Attendance Policy

ISP School Battle

Approved by:	Local Governing Body		Date: January 2022
Last reviewed on:	July 2020, July 2021, September 2022, September 2023		
Next review due by:	September 2024		

Contents   **Page no.**

1.   Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every child 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 ensure children have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We will also support parents and carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. Those children not attending school are our most at risk children in terms of safeguarding and failing to make progress. We will proactively seek to reduce episodes of non-attendance including referrals to Single Point of Advice (SPoA) and Teams Around The School and Setting (TASS).

2.   Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3.   Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure adults receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Head Teacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting adults with monitoring the attendance of individual children
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

3.3 The designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Amelia Stoner and can be contacted via amelia.stoner@ispschools.org.uk

3.4 Tutors and Progress Engagement Guides

Tutors and Progress Engagement Guides are responsible for ensuring our school administrator (Zena Maher) has accurate information regarding attendance for each child enabling Zena Maher to record attendance on a daily basis and using the correct codes.

3.5 School Administrator

Our School Administrator will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system (Behaviour Watch)
- Transfer calls from parents to the relevant adult in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.6 Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day, on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.55am 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

3.7 Children

Our children are encouraged to:
- Attend every day and talk to us about their worries when this is too tricky for them
- Attend their timetabled lessons and talk to us about their worries when this is too tricky for them
- Allow adults to help them to increase their attendance and their learning time together

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all children 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 whether every child 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.

We will also record:

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

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

Children must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

- The register for the first session will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.15am following guidance which states: time – not longer than 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place. Our community meeting is 8.55-9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.20pm and will be kept open until 12.50pm.

4.2 Unplanned Absence

The child's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50 or as soon as practically possible by calling our School Administrator, Zena Maher. (see also section 7).

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

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the child's parent/carer to provide 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.

In the unlikely event that the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, (which may include a referral to Single Point of Advice and/or Teams Around the School and Setting), identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

We act proactively to incidents of unauthorised absence including holding parent/carer meetings on the school premises or at home addresses. We conduct home visits to support parents/carers to ensure children are in school and we will pursue court action to address unauthorised absences when necessary.

4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a therapy session, medical or dental appointment will be counted as an authorised absence as long as the child's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents/carers should inform our administrator, Zena Maher of any planned absences, Zena will discuss these with the Head Teacher.

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

The child's parent/carer 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 child 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 using the appropriate code (U)

4.5 Following up an unexplained absence

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

- Call the child's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the child's emergency contacts, the school may contact Single Point of Advice (East Sussex) and/or police
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving Teams Around the School and Setting service.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

We report children's attendance termly to parents/carers via school reports and/or parent/carer progress days.

5. Authorised and unauthorized absence
5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to children during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as on balance based on the case presented the Headteacher determines that the absence supports the mental, emotional or physical wellbeing of the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller children 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 child is attending educational provision
- Study leave – study leave is not granted by default, and is only granted to children in year 11. Provision will still be made available for children who wish to revise in school
- Flexi-schooling provision – in circumstances where this is deemed appropriate by the Headteacher a child may be placed on a part time timetable. This would be in exceptional circumstances and would be documented in detail and reviewed at least every 6 weeks.

5.2   Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

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

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

6.   Strategies for promoting attendance

We communicate early about issues acknowledging positive improvements by phone calls home and updates in contact books. Initiatives such as raffle prizes for high attenders being conducted and children being awarded certificates for high attendance.
Home visits support children to attend school, collection of children from home and bringing them to school supports parents/carers and the children to feel they are valued and cared for.

We recognise that attendance is paramount in supporting positive life chances for our children. As our school grows we will invest more into our aspiration for our children by employing a Pastoral Intervention Tutor who will work closely with our children who find attending school tricky.

7.   Attendance monitoring

The school administrator with responsibility for overviewing attendance monitors children's absence on a daily basis.

Parents/Carers are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.6).

Parents/Carers are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.
If a child's absence goes above 5 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

We track our interventions for children who are struggling to attend school and communicate with Assessment and Planning Officers in East Sussex iSEND.

If after contacting parents a child's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving Teams Around the School and Setting service.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a child's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the child will be classified as a persistent absentee and we may conduct home visits.

Child-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and will share this with governors.

7.1   Monitoring Attendance

Our school will:

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

7.2   Analyse data

Our school will:

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

7.3   Using data to improve attendance

Our school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to our whole school team, to facilitate discussions with children and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4   Reducing persistent and severe absence

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

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

7.5 Attendance – Teams Around the School and Setting

The Attendance Lead will be the single point of contact (SPOC) for schools to discuss all attendance issues. They will meet with our attendance leader: Amelia Stoner to discuss whole school data and hold targeted conversations across the year. All schools will be receiving the targeted conversations three times per year. The focus of these conversations will be to support schools in building attendance capacity, strategies, and to provide specific cohort interventions around attendance. The Attendance Support Team will also train our adults and offer advice and guidance around all legal intervention work and processes.

8.   Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Caroline Belchem, Head Teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Chair of Governors and policy updates discussed at Governing Body meetings.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy, also behaviour 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
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil 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 pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

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