.

Term-Time Leave

Arranging holidays or planned absence during term time causes issues for many reasons:

- the pupil's education suffers; lessons and extra-curricular activities are missed
- there is no opportunity for teachers to set additional work or to assist a child in catching up on their return from holiday
- parents may be in breach of their legal obligation to send their child to school.

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 that placed greater restrictions on families and schools in relation to planned term-time leave.

The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 state:

Head teachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances, and the Head Teacher/ Head of School must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Requests for term-time leave will be considered on a case-by-case.

The Head Teacher/ Head of School will determine how many sessions may be authorised in cases where term-time leave is agreed.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent (the parent with whom the child normally resides).

Applications for term-time leave must be made in advance and in writing. Failure to do so will result in the absences being unauthorised.

When an application for term-time leave is declined, any resulting absences will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence relating to term-time leave being taken will be sent to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice when 10 or more sessions are unauthorised.

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Unauthorised absences resulting from term-time leave being taken is likely to result in the Local Authority issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for each child absent from school.

The Education Engagement Service issues penalty notices on behalf of the Local Authority in line with the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, which is available at www.somerset.gov.uk.

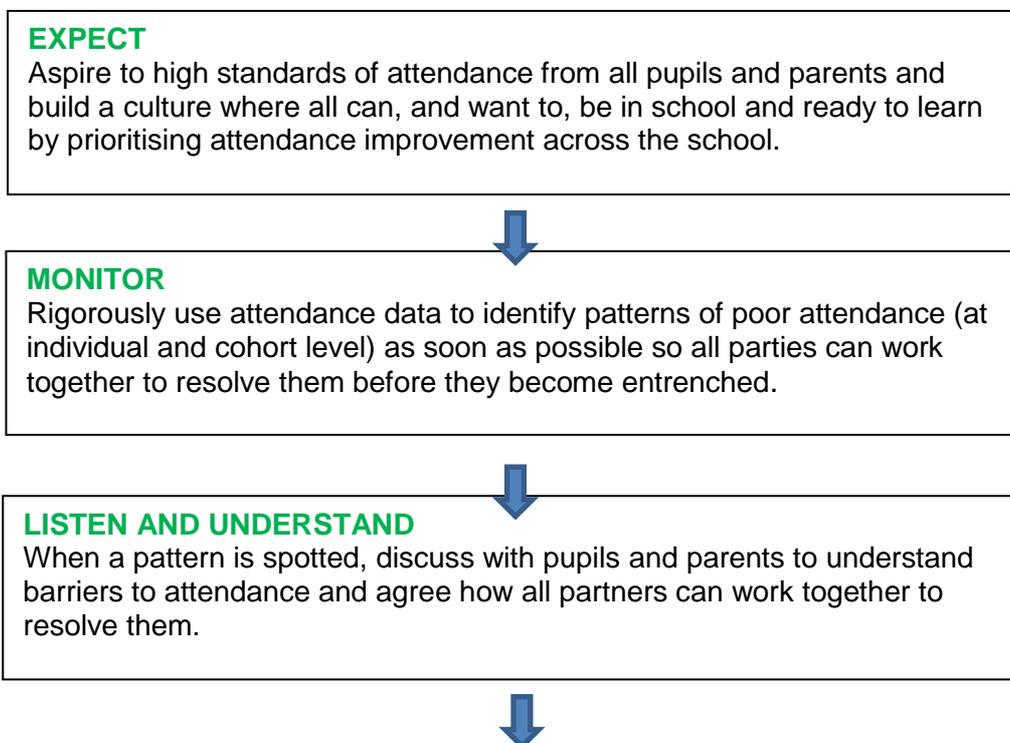
If a Penalty Notice is issued and not paid, the Local Authority will consider prosecuting parents in line with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This can result in a fine of up to £1,000 for each offence.

In exceptional cases, the Local Authority may seek to prosecute parents in line with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 without issuing a Penalty Notice.

Attendance Support and Intervention

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 schools within the Trust should work together to follow this process:



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FACILITATE SUPPORT * (See examples below)

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. 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 they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working 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. In addition, schools should work 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.

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- 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.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups 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.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

In all cases, schools should be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and they should talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Examples of Strategies, Support, and Interventions

The process outlined below is for guidance purposes only. The strategies used to support attendance will vary depending on a child's circumstances, the reasons for their absence and their needs.

Early intervention and support is the most effective approach to improving attendance.

Parents are strongly encouraged to engage with any support offered, as this may improve attendance quickly and prevent the need for requests for support from statutory services.

While the use of statutory and legal interventions is always a last resort, they may be put in place by the Education Engagement Service on behalf of the Local Authority.

Attendance Stage	Guidance Strategies, Support and Interventions Available
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance monitored by class or form teacher

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96% to 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absences may be discussed upon return to school • Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence if threshold reached
Stage 2 94% to 95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-school support considered and offered • Attendance letter 1 decision taken • Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence if threshold reached
Stage 3 90% to 93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and interventions as laid out in Stage 2 • Where appropriate, a meeting, or phone call, will be held with a Senior Leader to explore barriers to attendance and consider further strategies to support improved attendance- attendance letter 2 decision taken • Attendance support request submitted to the EES- parenting contract considered • Consider requesting support from external agencies • Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence if threshold reached
Stage 4 50% to 90% Persistent Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and interventions as laid out in Stage 3 • Following letter 2, consider asking for medical evidence- attendance letter 3 if genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of illnesses exist. • Multi-agency support • Attendance Casework from the EES- parenting contract • Possible legal interventions for unauthorised absences
Stage 5 Below 50% Severe Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and interventions and laid out in Stage 4 • Continued statutory intervention • Risk of legal intervention for unauthorised absence
Persistent Lateness	<p>Stage 1 Class teacher to Inform parents of concerns about lateness</p> <p>Stage 2 Decision taken on lateness letter 1</p> <p>Stage 3 Attendance meeting/ phone call- letter 2 decision taken</p> <p>Stage 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and interventions as laid out in Stage 3 • Multi-agency support • Attendance Casework from the EES • Penalty Notice

Appendix 1: School Specific Information

Parents are asked to inform us of any absences as follows:

By phone	Call 01823 442832 and select 'Absence Line'
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Morning session	Afternoon session
<p>Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 9:00am.</p> <p>Pupils that arrive after 9:00am will be recorded as late (L code).</p> <p>Pupils that arrive after 9:15am will be marked as late after registers have closed (U code). This counts as an unauthorised absence.</p>	<p>Pupils are registered at 1:00pm</p> <p>Pupils that arrive after 1:15pm will be marked as late after registers have closed (U code). This counts as an unauthorised absence.</p>

Key Staff and Contacts

Role	Name	Contact number
Attendance Lead	Miss Hannah Collier	01823 442832
Support for attendance (PFSA, ELSA)	Miss Gemma Poulson	01823 442832
Headteacher	Miss Hannah Collier	01823 442832
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Miss Hannah Collier	01823 442832
School Absence reporting line	Mrs Kirsty Holley	01823 442832

Our registration periods are as follows:

	Registers open
Morning session	8:55am
Afternoon session	1:00pm