

Attendance Policy

The new 'Working Together to Improve Attendance' guidance, which becomes statutory on the 19th August 2024, includes the expectation for schools to have a **clear school attendance policy which the whole school community understands.**

- There are **8 key sections** explicitly mentioned in the guidance that must be included in the policy
- Consider **language** use – avoid jargon, reading age of your parents
- Must be available on the **website**
- **Regularly reviewed** – barriers change
- Keep it simple – **it is what you do every day!**



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1. The **attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents**, including:
 - key times of the day (gates/doors opening, when children can enter the school site)
 - register closing times (including using L and U codes for lateness)
 - the processes for requesting leaves of absence (LITT form, when/who to)
 - processes for informing the school of the reason for an unexpected absence (eg methods)
2. The name and contact details of the school's **Senior Attendance Champion**.
3. **Information and contact details of the school staff** who pupils and parents should contact:
 - about attendance on a day to day basis (such as a form tutor, attendance officer)
 - for more detailed support on attendance (such as a head of year, pastoral lead or family liaison officer etc).

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4. The school's **day to day processes** for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence.

- First day calling
- Safe and Well checks
 - When?
 - Who?
 - Why?
- Communication with other agencies working with the family (SFW, SW etc)

5. How the school is **promoting and incentivising good attendance**.

- Assemblies
- Parent communication – open events, parents evening, new starter meetings
- Individual, group and class rewards

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6. The school's strategy for **using data to target attendance improvement efforts** to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.

- Comparison to local and national figures
- Vulnerable groups
- Register reviews

7. The **school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence**, including how access to **wider support services** will be provided to **remove the barriers to attendance** and when support will be **formalised** in conjunction with the local authority.

- Support first ethos of 'Working Together to Improve Attendance'
- What school can offer – in school early help
- External referrals – EHA, BSAT, EPs etc



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8. Details of the **National Framework for Penalty Notices** and **when Notices to Improve, penalty notices or other legal interventions will be sought if support is not appropriate** (e.g. for a holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with.

- National Framework – schools must consider if appropriate
- Not a blanket approach – case by case
- ‘Best available tool’ - would support help?
- AST have a wide range of legal interventions that can be utilised:
 - Attendance contracts
 - Education supervision orders (ESOs)
 - Parenting orders
 - Attendance prosecution
 - Penalty notices



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In summary, your school's attendance policy should be;

- a **'user manual'** for parents, staff and pupils
- tailored and personalised to cover what your school does as its processes and procedures for attendance.

Your 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.

AST's Attendance Advisors Jo Antenbring and Karen Parkinson will be happy to **review individual updated draft attendance policies during your upcoming Targeted Support Meetings** and some schools have already utilised the meetings to do this.

