Diocese of Hereford Multi-Academy Trust

Attendance & Punctuality Policy 2026-27

Review Date: September 27

School Lead: Kahlia Laws
Governor Lead: Andrew Teale

1.0 Legislation and guidance

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2.0 Other relevant government guidance

* Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour
* Children missing education
* Keeping children safe in education 2025
* Working together to safeguard children
* Elective home education
* Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities
* Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England
* Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
* Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
* Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges
* Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying

This policy also refers to the DFE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

The Governors and staff at our school are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Helping them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. We set high expectations about attendance from in all year groups. If your child has a place in our school, we expect your child to attend. Your child can only learn if they are in school.

It is the child's right to attend, not their parent's right to keep their child at home.

We value all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance and offer the right service at the right time to try to resolve any difficulties.

We will monitor attendance and use attendance data to identify any patterns of concern, whilst also celebrating success! Attendance concerns will be raised with parents if reasons are not known by the school, e.g. a long period of illness, this information may be shared with the Local Authority following concerns. Where we have concerns, or lack of engagement from families to improve attendance, we will follow the schools escalated approach to improving attendance. The schools escalated approach is child-centred and prioritises support and developing strong working relationships with families. We will use the early help process to provide support prior to escalation and consider how we can work with families to enable your child to access their right to education.

Our aim is to always to work in partnership with parents and any referral for consideration of a penalty notice is deemed to be a last resort for us. Attendance figures for each child will be reported to parents as part of the annual report, we will also share a child's attendance profile if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance. Throughout the school year we will report on the overall attendance figures for children's groups, this will be closely monitored for support and reported to the Local Governing Body.

3.0 To support good attendance and safeguarding we:

- Ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Ensure the school site is open at the stated times.
- Ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- Use a system to monitor attendance of groups and individuals over time
- Take safeguarding seriously and we will always contact you on the first day that your child is absent from school. If your child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at reception and transition the child to class.
- Consider any requests for leave in term time individually.
- Notify the Local Authority immediately if a new child is joining the school roll.
- Inform the Local Authority of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education.
- Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE

4.0 Working together

We will always work in partnership with our parents. We recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional early help that may be required. Safeguarding is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. We will always follow Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 and our school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan will be monitored and supported in school. At our school we will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking early action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

5.0 We will initially:

Check records, including any from other schools which the child has attended previously.
Discuss with staff how the child is coping with the curriculum.
Speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to establish whether the child is on the Special Educational needs register.
Take into account the voice of the child and understand any difficulties, e.g. curriculum or bullying and their views on the issue could be addressed.

6.0 Persistent Absence

We aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year.

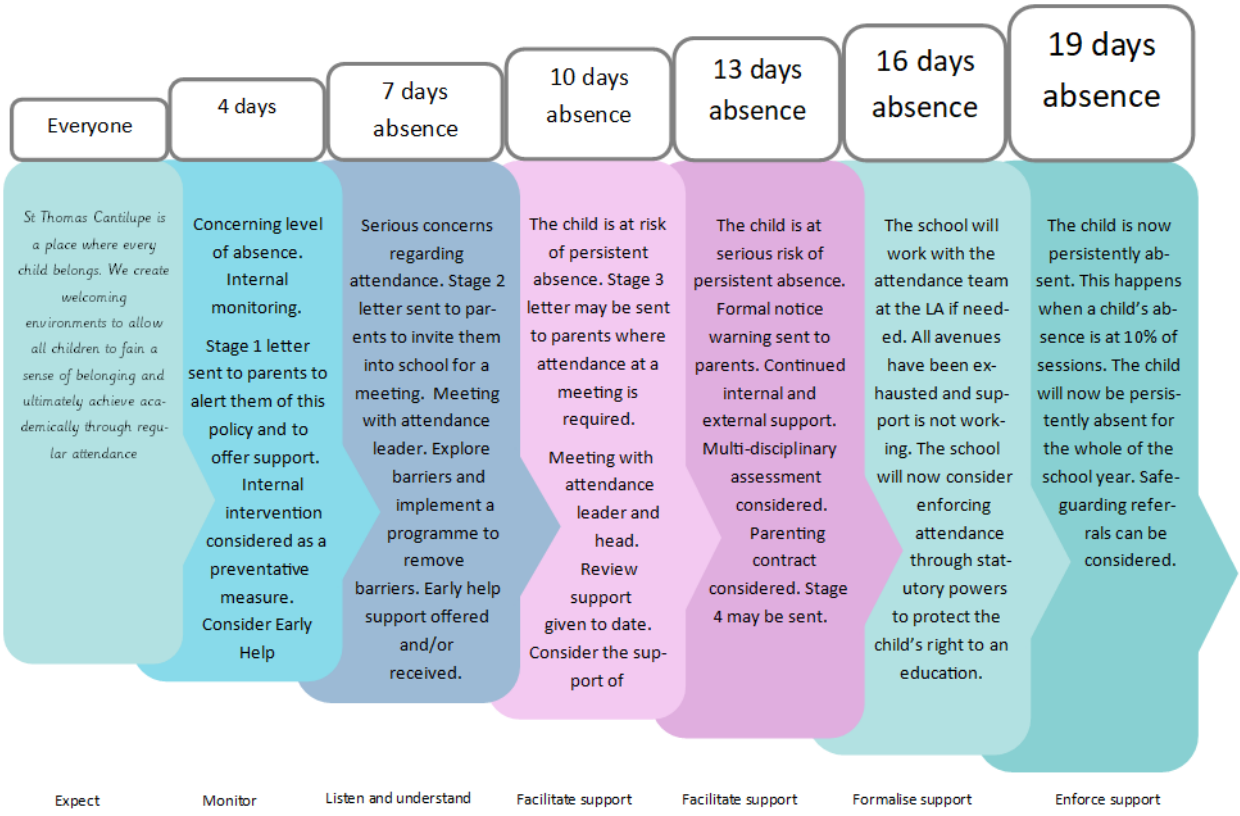
We will use a 19-day tracking system to make you aware of the number of days your child has missed in education. This will allow us to work together to reduce the number of days and attempt to prevent your child from reaching this number.

Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or 19 days absence, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school. We encourage parents to work in partnership with school to improve attendance, we are always keen to support families and have services we can offer.

7.0 Attendance Support Map.

We will always support children during each stage of our Attendance Support Map. If there is lack of engagement or concerns regarding the reason for absence, we will follow the Map to ensure we prioritise a child's learning and right to education.

Where a child's attendance improves, we will communicate to Parents/Carers.



First day contact

Parents/Carers-please ensure your contact details are up to date, including emergency contacts.

We expect our parents to make contact at the earliest opportunity on the first day of any absence. We will always contact by calling or emailing you. Where we have on-going concerns regarding your child's attendance, we will visit your home address and write to you. We may even invite you to meet with a member of staff to discuss any on-going concerns regarding attendance. It is important that you talk to us first; you are legally responsible under Education Act 1996 for ensuring that your child is in school every day and on time. If we cannot contact you, we will continue to make announced and unannounced home visits, regarding any concerns we may have surrounding attendance.

If your child is absent, please let us know by phone or email on the first day of absence. We aim to listen, understand, empathise and support families with attendance, but do not tolerate, and always seek improvement.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

8.0 Recording Attendance

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

Present

Attending an approved off-site educational activity

Absent

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

The original entry

The amended entry

The reason for the amendment

The date on which the amendment was made

The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

Whether the absence is authorised or not

The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

9.0 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

10.0 Absence

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive a full-time education. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where absences occur repeatedly due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescriptions etc. Absence may be coded as unauthorised without evidence.
- Parents should wherever possible make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day. Appointment cards should always be provided as evidence of medical/dental appointments.
- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted by the school absence will not be authorised.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A child's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniform.
- Having their hair cut.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes.
- "Couldn't get up".
- The alarm not going off. Come in anyway as soon as you can.
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority and in the absence of a communicable disease.
- Leave during term time taken without authorisation of the school
- Head lice – let the school know and letters will then be sent to all parents in a confidential manner.

11.0 Punctuality

Children can arrive at 8.40am and they must be in the school building at 8:50am. Register is taken at 8:50am. Any child that arrives after 9.00am but before 9.30am will be marked as 'Late'. Parents will need to report to the school office to complete a form outlining the reasons. If a child arrives after 9.30am they will be marked as unauthorised.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if a child has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

Research shows a close link between attendance at school and a child's achievement. Being late adds up to a loss of learning. Unauthorised absence or your child being frequently late could result in fine or prosecution. If you need support with punctuality or any other barriers affecting your child's attendance, please speak to school.

12.0 During any long-term absence we will:

Maintain contact with the child.
Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring your child feels welcome and gains a sense of belonging.

Ensure the child once again feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, they will have an appointed member of staff to work with.

The Class Teacher and/or Teaching Assistant will support a child when returning to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

13.0 Authorised and unauthorised absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad

Attending an interview

Study leave

A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 3 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form (the Administrator can send you a form for you to complete. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments

Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a

traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school

Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)

Attending provision arranged by the local authority

Attending work experience

If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

14.0 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

15.0 Penalty notices

Due to national legislation, we are unable to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (which doesn't include a holiday). Therefore, any unauthorised absence (5 days or more within a term), may result in a referral to Herefordshire Council who will consider a penalty notice of £80 per child per parent or other legal intervention. You could also be subject to a fine or to be prosecuted in court. See more information here on the Herefordshire Council website.

Herefordshire Local Code of Conduct Penalty Notices:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/5myfexpd/penalty_notice_-_local_code_of_conduct_2024.pdf

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)

Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil

Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution

Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

16.0 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences

The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996

Details of the support provided so far

Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with

A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis

A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period

The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

17.0 Using attendance data

Children's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies and the DfE.

Regular attendance meetings will be held and will focus on agreed actions for those children of concern. The purpose of each meeting will be to understand the progress the school is making when supporting identified individuals or groups of children.

Attendance data will be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

It is the responsibility of Local Governors and the DHMAT to challenge and support the school regarding overall attendance, regular reports will be presented to this body. They will therefore examine closely the information provided for them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as can be.

Insight is used as a tool to share data, at least termly, with parents and to communicate further when there are concerns about patterns and/or length of absences.

18.0 Statutory Duty

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

9.0 Children Missing Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown), and are children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education and Inclusion team, by making referrals.

20.0 Celebrating success

We feel it is important to reward children who have achieved good or improved attendance.

Reward	Who for?	Information
Certificate	Individuals	Each half term children with 100% attendance receives a certificate. Each half term the attendance measure is reset to allow for periods of illness.
Weekly attendance cup	Class	The class with the best overall attendance for the week gets to celebrate and keep the cup in their class for the week.
Wrist band 100%	Individuals	Each term children with 100% attendance receive a 100% attendance wrist band, alongside a certificate.

Positivity notes / verbal rewards	Individuals	For improved attendance individual celebrations are made by the attendance team through positivity notes and verbal rewards.

We will always challenge falling attendance and reward improvements. We are committed to the future of all children that attend our school and by working in partnership with the school community we believe that together we can achieve more!

We can only achieve this by working in partnership with you, if you have any concerns or anything that prevents your child from attending or if you would like to become involved in our school please contact us.

21.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Parents:

i Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend the School regularly and may risk prosecution if they fail in this responsibility.
ii Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, with the correct equipment and in full school uniform.
iii Parents should support the school by avoiding, if possible, non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during School time.
iv Parents should be aware that they do not have the automatic right to take their child out of the school for a holiday during term time.
v It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence and in line with the school's procedures for informing of absence.
vi All unexplained attendances will be monitored, and parents will be kept informed about any attendance concerns relating to their own child. Parents are expected to attend meetings when requested and support the school in responding to ongoing attendance concerns.

Children:

i. All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.
ii. All children are expected to be on the school site on time and ready to learn. Children are expected to be punctual to all lessons and registration.
iii. Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness at the office
iv. Children must not leave the school without permission, 'truant'; this will be seen by the School as a Safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

Class Teacher

The Class Teacher are the key staff members in promoting regular punctual attendance. The Class Teacher will:

i. Provide a good example by always being punctual to registration and meeting children at the door – providing a welcoming environment;
ii. Keep an accurate and up-to-date register of attendance;

iii. Follow the Attendance Policy procedures when dealing with absences and punctuality;
iv. Maintain swift action and effective communication with other staff on all attendance matters concerning class;
v. Ensure that children and young people are aware of the importance of the school attendance target and their own individual attendance targets;
vi. Ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy:
vii. Build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary when children return after an absence.

School Administrator:

The School Administrator will:

i. Ensure that data is input daily into the attendance management system;
ii. Ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received;
iii. Respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns;
iv. Provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
v. Be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Attendance Leader of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
vi. Be responsible for keeping a record of the interventions in place to encourage attendance and for generating all documentation including letters to parents;
vii. Be responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Attendance Team to referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up;
viii. be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems.

Attendance Leader

The Senior Leader responsible for Attendance will promote good attendance and punctuality. They will:

i. Regularly meet with the EHT reporting on progress and next steps planning;
ii. Attend attendance meetings;
iii. Provide training and support to staff;
iv. Participate in pre-legal meetings;
v. Use attendance data to make links with attendance and academic performance;
vi. Lead attendance element of reward assemblies;
vii. Ensure that reference to attendance is included in all school documentation e.g. School newsletters, letters to parents, school prospectus, information for booklets;

Local Governing Body

The Governing Board is responsible for:

i. promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
ii. making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
iii. regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data;
iv. monitoring attendance figures for the whole school;
v. making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance;
vi. holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

22.0 Our five key priorities are explained below:

1. Whole school thinking, culture and climate
   The school has a fully embedded ethos in which excellent school attendance is expected, developed and nurtured. The escalated approach to supporting attendance is built on foundations of belonging and connectedness.

2. Supportive policies, systems and processes
   The approach to improving attendance is built on clear policies, systems and processes. This ensures continuous and sustainable improvement drives attendance practice. The attendance policy is understood by all stakeholders and allows the school to set, and maintain, high expectations to improve the culture of attendance.

3. Professional learning and staff development
   The school prioritises developing a team of attendance experts, with a shared vision and core purpose. The Attendance Leader delivers bespoke training to support all staff to fully understand their role in improving attendance. External partnerships support attendance improvements through a multi-disciplinary approach for identified children and families.

4. Targeted programmes and intervention
   Data information and analysis direct resources proactively towards key demographic groups and identified individuals. The expert use of data analysis informs decision making at all levels. The attendance process ensures we understands the reason for attendance concerns, these barriers can then be successfully supported and removed.

5. Connection to behaviour management
   Connecting and belonging drives the school approach to supporting attendance. All staff are supported to understand 'deeper roots' regarding poor attendance concerns. The school has developed, and embedded, an effective rewards system to further drive attendance improvements and celebrate success.

DFE expectation	1	2	3	4	5
Whole school culture which promotes benefits of attendance	■	■	■	■	■
Attendance policy		■			
Day to day procedures to follow up absence	■	■	■		
Monitor and analyse data to identify those needing support		■	■	■	
Engage with families, understand barriers and remove them	■			■	■
Provide additional support for SEND/medical conditions			■	■	■
Share information and work collaboratively with others	■	■	■	■	
Focus on persistent and severe absence		■	■	■	■
Find out what the DFE expects from other stakeholders		■	■	■	

Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school

Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason

		given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Exceptional leave form

Head teachers may only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances' only. If you take your child out of school and the absence is not agreed by the head teacher, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. The school will then notify Herefordshire Council, and you may face a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or other legal action (see overleaf for full details).

Child's name:	DOB:	Year group:
Date from/to:		
Total days:		
Total sessions:		
Destination:		

	Parent/Carer	Parent/Carer
Title (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss.):		
Surname:		
Forename:		
Date of Birth:		
Relationship to pupil:		
Address:		
Telephone number:		
Email address:		
Pupil resides with:		
Signature of Parent requesting exceptional leave.		

Give specific details of the absence and what makes it exceptional circumstances. Attach evidence which explains why the absence is exceptional and why it cannot be scheduled during a school holiday period.

Signature:	Date:
Signature:	Date:

Information on Fixed Penalty Notices

Unauthorised absence from school is an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996. When a school becomes aware that the national threshold for Unauthorised absence has been met, they must consider whether or not to refer to Herefordshire Council to request the issue of a penalty notice. A penalty fine is an opportunity for the parent to settle out of court. If a penalty notice is not paid parents can be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance.

Penalty notice fines are issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for Unauthorised absences, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines. In education law, anyone who lives with a child and who has day-to-day care of the child is also considered to be a parent whether they are biological parent or not. For example, this will include stepparents and partner.

Penalty notice fines are considered when there have been 10 sessions (5 days) of Unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of Unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). If in an individual case Herefordshire Council believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.

First offence - The first time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days

Second offence (within 3 years) - The second time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days and there will be no offer of a reduction in rate

Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years)- The third time an offence is committed for Unauthorised absences a penalty notice will not be issued. The local authority will instead consider other legal options to improve attendance, and this could include prosecution. If prosecution in the Magistrates' Court is deemed appropriate, fines can be up to £2500.

Further information can be found:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to[1]improve-school-attendance and Penalty Notice - Herefordshire Local Code of Conduct 2024