



The Olympus Academy Trust Attendance Policy

Document Summary

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On Trust Website?	No
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*This policy has initially been created by the document owner and approved as a model by the Trust Improvement Committee. Schools have then adapted relevant sections to reflect their own individual settings and final approval for this has been provided by the School Improvement Committee as the table above.

Amendment History

Version	Amendment Date	Author	Amendment Summary
1.0	29 th November 2022	Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New model policy to be reviewed by Board of Trustees Further review to be done by SIC once updates made.
1.1	3 rd February 2023	Policy Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following amendments requested by the Trustees and further work by the Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding and the CEO. Main change is the addition of section 3.9 re the Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding's role and changes to nomenclature.
1.1	9 th February 2023	Policy Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy approved by Trust Board.
2.0	22 nd January 2024	Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy updated as per latest guidance (see v2.0 for full details).
2.1	23 rd January 2024	Policy Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final updates made for approval process. Change approval committee to Trust Improvement Committee. Sent for approval.
2.2	15 th February 2024	Policy Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved by Trust Improvement Committee. Sent to schools to make their updates to highlighted sections. These sections need to be approved by the School Improvement Committee.
3.0	June 2024	Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial changes to guidance from August mean that SBw needed to review the policy to include the greater emphasis on school leaders, family support, changes to fines and the need to provide training to staff/induction.
3.1	July 2024	Policy Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved by ARC

1. Aims

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 learners
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every learner 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 learners have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) 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 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The School Improvement Committee

The School Improvement Committee is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, learners and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, 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 learners who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all learners, but adapts processes and support to learners' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual learners 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 learners 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 learners, 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 headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher 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 learners
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising an Assistant Headteacher to be able to do so
- Working with the parents of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for learners with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where learners with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a learner with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the learner's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to learners and parents through all available channels

3.3 The designated Assistant Headteacher (also known as the ‘senior attendance champion’) responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader 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 learners, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with learners and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to learners and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance can be contacted through the school office.

3.4 The school attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Ensuring that the reasons for absence are recorded accurately and that unauthorised absences are followed up robustly
- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transferring calls from parents/carers to the head of year where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Liaising with the pastoral and safeguarding staff where vulnerable learners are absent without a reason
- 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 headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Organising meetings and referrals in response to absence
- Overseeing requests for term time absence
- Advising the headteacher/assistant headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer can be contacted via the main school phone number

3.5 Primary and secondary registers

Class teachers in Secondary schools are responsible for taking an accurate register at the start of every lesson. In secondary school, the only codes that teachers are expected to use are L , N and /.

3.7 Parents/carers

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 on time
- Use the Studybugs app to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
- 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 head of year, who can be contacted via pcs-enquiries@olympustrust.co.uk or 01454 862 020

3.8 Learners

Learners are expected to:

- Arrive at school by 8:25am and to attend every timetabled session on time

3.9 The Olympus Trust Executive Team and Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding

Reducing absence levels in Trust schools is a priority for all senior leaders. The Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding, the Inclusion Practitioner and the Executive Team have a role in responding to absence levels and to improve attendance for all learners in our schools, through:

- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools
- Providing support to attendance leaders to analyse data and respond to patterns and concerns
- Providing advice on whole school, strategic change to improve attendance
- Providing challenge to attendance leaders where levels of absence remain a concern
- Working collaboratively with attendance leaders and produce attendance improvement plans
- Leading the attendance network across the Trust
- Updating the Improving attendance Olympus Handbook to provide schools with the latest research and approaches to reduce absence
- Providing support with training staff who work directly with families and learners or who are new to the role of attendance champion

- Ensuring that the Trust's attendance phases are implemented within each school
- Monitoring attendance improvement through termly visits
- Regularly reviewing school and trust data against national
- Monitoring schools use of reduced timetables

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all learners 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 learner 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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

For learners of compulsory school age

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a learner is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a learner 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.

The school day starts at 8:30am and ends at 3:00pm.

Learners must arrive in school by 8:25am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:35 and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 11:20 and will be kept open until 1:00pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The learner's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am, or as soon as practically possible, Using the Studybugs app. This is available to download onto smart phones or can be accessed in an internet browser at <https://studybugs.com/about/parents>.

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.

4.3 Planned absence

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

The learner's parent must notify the school in advance of the appointment using the Studybugs app. This is available to download onto smart phones or can be accessed in an internet browser at <https://studybugs.com/about/parents>.

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

The parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A learner who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

Pupils who are more than 5 minutes late to school or to any lesson will be issued with a 10 minute late detention after school the following day. Pupils who are late to 2 or 3 lessons in a day will complete 20 and 30 minute detentions respectively. Pupils who are late to more than 3 lessons will be deemed as truanting will complete a day in Internal Reset.

Pupils who are regularly late may be placed on punctuality report to either their tutor or head of year.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

The school will follow its first day of absence response process when learners do not attend, and no message is received from the parent or carer.

Vulnerable learner List

All learners who the school deem vulnerable are recorded on the school's **Vulnerable List**. This list is overseen by the DSL and Attendance Lead and is reviewed regularly. Learners on this list would include:

- Children on a Child Protection Plan
- Children on a Child in Need Plan
- Children in Care
- Children previously reported as missing
- Children where there are domestic abuse concerns
- Children where there are significant mental health concerns
- Children where there are exploitation concerns

These learners have a priority status for calls when they are absent from school without reason. The register will be marked with the holding code **N** until the reason for absence is ascertained. Once the reason for absence is known, the code will be changed to the relevant absence code. A comment will be entered in ARBOR in the usual way.

The attendance administrator will consult the DSL/Safeguarding Team as soon as possible where a vulnerable child is missing without a reason.

The school will carry out all their usual and “**reasonable enquires**” to follow up non-attendance with parents and carers. These include:

- Consultation with other agencies who are involved - where there is a named social worker/case co-ordinator and the school is unable to resolve the learner’s non-attendance, then the relevant worker will need to be contacted so that a multi-agency approach can be formulated.
- Contacting parents/carers by telephone, text, email and other school messaging systems
- Contacting Emergency Contacts where necessary
- Home visits where necessary, if so:
 - Wherever possible, we would want to see and speak to the child as well as the parent. If this is not possible (for example, if the parent says the child is too unwell to come to the door), where considered necessary and appropriate, we will follow up with a further home visit or a Teams video call to see and speak to the child.
 - If there is more than one child in our school in the family, school staff will ensure they see and speak to each child.
 - Wherever possible two members of staff should visit, ideally including someone with a good relationship with the learner/family
 - Recording a visit note on CPOMS
 - If any safeguarding concerns are identified, school staff will refer the concerns to the school DSL as soon as possible on return to school.
- If immediate safeguarding concerns are identified, school staff will follow the school’s usual safeguarding process, which may include contacting 999 if a staff member considers a child or family member to be at Immediate Risk of Significant Harm.

If a reason for absence cannot be established and a learner’s whereabouts cannot be confirmed despite reasonable enquiries, the Child Missing Education (CME) processes will be followed. Details of South Gloucestershire CME process can be found here: [Children missing education | South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](https://www.southglos.gov.uk/children-missing-education)

Children Missing From Education

Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk

of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence (making reasonable enquires) and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points. We will always complete a CME referral when we have concerns about a learner's non-attendance and/or have not been able to establish contact

[Children missing education | South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](https://www.southglos.gov.uk)

Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The Department for Education expects schools to keep parents and carers informed about their child's attendance and attendance in general.

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via half-termly written reports.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time 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 learner is authorised to be absent for.

Appendix 4 provides examples of exceptional circumstances.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a learner 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 6 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website. 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 (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 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
- 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 learner is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a learner 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 learner is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the learner 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

5.2 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.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), 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, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it 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

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.

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 learner'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

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is rewarded and celebrated weekly in tutor time. All pupils with 100% attendance each week receive reward points and are entered into a raffle prize draw where there is one winner per year group

per week. We have end of term rewards for pupils with 100% attendance and those above 97.5%. We also conduct regular attendance assemblies.

7. Supporting learners who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Learners absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We work closely with families to identify barriers and to remove or manage barriers to support good attendance. In some cases this may involve working collaboratively with external agencies such as the Family Link Team, Education Welfare Officers or CAMHS. Families will be assigned a key member of staff to support them, this will be selected based on who is best to offer support and is mostly likely to be the head of year. The member of staff and the family will go through cycles of assessing the situation, planning supportive actions, implementing actions and reviewing them. In most cases assessment of the situation and agreement of actions will take place in School Attendance Meetings.

7.2 Learners absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where mental or physical ill health or SEND are a contributing factor towards absence families will be assigned a key member of staff to offer support. This is likely to be the head of year or a member of the SEND Team. The member of staff and the family will go through cycles of assessing the situation, planning supportive actions, implementing actions and reviewing them. In most cases assessment of the situation and agreement of actions will take place in School Attendance Meetings.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

7.3 Learners returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Pupils who are returning from a lengthy period of absence may face barriers in returning to school. Where this is the case families will be assigned a key member of staff to offer support. The member of staff and the family will assess the barriers and plan accordingly to support the return. In case cases it may be appropriate to offer a gradual return to school through a temporary Part Time Timetable. After the initial meeting between school and the family the member of staff and the family will go through cycles of assessing the situation, planning supportive actions, implementing actions and reviewing them. In most cases assessment of the situation and agreement of actions will take place in School Attendance Meetings.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

- Whole school absence levels, persistent absence and disadvantaged data is analysed on a weekly basis through the Trust attendance dashboard
- Monitoring of attendance and absence data will take place fortnightly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual learner level
- Identification of whether or not there are particular groups of learners whose absences may be a cause for concern with a focus on those learners who are disadvantaged.
- Tutors, SENCo, Year Leads receive weekly data updates from Studybugs regarding students they work with.

The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the School Improvement Committee

The school has granted permission to share data with the DfE and LA

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify learners or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these learners and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual learners, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the learners it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, tutors and staff, to facilitate discussions with learners and families, and to the SIC 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 learner's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific learners, where appropriate

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a learner misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a learner misses 50% or more of school.

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 learners 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 learners. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

The school also reference:

- Trust Attendance Phases set out in Appendix 2

- Trust Attend to Achieve strategies to support learners and parents and carers in improving attendance at school. These are set out in Appendix 3
- The Olympus Improving Attendance Handbook

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Trust Director for SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding. At every review, the policy will be approved by the School Improvement Committee following approval by the Olympus Trust Improvement Committee.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Secondary Mental Health Policy
- Supporting pupils who cannot attend school due to health needs

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Learner is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Learner is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Learner arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Learner is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Learner is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Learner has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Learner is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Learner is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Learner is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Learner has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Learner has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Learner has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a learner will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Learner is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Learner is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 learner is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Learner from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Learner is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Learner 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)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for learner's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Learner arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Learner 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 learner is in custody
Z	Learner not on admission register	Register set up but learner has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



Olympus Academy Trust Attendance Phases

Excellent attendance is intrinsically linked to academic achievement and progress.

Learners who have regular absence, patterns of unauthorised absence, broken weeks of attendance and high levels of absence for minor illness are unlikely to achieve their academic potential. The Olympus Academy Trust prioritises the monitoring, support and robust action needed to secure high levels of attendance and works in close partnership with the Local Authority to place matters before the court in circumstances where parents/carers do not ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

The following Attendance Phases are a guide for learners and parent/carers on the steps that the school will take to support regular attendance at school. At every stage of our Attendance Phases we welcome the opportunity to engage with parents and carers. Early intervention and learner support sit at the heart of our approach to raising attendance levels. The Phases below are intended to work alongside the LA published processes.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term used to describe children and young people who experience challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSA is commonly associated with emotional and physical distress, and a reluctance to attend school, which can lead to reduced attendance and further anxiety regarding school.

Some learners will experience varying levels of anxiety about attending school. However, in most cases they will benefit from familiar and predictable school routines to support their wellbeing. For some however, there are likely to be additional challenges and the level of anxiety being experienced will mean more targeted support is needed for those experiencing EBSA. **KCSIE 2021** recommends that schools use an early help process (EHAP) for learners with persistent absence as this is a potential safeguarding issue.

Schools can use the education resources associated with these attendance phases to support learners and plan individual responses, which improve attendance through improved wellbeing.

Resource 1: Identifying EBSA as part of the response to absence Olympus example

Resource 2: Do you worry about going to school? *Somerset County Council Resource*

Resource 3: Secondary schools only- signposting learners to the Olympus Trust Thrive App for support with anxiety and depression

Resource 4: Information for parents on EBSA published by Somerset County Council [Parents/ Carers EBSA Guidance | Support Services for Education](#)

Monitoring Phase	
Reason	
<p>Attendance is between 95% and 93% with absences due to medical appointments or illness. Unauthorised absences may be on the attendance record.</p>	
Action	
Secondary Phase	Primary phase
<p>The learner will have an initial discussion with their tutor to discuss their overall attendance rate. Any underlying issues will be able to be fully discussed and parents and carers will be notified when required. Where unauthorised absences are on the record, contact will be made with the parent or carer to address the issue and ensure reasons for absence are communicated.</p> <p>In the secondary phase, learners are encouraged to monitor their own attendance through tutor programme intervention and through the Arbor App.</p> <p>School are likely to send a letter home to highlight any attendance concerns.</p>	<p>The learner will be flagged with the SLT attendance lead by the attendance administrator and the class teacher will be informed. Where unauthorised absences are on the record, contact will be made with the parent or carer to address the issue and ensure reasons for absence are communicated.</p> <p>School are likely to send a letter home to highlight any attendance concerns.</p>
Review	
<p>Attendance will be monitored regularly by the tutor or attendance administrator to ensure that it moves towards the school target of 96%.</p> <p>Where attendance does not improve, learners will be moved to Phase 1.</p>	

Phase 1
Reason
<p>Attendance levels continue to fall and are below 93%. Unauthorised absences remain on the attendance record. There are patterns of broken weeks of attendance. There is regular absence due to minor illness.</p>
Action
<p style="text-align: center;">Secondary and Primary Phase</p> <p>Parents and carers will be invited to attend a school attendance meeting in school (SAM). The concerns will be discussed and any support required will be put in place. This may be parent support, academic support or pastoral support.</p> <p>Any professionals working with the family or learner will be invited to attend.</p> <p>The school will consider any obstacles presented in the meeting that impact on positive levels of school attendance and will seek to support learners and families in finding a positive way forward.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to opening an EHAP, writing a “My Support Plan” or an Individual Health Care Plan.</p> <p>Where there are frequent absences due to illness, the school may request that medical evidence is provided from the GP before any further absences are authorised. Parents will be asked to sign a medical consent form at this SAM and the school will write to the GP with a copy of the attendance certificate.</p> <p>Medical evidence may take the form of a dated prescription, a prescribed medicine package with the child’s name and the date of issue or, an appointment card, dated with the child’s name on.</p> <p>Please note that only the Headteacher, or delegated staff member, can authorise absence from school.</p>
Review
<p>Attendance will be monitored for a period of 4-6 weeks. A school attendance meeting review will be held with parents and carers. Where concerns persist, the learner will be moved to Phase 2.</p>

Phase 2
Reason
<p>Attendance levels continue to fall to persistent absence, which is anything below 90%. Unauthorised absences remain on the attendance record. There are continued patterns of broken weeks of attendance.</p>
Action
<p>Secondary and Primary Phase</p> <p>A formal referral will be made to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) by the school and a home visit or phone call home by the education welfare officer will be made.</p> <p>Parents/carers will be invited to attend a formal Attendance Panel meeting where further agreements will be made and expectations clearly shared. This meeting will be led by the senior lead in the school and the SAM action plan will be reviewed. Invitations will be extended to any external agencies working with the family or learner as part of a team around the child approach.</p> <p>The school will explore all possible areas of support during this meeting, which will help the learner to improve their attendance. They will consider any wider family circumstances which may be impacting on attendance and ensure that liaison with any external agencies where an early help support plan (EHAP) is held takes place. This meeting will also explore any other underlying causes such as obstacles to learning, social and emotional aspects of learning and health concerns.</p>
Review
<p>Attendance will be monitored for a period of 4-6 weeks.</p> <p>An Attendance Panel Review will be held on the 6th week. Where concerns remain, the meeting will be chaired by the Local Authority and the student will automatically be moved to Phase 3.</p>



Attend to Achieve

- A**ttendance process. Have robust systems which are well communicated. Increase rigour and sustain it. *Telephone PP parents on the first day of absence rather than text.*
- T**ackle the level of illness early. Don't authorise patterns of illness. Challenge!
- T**argets. Set aspirational whole school targets. Make sure staff, students and parents know them. Talk about them at every opportunity!
- E**arly intervention. The first step forward. Understand student barriers to attendance in your school by gathering student voice.
- N**on-attendance procedures which are followed in a timely way so that challenge and improvement happens quickly. Start the attendance conversation early and reduce time between reviews.
- D**ata analysis. At least fortnightly for the whole school to reduce broken week patterns being left without action. Regular vulnerable group analysis. Have set broken weeks letters ready. Share the data with the staff team.
- T**utors and teachers. Does everyone know what their role is? Make attendance everyone's responsibility. How can they help?.
- O**rganisational issues. Help disadvantaged students with organisation. This is often an issue at home, so make school a place where someone helps with this when they need it – don't make it become a reason to stay at home.
- A**nxiety and mental health. Have strategies to support phased in-class attendance to respond to the rise we see with young people and mental health concerns.
- C**ompetitions. Use house and year group systems to regularly raise the profile of attendance across the school. Celebrate every week and share with parents and newsletters.
- H**ome school liason workers. Target disadvantaged families, build relationships to combat negative parental experiences of school.
- I**nvest in Key Adults for students. People who can check-in with them, know them and understand their journey. Safe people = safe places = improved attendance.
- E**nvironment. Create a safe culture where students are free from racism, discrimination and all forms of bullying.
- V**alue the importance of positive relationships. Shine a "spotlight" on disadvantaged students to ensure that everyone knows who they are.
- E**nsure that your policy communicates clearly what regular attendance means in your school and how you will respond to unauthorised absence and persistent absence patterns.

Appendix 4 - Guidance for Granting Absence during Term Time due to Exceptional Circumstances

Headteachers can only grant term-time absences in 'exceptional circumstances'.

Any requests for term-time absence must be made in advance. If the parents didn't apply for the leave of absence in advance, you must record the absence as unauthorised. This is set out in the DfE's non-statutory advice on school attendance.

You must decide whether an absence request constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance' based on the individual circumstances and the relevant context behind the request.

You will still need to respond to requests on a case-by-case basis, but you can set out examples of the sorts of exceptional circumstances you will accept in your attendance policy, or on a stand-alone page on your school website. The Trust have issued guidance on what exceptional circumstances are and these are shown below.

Trust recommended exceptional circumstances

- When a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family members bereavement, crisis or serious illness and the Headteacher is satisfied as to the circumstances
- Funeral of immediate family member. Discretion will be used to consider travel requirements.
- Religious observance
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Transport was not provided by the LA when it should have been
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued and seen by the Headteacher
- One off sporting events, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the sports regional governing body as evidence
- One day of absence could be authorised for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade
- Medical appointments (parents/carers should be encouraged to arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours when possible. If the medical appointment is during the school day, evidence must be provided. Schools should not authorise a whole days absence for a medical appointment that occurs in the morning – the child would be expected to return to school in the afternoon, and vice versa
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time.

Absence will not be authorised for reasons such as the following:

- Family holidays

- To care for other family members
- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitment.
- Pilgrimages by parents (e.g. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Weddings for extended family members (beyond parent and sibling)
- Family Anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problems
- School refusal.