Attendance Policy 2026-27

The Board of Trustees, CEO and Strategic team are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and require all staff and volunteers to demonstrate this commitment in every aspect of their work.

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Signed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees (for Trust Policies) or Chair of the LAB of (School) (for School Policies)	John Smith

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1. Introduction

At Acle Academy we recognise that positive behaviour and good school attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. There is a wide range of evidence as to the health and wellbeing benefits of school-age education.

Ensuring excellent attendance is essential for achieving strong outcomes and promoting social inclusion for all children and young people across the Wensum Trust.

As a trust we create a culture in all our schools that is motivating and ambitious for all, including disadvantaged children and children with SEND, so that children can achieve their full potential.

Through our Relational Approach, we believe that we learn to build strong, positive relationships with all our children, families and communities - this is key in supporting the growth of emotional wellbeing, belonging, inclusion and achievement.

This means we aim to: Connect, Communicate and Collaborate.



Therefore we have worked with our schools collaboratively to develop our attendance strategy: Attendance Matters.



'Attendance Matters' aims to create a unified, proactive, and data-informed approach to attendance across our schools, involving strong leadership, effective communication, robust systems, and well-trained staff, all working towards the common goal of raising attendance and improving outcomes for all children.

This policy is written with the guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the suitable, full-time education to which they are entitled.

- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

Our policy outlines the school's commitment to attendance. Our policy aims to provide clear guidance to all staff, parents & carers, pupils and governors/trustees about the responsibilities and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

2. Aims

Our policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE). We aim to achieve this through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, which includes:

- 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.
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance and School attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996

- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Local Advisory (Governing) Board

The local advisory board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations, statutory duties and comply with the law on school attendance, including:
  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority.
  - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources.
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs.
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance.
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance.
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues.

- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers.
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data.
- Holding the Executive Headteacher / Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.
- Use of a Link governor for attendance to provide strategic oversight and challenge, holding leaders to account for improvements. The link governor will meet regularly with the attendance lead, review progress against school targets, and report key areas for development to the governing body

4.2 The Executive Headteacher / Principal

The Executive Headteacher / Principal is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Issuing penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the Head of School / Vice Principal to be able to do so.
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers.
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels.
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
  - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times.
  - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days.
  - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.

4.3 The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance.
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance: Senior Attendance Champion is Rob McCombe and can be contacted via rmccombe@acle.norfolk.sch.uk / 01493 750431.

4.4 The Attendance Officer (Jane Bryant – Attendance manager)

The school attendance officer is 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 concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Executive Headteacher / Principal.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Executive Headteacher / Principal and/or Head of School / Vice Principal (authorised by the Executive Headteacher / Principal) when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The attendance officer is Jane Bryant and can be contacted via jbryant@acle.norfolk.sch.uk / 01493 750431

4.5 Class teachers/ form tutors

Class teachers / form tutors are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information.

The morning session (AM) register is taken during form time. The AM register is open from 8.55am until 9.25am. The afternoon session (PM) register is taken during Period 4. The PM register is open from 1.30pm to 1.55pm. For both the AM and PM register the form tutor or class teacher can only record a student as being present (/\), late (L) or absent (N). The relevant absence code is then entered by a member of the attendance team.).

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to all pupils and their parents.

- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the regulations and other relevant legislation.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

4.6 School Office / Reception Staff

School Office / Reception staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Head of Year where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

4.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them).

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day / timetabled session on time.
- Report their child's absence before 8.55am on the **first and each subsequent day of absence,** giving the reason for the absence, using on the of the following methods:
    - Class Charts absence reporting tab
    - Leave a message on the absence line 01493 750431 Option 1
    - Email the Attendance Manager jbryant@acle.norfolk.sch.uk
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting [the relevant Head of Year or the Attendance Manager who can be contacted via (01493 750431 or by the following email addresses:

Attendance Manager - Mrs J Bryant - jbryant@acle.norfolk.sch.uk
Head of Year 7 - Ms S Kinnarney - skinnarney@acle.norfolk.sch.uk

Head of Year 8 - Mr R Chapman - rchapman@acle.norfolk.sch.uk
Head of Year 9 - Mrs C Perkins - cperkins@acle.norfolk.sch.uk
Head of Year 10 - Ms I John - ijohn@acle.norfolk.sch.uk
Head of Year 11 - Miss C Granger - cgranger@acle.norfolk.sch.uk

4.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time.
- Attend every timetabled session, on time.

5. Recording attendance

5.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon 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 a place other than school
- Absent
- Absent – unable to attend due to unavoidable causes

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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

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 circumstance

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

The school day starts at 0855 and ends at 1530.

Pupils must arrive in school by 0855 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at [8.55am] and will be kept open until [9.25am]. The register for the second session will be taken at 1330 and will be kept open until [13:55

5.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by [8.55am], or as soon as practically possible, by using the contact methods given in 4.7 above.

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 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.

5.3 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.

Parents can report planned absence using the contact methods given in 4.7 above.

Where possible, the pupil should:

- Be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary, and attend school before/after their appointment.
- Wear school uniform to their appointment, to make it easier to return to school afterwards.
- However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.
- The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. See section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed, will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Behaviour points will be issued (which could generate a lunch time intervention) - regular lateness will be challenged by the Attendance Manager..

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Send a text to the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If no response is received a phonecall will be made.
-
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not - until a reason is provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Identify and input the correct absence code as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent.
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
    - On subsequent days if no reason for absence has been provided then emergency contacts will be called.
    - By no later than the 3rd day of unexplained absence a home visit will be conducted. The Attendance Manager reserves the right to contact the police if there are safeguarding concerns.
    - Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team officer
    - Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
    - Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
    - Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: [issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 7 below), as appropriate].

5.6 Reporting to parents

Acle Academy has adapted a staged approach to notifying parents (see the definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) of their child's attendance which involves writing to parents when certain trigger points have been reached (i.e. 3 days, 6 days, 9 days, 12 days etc). The intention of the letters is to identify any barriers to attendance as early as possible in order to work collaboratively with parents to improve their child's attendance. We focus on the number of days/lessons missed rather than the attendance percentage. In addition to the triggered letters, half termly whole school letters are sent making parents aware of their child's attendance to date.

6. Authorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Executive Headteacher / Principal 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 for employment or for admission to another educational institution.
- 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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare and unexpected circumstances which are unlikely to reoccur. Examples include:

- Medical emergencies
- Family emergencies (e.g. death of a relative)

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 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible from the school. The Executive Headteacher / Principal may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

6.2 Other reasons for authorised absence

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 5.2 and 5.3 for more detail).
- 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 for religious observance. Pupils should attend school on the days surrounding those set apart for religious observance.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – a pupil is a mobile child if their parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. In these circumstances a pupil will be considered as a mobile child, provided they are of compulsory school age and have no fixed abode and whose parent is in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place.

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

6.3 Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

The Executive Headteacher / Principal will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. These are not classified as absences. Reasons 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.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

We want our pupils to succeed and develop their skills. To do this, pupils need to avoid missing lessons and days of school as much as possible. As a school, we want to reward high attendance and not just penalise pupils for poor attendance.

At our school, we believe that good attendance is fundamentally linked to a supportive, proactive, and inclusive environment. Rather than relying solely on reactive measures, we actively work to improve attendance through a tiered approach focused on connection, culture, and targeted intervention.

7.1 Proactive and Positive Family Communication

We recognise that building strong partnerships with parents and carers is one of the most effective ways to encourage regular attendance.

- Positive Reinforcement: We don't just reach out when attendance drops. We make a conscious effort to communicate when attendance improves or remains consistently strong, keeping our outreach personalised and positive.
- Evidence-Based Reminders: In line with research, we utilise low-cost, high-impact strategies, such as personalised message reminders to keep attendance at the forefront of family conversations and gently prompt action before patterns of absence develop.

7.2 Cultivating an Inclusive Culture

Our pupils cannot learn if they do not feel they belong. We prioritise building a welcoming school community where every child feels safe, valued, and understood.

- A Foundation for All: We establish a warm, predictable school climate where pupils look forward to coming to school. This sense of belonging is the baseline foundation for excellent attendance.
- Supporting Vulnerable Students: We pay close attention to our most vulnerable learners, ensuring they have trusted adults to connect with daily, so they feel seen and safe from the moment they arrive.

7.3. Individualised and Targeted Support

When attendance challenges do arise, we avoid "one-size-fits-all" solutions. Instead, we seek to understand the unique story behind the data.

- Understanding Specific Barriers: We work closely with families to identify the root causes of absence—whether they are academic, social, emotional, or practical.
- Context-Driven Solutions: Support is tailored directly to what the pupil needs to succeed within our specific school environment.

We view attendance support not as a system of compliance, but as an ongoing opportunity to collaborate with families, remove barriers to learning, and help every pupil thrive.

8. Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our school will make use of the full range of support and 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.

8.1 Attendance contract

We use attendance contracts as a form of attendance support.

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance contract is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and the school cannot agree to an attendance contract in a parent's absence.

Where an attendance contract would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent (and pupil if they are old enough to understand) to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's attendance.

Where parents fail to comply with an agreed attendance contract, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance contract remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

8.2 Education Supervision Order

In cases where voluntary early help plans or attendance contracts have been unsuccessful, we may work with the local authority to issue an education supervision order. If an education supervision order is considered, the local authority will inform the parent(s) in writing and will set up a meeting.

An education supervision order is a formal intervention but **not** criminal prosecution.

An education supervision order initially lasts for 1 year, but it can be extended within the last 3 months for a period of up to 3 years at a time.

In cases where parents persistently fail to meet the directions given under the education supervision order, they may be liable to a fine of up to £1,000 upon conviction.

8.3 Notice 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.

A notice 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.

It 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, or prosecution considered, 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.

8.4 Penalty notices

The Executive Headteacher / Principal (or a Head of School or Vice Principal, authorised by the Executive Headteacher / Principal), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, we will check with the local authority before doing so, and send the local authority a copy of any penalty notice issued.

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.

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.

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). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

9. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

9.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

Meetings will be held to identify any in-school or external barriers to attendance, action plans will be agreed and reasonable adjustments will be made accordingly if possible. Referrals for outside support will be made if appropriate. Where there are significant barriers, it may be necessary to involve the Inclusion Team.

9.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health

Meetings will be held to understand the mental or physical health barriers that are affecting a child's attendance. Referrals for outside support will be made if appropriate. Medical advice will be sought via the Joint Medical Protocol. Referrals to the Medical Needs Service for online learning may be considered appropriate in some circumstances. Where there are significant barriers, it may be necessary to involve the Inclusion Team.

Parents should consult the NHS guidance Is my child too ill for school? when deciding whether to keep their child home due to illness. We will share this guidance with parents, and provide support in understanding it, in order to promote school attendance wherever appropriate.

9.3 Pupils absent due to other barriers to attendance

We provide timely, targeted interventions to remove specific barriers to school attendance for vulnerable cohorts.

- For pupils with SEND, we implement reasonable adjustments to proactively support their learning and emotional needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils and young carers receive tailored assistance—such as flexible provisions—to alleviate socio-economic and domestic pressures.
- For pupils currently or previously known to children's social care, we coordinate closely with multi-agency partners to maintain a consistent safety net.

Every intervention is precisely matched to individual circumstances and deployed without delay to ensure sustained school engagement.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, the school will inform the local authority.

9.4 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

We welcome pupils back with a structured, supportive reintegration plan tailored to their individual needs. To ensure a smooth transition and prevent further absence, we implement phased returns, academic catch-up support, and regular pastoral check-ins. By focusing on both well-being and curriculum recovery, we help pupils rebuild their confidence and safely reconnect with the school community.

10. Attendance monitoring

10.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the local advisory board.

10.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and,
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

10.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis.
- Provide targeted support to the pupils we have identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 10.4 below).
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers/form tutors, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the local advisory board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead).
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

10.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school.
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance.
    - Explain the help that is available.
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence.
    - Review any existing actions or interventions.
    - Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant.
    - Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.
    - Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 7, above)

The above is based on our 'Attendance Matters' Staged Attendance Response

We want to work closely with you to ensure your child gets the absolute best out of school. Our staged approach outlines how we will reach out to support you if absences begin to add up:

- Early Monitoring & Support (Stages 1 & 2): If your child misses 3 days of school, their Head of Year will reach out for a supportive chat. If absences reach 6 days, we will invite you to a friendly parent support meeting to look at any early barriers and plan how we can help.
- Support Plus & Intervention (Stages 3 & 4): If absences reach 9 days without improvement, we will invite you to a second meeting to build an attendance improvement strategy. By 12 days, we will collaboratively co-create a formal Attendance Support Plan.
- School & Legal Action (Stage 5): If absences reach 15 days with further unauthorised time off, the Executive Headteacher / Principal will step in, and we are required to refer the case to the Norfolk County Council attendance team. This can ultimately lead to a formal Notice to Improve.

The "Lock-In" Effect: Keeping Track of the Days

It is easy to lose track of how quickly occasional days off add up across the school year. By the end of the year:

- 10 days of absence drops your child to 95% attendance.
- 19 days of absence drops them to 90% attendance.
- 20+ days of absence places them in the Persistent Absence category.

Once a child misses 10 days early in the year, it becomes incredibly difficult to pull their attendance back above 95%. To help you stay on track, keep these half-term limits in mind:

- Autumn Term (Sept–Dec): Missing more than 4 days by October half-term, or 7.5 days by Christmas, puts your child's attendance at critical risk.
- Spring Term (Jan–Easter): Missing more than 10 days by February half-term, or 12.5 days by Easter, falls into the Persistent Absence category.
- Summer Term (Apr–July): To finish the year strongly, your child should not miss more than 16 days by May half-term, or 19.5 days in total by July.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Angie Clifton / Tom Rolfe, Primary / Secondary Strategic Leads. At every review, the policy will be approved by the local advisory board.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour and Self-Regulation policy
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- Mental Health, Wellbeing and Emotional Regulation policy (25-27)
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy

Appendix 1: 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

Appendix 2a: Wensum Trust cover letter to parents and carers for Norfolk County Council Penalty Notice

Re: Welcome Back and "Attendance Matters" Update

Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome back to a brand-new school year! We hope you and your family had a wonderful, restful summer break. The start of September is always filled with excitement, and our teams have been working hard over the holidays to prepare our classrooms, practical spaces, and future-career insights for the brilliant year ahead.

Attendance is Everyone's Responsibility
Across the Wensum Trust, our guiding belief is that attendance is everyone's responsibility; schools, families, pupils, and our wider community working as one team.

Being in school every day isn't just about ticking a box; it is how young people build strong friendships, grow in confidence, and develop crucial life skills like teamwork and problem-solving. Every day your child is here, they are unlocking doors to their future aspirations.

Our New "Support First" Staged Approach
We want to work closely with you to ensure your child gets the absolute best out of school. Our staged approach outlines how we will reach out to support you if absences begin to add up:

- Early Monitoring & Support (Stages 1 & 2): If your child misses 3 days of school, their class teacher / form tutor will reach out for a supportive chat. If absences reach 6 days, we will invite you to a friendly parent support meeting to look at any early barriers and plan how we can help.
- Support Plus & Intervention (Stages 3 & 4): If absences reach 9 days without improvement, we will invite you to a second meeting to build an attendance improvement strategy. By 12 days, we will collaboratively co-create a formal Attendance Support Plan.
- School & Legal Action (Stage 5): If absences reach 15 days with further unauthorised time off, the Executive Headteacher / Principal will step in, and we are required to refer the case to the Norfolk County Council attendance team. This can ultimately lead to a formal Notice to Improve.

Important National Framework Updates
While our hearts are in supporting you early, we also have a legal duty to safeguard your child's education. This year, Norfolk County Council (NCC) and the Department for Education have introduced a stricter National Framework for school absence.

Attached to this letter, you will find the official NCC Penalty Notice Information Letter. We are required to share this with all families.
Key updates to be aware of include:

- The 10-Session Threshold: Schools are now legally mandated to refer cases to the Local Authority if a pupil accumulates 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-week period. This includes unauthorised term-time holidays and unexcused lates.
- National Fines: First-time penalty notices are issued at £160 per parent, per child (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days). A second offense within three years is a flat £160, and a third offense moves directly to court prosecution.

We want to assure you that our doors are always wide open. If your child is facing hurdles, feeling anxious about coming in, or if your family is going through a tough patch, please reach out to us immediately.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for helping us give your child the very best start to their future.

Warmest regards,

[Name]
[Executive Headteacher / Principal]

Appendix 2b: NCC Penalty Notices regarding school absence: Guidance for parents 2026-27

Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities

At [INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL], we work closely with parents and carers to ensure that all pupils receive the best possible education and achieve their full potential.

Good school attendance is essential for children's learning, wellbeing and future opportunities. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly when they are registered at a school.

The Government is clear that children should only miss school in exceptional circumstances, Schools and local authorities are expected to work with families to promote good attendance and reduce avoidable absence.

When could a Penalty Notice be issued?

Under the national framework for school attendance, a Penalty Notice may be considered when a child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

What does this mean?

- A school day consists of two sessions – a morning session and an afternoon session
- 10 sessions is usually equivalent to 5 school days
- The unauthorised absences do not need to happen on consecutive days
- The 10-school-week period can span different terms or school years

Examples of unauthorised absence may include:

- Holidays taken during term time without authorisation
- Keeping a child away from school without an accepted reason
- Persistent late arrival after the close of registration

Can a Penalty Notice be issued before the threshold is reached?

Yes. In some circumstances, the Local Authority may decide to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is reached. For example, this could apply where there have been several unauthorised term-time holidays. The Local Authority may also consider alternative legal action where appropriate.

How many Penalty Notices can be issued?

A maximum of two Penalty Notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling three-year period. The three-year period begins on the date the first Penalty Notice is issued. If the national threshold is met for a third time within three years and two Penalty Notices have already been issued to the parent(s), the Local Authority may consider prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A successful prosecution could result in:

- A criminal conviction
- A fine of up to £2,500
- Any other penalties available to the court

Who can receive a Penalty Notice?

For the purposes of school attendance law, a parent includes:

- A child's natural parent
- Any person who has parental responsibility for the child
- Any person who has day-to-day care of the child

Penalty Notices will usually be issued to parent(s) responsible for the child's attendance or who allowed the absence to occur. This may apply regardless of which parent submitted a request for leave of absence.

How much is a Penalty Notice?

First Penalty Notice	Second Penalty Notice
The first Penalty Notice issued to a parent for a child will be: ● **£160**, payable within 28 days; or ● **£80**, if paid within 21 days.	If a second Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first Penalty Notice: ● The charge will be **£160** ● Payment must be made within 28 days ● No reduced payment option is available.
Important information about payment ● Penalty Notices must be paid in full. ● Part-payments are not accepted. ● Payment plans are not available. ● There is no right of appeal against a Penalty Notice. ● Penalty Notices are issued **per parent, per child.** This means that where two parents are liable for a child's absence, each parent may receive a separate Penalty Notice and will be responsible for paying their own fine.	

Requests for leave of absence during term time

Government guidance states that schools should only grant leave of absence during term time in **exceptional circumstances**. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the specific circumstances presented. Although we recognise the value of family time together, requests for family holidays during term time will not normally be authorised. Government guidance states that a need or desire for a holiday or other leisure activity is not considered an exceptional circumstance. If leave is granted, the Headteacher will determine the length of time authorised.

How to request leave of absence

Requests for leave of absence should be made in advance of the planned absence. Making a request in advance allows the school to consider the circumstances before a decision is made. Where leave has not been requested in advance, the school may be unable to consider induvial circumstances, and the absence is likely to be recorded as unauthorised. The school reserves the right to request evidence in support of absences reported immediately before or after a holiday period.

Support with school attendance

We understand that children and families can sometimes face challenges that affect attendance. If you are experiencing difficulties or require support to help your child attend school regularly, please contact:

[Jane Bryant - Attendance Manager]

[01493 750431 - jbryant@acle.norfolk.sch.uk]

We will work with you to understand any barriers to attendance and discuss the support available.

Appendix 3: Attendance Key definitions:

Statutory School Age: A child is of statutory school age from the first full term after they reach their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June in the academic school year that the child reaches the age of 16. The legal responsibility for parents to ensure regular attendance at school or otherwise continues up to the end of this time period.

Persistent Absence: A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% or below for any reason whether the absences are authorised or not. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 school days; equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

Severe Absence: Severe absence refers to pupils who are absent for 50% or more. Severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support - this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.