



# Attendance Policy

<b>Date of last review by Local Governing Body</b>	June 2026
<b>Review cycle</b>	Annual
<b>Policy due for review by Local Governing Body</b>	June 2027

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## **Introduction**

At Estuary Academy North (EAN) we know that attendance is key in terms of safeguarding, learning and future life success. Across the Alternative Learning Trust (ALT) attendance is a focus as often students join with high levels of disengagement and poor attendance. However, we are not just after an improvement from these low starting levels, we aim for our students to have comparable excellent attendance with those who have not been educationally disadvantaged. Improving attendance and ultimately having them in school every day, supports their safety and ensures they are able to make progress across all aspects of their learning.

## **Aims**

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance. It is therefore vital that this policy is read alongside all others, where we have a safeguarding first approach.

The aims of this policy are:

- To promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, including how different roles across our school team support this.
- To formalise our robust processes to promote good attendance and punctuality, including rewards and reduce absence, particularly persistent and severe absence.
- To commit to offering every student access to the education which they are entitled
- To formalise our robust processes for monitoring and analysing attendance with the aim of addressing patterns at the earliest opportunity.
- To acknowledge the need for strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school, noting the actions we take to support this.
- To commit to a collaborative approach when addressing causes for concern, liaising with relevant agencies and our mainstream school partners.
- To show how we monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

## **Legislation and Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the 'working together to improve school attendance' 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.

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Mental health issues affecting student’s attendance: guidance for schools

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

EAN aims to promote the best possible attendance and punctuality for all students in order to:

- Ensure that students gain the greatest benefit from the education and support on offer, thus enabling them to reach their full potential.
- Ensure that students have continuity of learning and are afforded the best opportunity for success in coursework and examinations or return to mainstream education.
- Ensure that students secure good records for references for their next steps, whether returning to mainstream or moving to post-16 education or employment.
- Promote patterns of behaviour which will prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life.

This is a whole school responsibility, however, there are specific roles that take responsibility for key actions as part of this.

#### **1. The Governing Body:**

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring the importance of attendance is promoted across the school’s policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy

#### **2. The Head of School:**

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy at EAN
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students

- Monitoring the impact of strategies implemented to support attendance and punctuality
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT):**

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, through its vision, values and ethos
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building strong relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Work with mainstream school partners and other relevant agencies to ensure a collaborative approach to promoting attendance at EAN
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention to support students and families
- Welcoming and recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office while on door duty

### **4. The Attendance and Welfare Team:**

The Attendance and Welfare Team work across first day calling, safeguarding and attendance monitoring (including some across hub working).

The Attendance and Welfare Team are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting any concerns about attendance to SLT and Head of School
- Working with the education welfare officers to tackle persistent absences
- Advising the Head of School when to issue fixed penalty notices
- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Providing parents/carers with detailed support for student attendance

### **5. Parents/Carers:**

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of absence and each
- subsequent day of absence, advising when they are expected to return
- Provide evidence to support any absences, including sickness
- Provide the school with at least 2 emergency contacts for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

## **6. Students:**

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day and be punctual, going to each of their timetabled lessons

### **Recording attendance**

We keep an attendance register and once each student has undertaken their assessments and pre-admission meeting, we place them onto this register.

We take our register as the students walk in the door each school day and again during our afternoon reading session. It marks whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendments to the attendance register will include:

- The amended and original entry as well as the reason for the amendment
- The date of the amendment
- The name and role of the person making the amendment

*(See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.)*

We also record:

- Whether an absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of the circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive at school by 9.30 each day, school opens for students at 9.00. This means the register for the first session opens at 9.00 and is kept open until 9.30. The register for the second session opens at 12.55 and is kept open until 13.05.

### **1. Unplanned absence**

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of unplanned absence by 9.00 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school reception team.

This is through the school's main number, 01474 332897 or via the school's mobile number, 07934 296 256. Both of these numbers have a facility to leave a message should the line be busy.

We ask that where possible parents/carers provide evidence of any physical or mental illness and require this evidence should an absence exceed 5 days. This evidence might include a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other form of appropriate evidence.

Without evidence, where we have concerns about the authenticity of an illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

### **2. Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. We do ask that, where possible, these are made outside of school hours. If they have to happen during school time, we ask that students are out of school for the minimum amount of time.

Evidence of such appointments should be shared with the reception team so that this can be recorded on the registers. This can be done via email, text or in person.

If requesting any other type of term-time absence (see section: Authorised and Unauthorised Absence), these must be put to the school with as much notice as possible.

### **3. Lateness and punctuality**

A student who arrives late will be marked with the appropriate codes.

Reports are then run by the Attendance and Welfare Team to consider where patterns of lateness or issues are arising. These concerns are then shared with SLT to take appropriate actions at the earliest possible point.

Further to this, systems are in place to send letters home to note when lateness has been noted for a specific reason, for example smoking.

### **4. Following up unexplained absence**

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student’s parent/carer on the morning of any unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student’s emergency contacts, the school will then send a text message reminding the parents/carers of the requirement to inform the school. Should we still not be able to contact the parents/carers we will then consider if either a home visit or contact with external services (police/social services) is necessary.
- Ensure a home visit or contact with external agencies is made if an unexplained absence with no contact happens for more than one day.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained. Attendance and welfare staff will also record follow up communications and actions with parents/carers on CPOMS as part of our safeguarding ethos.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- Involve an Education Welfare Officer if absence from school continues.

## 5. Reporting to parents and carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child’s attendance and absence levels, the table below lays out how this happens.

Students on a respite placement		Students on an alternative curriculum placement	
Regularity	Method	Regularity	Method
Weekly	Postcards to alert to improving or declining attendance	Weekly	Postcards to alert to improving or declining attendance
Mid-point (6 weeks)	Attendance figure shared as part of report	Term 2	Attendance figure shared as part of formal report
Endpoint (12 weeks)	Attendance figure shared as part of report	Term 4	Attendance figure shared as part of formal report
As needed	Phone call from SLT/ Attendance Team due to attendance concerns.	As needed	Phone call from SLT/ Attendance Team due to attendance concerns.

## 6. Reporting to our mainstream stakeholder schools

As the vast majority of our students are dual registered, attendance for these students is shared weekly with their mainstream school.

### Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

## **1. Approval for term-time absence**

The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as 'being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time'.

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

Any request of this nature should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence. This request should be put in a letter to the Head of School with any supporting evidence provided at the time of the request.

## **2. Legal sanctions**

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. Penalty notices can be issued by the Head of School or Local Authority Officer.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken during term-time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## **Strategies for promoting attendance**

Attendance is a focus for everyone in our school. The list below is some of the strategies that our Attendance and Welfare Team alongside our SLT use to respond to emerging concerns or trends, and to actively promote good attendance and punctuality from our students.

- An attendance reward system where students receive an attendance award for 100% attendance in the previous week during their Key Stage assemblies

- 100% attendance students recognised weekly in our reception area
- Postcards to parents/carers recognising improved attendance and challenging declining attendance
- SLT daily attendance monitoring, looking at each student and their attendance
- Student tracking in planners; giving ownership to students over improving attendance
- Termly summary stickers in planners, highlighting where we have concerns about attendance
- Attendance importance posters displayed around the school
- Use of Academy 21 to support re-engagement with education
- End of day tutor time used to reflect on weekly attendance and set individual improvement goals

## **Attendance Monitoring**

### **1. Monitoring attendance**

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistic releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average for APs and share this with the Local Governing Body.

### **2. Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Analyse comparative data on students' attendance prior to joining EAN and compare to that in their mainstream schools

### **3. Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Use regular attendance reports, to allow the Attendance and Welfare Team alongside the SLT to facilitate discussions with students and their families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

#### **4. Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is defined as being where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the school considers to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement in school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Use robust processes to warn parents/carers that their child's absence is at risk of causing a fine to be issued

#### **Review arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years by Zoe Martyndale-Howard, Head of School. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body and published on the school website.

## **Appendix 1: Attendance Codes**

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

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)