Attendance Policy

(Independent School Standards: Paragraphs 15 & 34).

Important note: The term 'Spark' or 'Spark Academy Group' applies to both our tutoring and independent school settings, also referred to as 'provision', 'school' or 'organisation' interchangeably.

Guidance & Legislation

- Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK

Links to Other Policies

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Positive Relationships Policy

Last External Review	August 2025
Next External Review	August 2026
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Author	CEO / Proprietor
Policy Sign Off	Headteacher

We Build Communities Where Everyone Belongs, Grows & Thrives.

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

- Absence from school affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and wellbeing.

- Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law.

- We set clear targets for school attendance of 95% in order to ensure that our pupils come to school every day and make the best possible progress. We are mindful, however, that all of our pupils have education, health and care plans for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Many therefore face complex barriers to attendance, including in relation to mental health conditions. Though the expectations of attendance for these pupils are the same, we recognise that they might require additional support.

- This attendance policy pays regard to national guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), including 'Working together to improve school attendance' (August 2024), however as an independent school we are aware that chapter 3 does not apply to independent schools. Spark Academy Group may seek support from the school attendance support team in the designated local authorities it serves, however we are aware that not all aspects of legal intervention are open to us as an independent school – education supervision orders, prosecution and parenting orders may be used; while penalty notices and attendance contracts may not.

- This policy should also be read in conjunction with the 'Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy'.

Section 2: Promoting Regular Attendance

Our Ethos

- We believe that attendance is not simply a matter of compliance, but a reflection of emotional safety, relationships, and belonging.

- We believe **school must feel like a safe place before it becomes a consistent one**.

- For many pupils with additional needs, persistent absence or school avoidance may be rooted in anxiety, trauma, unmet needs or sensory overwhelm.

- Our approach to attendance is therefore non-punitive, trauma-informed and therapeutically driven, ensuring that all pupils feel safe, seen and supported.

- We embed a culture that says to every child, *"We're glad you're here."* This ethos is at the heart of our relational approach to promoting attendance and is embedded through:

    - Emotionally warm and predictable morning routines, including soft landings, sensory support, and safe arrival spaces
    - Daily regulation check-ins with trusted adults to reduce anxiety and build connection

    - Staff training in trauma-informed, attachment-aware and autism-inclusive practices

    - A flexible, inclusive curriculum that validates pupil voice, strengths, and emotional readiness

Aims & Intent

- Our schools aim to promote a high level of awareness of the need for regular and prompt attendance.

- We advise families of the schools' expectations during the induction meetings for new pupils and on families days.

- We report to families on their child's attendance in their progress and achievement reports.

- We contact families every day to clarify the reason for a child's absence from school; this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day, the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register. If we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent, we will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts. We ask for at least two emergency contacts for every pupil. At this stage, if we have

been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts, a home visit will be carried out. As a last resort, if the school has not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police.

■ We contact with home will also always be made should a pupil's attendance be a cause for concern, with the aim of establishing the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance, thinking together to establish how we can overcome the barriers.

■ We will seek support for pupils/families where out of school barriers are identified, which could include a voluntary early help assessment.

■ We work together with multi-agency teams in order to improve attendance levels, including for those pupils who have social workers and for those who have persistent or severe absence. We will consider making reasonable adjustments to policies and practice to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend. This may include transport arrangements, daily routines, an increased access to support in school and a time-limited phased return – which would always be agreed with the local authority.

Proactive Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Relational Foundations: Building Safety & Belonging First

■ Key adult check-ins: Daily emotional check-ins with a trusted adult reduce anxiety and create a soft landing in school.

■ Welcome routines: Gentle, predictable morning routines (e.g. soft lighting, breakfast clubs, music, sensory calm) that feel safe and nurturing.

■ Safe space on arrival: Pupils who are dysregulated on arrival have access to a therapeutic or nurture space to settle before entering lessons.

Personalised Support Plans

■ Use personalised attendance plans co-created with the pupil, parents, and the therapeutic team.

■ Plans include barriers to attendance, pupil voice, graduated exposure if needed, and named adults who will provide daily emotional scaffolding.

Therapeutic Interventions

■ CBT-informed sessions for pupils with anxiety-based non-attendance.

■ Sensory integration activities and emotion coaching for those with sensory processing difficulties or PDA profiles.

- Home-school communication logs or video calls to build trust before attendance improves.

Trauma-informed Curriculum Access

- We offer flexible timetables or phased reintegration for those experiencing acute emotional distress.

- Ensure lessons start with low-pressure, regulation-supportive activities (e.g. retrieval games, personal goal-setting).

Recognition for Effort (Not Just Outcomes)

- Create a "Courage to Come" Award that recognises effort (e.g. overcoming a fear, attending for 1 hour more than usual).

- Visual progress trackers (individualised) showing steps achieved toward full attendance.

- Postcards home from the headteacher or trusted adult saying, "We're proud you made it in today."

- Therapeutic reward menus (e.g. choosing a classroom job, extra time with an animal, creative time) based on their regulation style.

Family Engagement & Empowerment

- Family support workers to visit or call parents/carers regularly with non-judgemental curiosity.

- Hold parent partnership drop-ins or coffee mornings to build relational trust with families.

- Offer travel support, uniform adjustments, or sensory support equipment where needed.

Data Monitoring With Therapeutic Intent

- Our daily attendance tracked with colour-coded emotional readiness markers (e.g. green – regulated and engaged, amber – dysregulated but attending, red – not attending).

- We use this data to inform weekly attendance huddles with SLT, DSL, and key staff, looking for patterns and supportive interventions – not punishment.

Whole-School Structure of Belonging

- We celebrate "Attendance Champions" weekly with categories like:

    o Most improved courage

    o Biggest bounce back

    o Best morning routine effort

- Embed **emotional literacy and attendance resilience** in PSHE lessons (e.g. what to do when you're feeling overwhelmed in the morning).

- Classroom culture of **"We're glad you're here"** not "Where were you yesterday?"

Supporting Pupils Facing Complex Barriers to Attendance or Returning After Prolonged Absence

- We understand that **persistent or prolonged absence often signals deeper unmet needs, vulnerabilities, or emotional distress.** For some pupils, especially those with SEND, trauma backgrounds, or social care involvement, the barriers to regular attendance can be complex, multi-layered, and dynamic.

- We therefore respond **not with punishment, but with curiosity, compassion, and coordinated support.** Our approach is fully in line with the principles of the *Positive Relationships Policy, Working Together to Improve Attendance* (DfE, 2022), the *SEND Code of Practice*, and our statutory safeguarding duties.

Recognising Underlying Needs

We recognise that poor or irregular attendance can be an indicator of:

- Emotional-based school avoidance (EBSA)

- Anxiety or mental health challenges

- Neurodiversity-related overwhelm (e.g. sensory sensitivities, executive functioning needs)

- Safeguarding or welfare concerns, including bereavement, housing insecurity, domestic abuse, or family breakdown

- A sense of disconnection or unmet belonging needs within the school environment

Responding Therapeutically & Inclusively

When a pupil has been absent due to complex reasons or is reintegrating after a prolonged period, we take a **graduated, personalised and relational approach**, including:

- Pupil-centred reintegration plans co-developed with families and professionals

- Adapted timetables and flexible routines that prioritise emotional regulation and readiness to learn

- Reconnection meetings with a trusted adult, ensuring the pupil is welcomed back with safety, not scrutiny

- Daily check-ins or pastoral keyworker support, including sensory regulation time if needed

- Safe arrival strategies, such as soft landings, meet-and-greet support, or calm zones

- Attendance improvement plans that focus on understanding and reducing the underlying barriers, not just tracking absence

Co-ordinated Multi-Agency Support

Where barriers to attendance require wraparound support, we work in partnership with:

- Parents and carers – building trust through regular, non-judgemental communication

- External agencies – including CAMHS, early help, children's social care, ELSA, EPs, and attendance specialists

- Local authorities – ensuring alignment with EHCPs, care plans, or family support plans

All strategies are regularly reviewed in Team Around the Child (TAC) or pastoral review meetings, to ensure they remain relevant, relational, and impactful.

Inclusive, Evidence-Informed Support Strategies

Strategy	Purpose
Relationship-building & support	Key adult, check-ins, trust-building activities
Wellbeing plans & regulation strategies	Tailored to sensory, anxiety, or SEMH needs
Attendance support plans	Graduated, co-produced with families
Mentoring & coaching	From pastoral or therapeutic staff
Friendship & peer-group support	To reduce social isolation
Pupil voice activities	Empowering pupils to shape their reintegration
PSHE & emotional literacy input	Addressing underlying concerns (e.g. anxiety, loss, identity)
Flexible timetabling	For phased or supported return
Curriculum adjustments	To reduce cognitive overload or perceived failure
Referral to external services	e.g. CAMHS, family support, specialist tutors
Attendance panels or reviews	Multi-agency planning and review
Therapeutic reward systems	Celebrating effort and progress, not just thresholds
Inclusion & behaviour support	Through a non-punitive, relational lens

Share Planning & Family Engagement

■ All support is developed collaboratively and transparently with the child and their family. We acknowledge that parents/carers may also feel anxious, ashamed, or overwhelmed when facing attendance concerns, and we approach every family with empathy and partnership, not blame. No plan is imposed - every strategy is co-produced and reviewed in regular conversation.

Last Resort Escalation (Where Required)

Legal sanctions will only ever be considered as a last resort where:

■ A pattern of persistent unauthorised absence continues despite significant support and engagement offers
■ All available therapeutic and multi-agency interventions have been exhausted
■ The risk to the pupil's safety, learning, and wellbeing is escalating

In such cases, the decision to escalate will be made collectively by the SLT, in consultation with the Local Authority Attendance Service and safeguarding partners, with full transparency to the family.

Section 3: Roles & Responsibilities

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to relevant stakeholders ie: ISA.

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the attendance officer to be able to do so.

- Working with the parents/carers to develop specific support approaches for attendance, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils face in-school barriers.

- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil 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, when requested, 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

The Designated Senior Leader 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 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.

- For local authority **tutoring services**, we will continue to provide attendance information on **daily repor**ts as well as through placing local authority reporting frameworks.

WHO

- In Spark Vale Academy's current structure, the **Headteacher** will also be the Designated Senior Leader responsible for Attendance.

- In Spark Academy Tutoring, the **Service Delivery Manager**, is the Designated Senior Leader responsible for Attendance.

The Attendance Officer

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 headteacher.

- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.

- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

- Completing home visits as and when necessary.

- Compiling reports for other professionals on request.

WHO

- In Spark Vale Academy's structure, the **Headteacher** will also be the Attendance Officer.

- In Spark Academy Tutoring, the Service Delivery Manager, is the Attendance Officer.

Teachers

The teachers are responsible for:

- Take calls from parents/carers and pupils about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system (see which systems below).
- Transfer calls from parents/carers and pupils to the safeguarding / inclusion teams where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

WHO

- At Spark Vale Academy, the recording school system is TES Class Charts.
- At Spark Academy Tutoring, the recording system is CPOMS.

Office Staff

- Take calls from parents/carers and pupils about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.

- Transfer calls from parents/carers and pupils to the safeguarding / inclusion teams where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

Parents or Carers

Where this policy refers to a parent or carer, 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.

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.

- Provide the school with two 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 Attendance Officer, Inclusion team or the Headteacher.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

- Attend every timetabled session, on time

Section 4: Types of Absences

Understanding Types of Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the family), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of absence is required.

Authorised Absences

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 school attendance regulations 2024.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including:

- The length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

- The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

- 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.

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational

purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

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

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

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

How to make a request for authorised absence:

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible office@sparkvaleacademy.co.uk .

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given.

This includes:

- families keeping their child off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never properly been explained
- pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- activities such as shopping, looking after other pupils or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been formally agreed.

Punctuality

- Good time-keeping is a vital skill for life. Being on time helps a pupil to be calm, relaxed and happy in school.

- Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late-arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence. The register is a statutory document and is taken twice a day.

- Each day counts as two sessions of attendance. Timings are made clear to families and local authority transport teams.

- The school day **starts at 08:45 and ends at 14:30.**

- **Registers are marked at all sites at 09:15.** If a pupil arrives after the registration period they will be formally marked in as late.

- At 09:45 the registers will be closed.

- In accordance with the regulations, if a pupil arrives after that time, they will receive a mark to note that they are on site, but this will not count as a 'present' mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

- It is essential that pupils arriving and leaving school with a family member outside the normal hours are signed in and out from the school offices. These records are used in the case of fire/emergency.

- If a pupil has a persistent late record, families will be asked to meet with the relevant leader to resolve the problem. However, families can approach the assistant principal at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

We encourage good punctuality by being positive role models to our pupils and through celebrating and rewarding good punctuality, as we do attendance. As special schools catering for a large proportion of pupils who arrive to school from a wide range of locations on transport provided by placing authorities' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) teams, we acknowledge that sometimes transport providers arrive late to school. This can be for reasons beyond pupils' and families' control, such as heavy traffic or the late arrival of escorts. Pupils will not be penalised for lateness that is beyond their control. Pupils who travel independently must ensure they make suitable arrangements to get to school on time.

Illness & Medical Appointments

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

- We should be notified of these appointments in advance.

- If it is necessary for a pupil to be out of school for this reason, the pupil should wherever possible return to school directly after the appointment and not take the entire day off.

- Long-term medical conditions requiring regular and repeated visits to medical professionals during term time need to be evidenced, reviewed and monitored by an assistant or vice principal and the designated safeguarding lead.

If a pupil is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedure:

- Contact the relevant school site as soon as possible on the morning of the first day of absence before 09.15.

- Provide any written medical evidence that is available, which could explain an absence.

For unavoidable medical appointments during the school day:

- The parent/carer must phone us or send us a note in advance of the appointment.

Holidays During Term-Time

- There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. It is strongly discouraged by the government, placing authorities and the Spark Academy Group.

- It is the family's obligation to inform the schools (in writing or at a meeting arranged with an assistant/vice principal) of a period of absence. It must be made by the parent or carer with whom the pupil normally resides.

- Any period of leave for holidays taken in term time will be classed as unauthorised.

Arrangements for Absence in Other Circumstances

- Sudden serious circumstances do rarely occur, when it is impossible for a family to bring their child to school.

- It is essential that we are told about these circumstances immediately so that the appropriate code can be noted in the register. All absence codes are recorded in line with the latest DfE guidance to ensure accurate data.

Section 5: Our Response to Absence & Missing Children

Pupil Absence Response

If a pupil is absent we will:

- Contact parents and carers every day to clarify the reason for a pupil's absence from school. This will happen as soon as practicable on the first day and the reason for the absence will be recorded on the register.
- Attempt to contact **if we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent (we ask for at least two emergency contacts for every pupil).**
- Carry out a home visit if we have been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts.
- As a final resort, if we have not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police.
- We will always invite the family in to discuss the situation with a senior leader if a pupil has persistent or severe absence. We may then consider referring the matter to the relevant Education Welfare Services team if attendance fails to improve.
- Staff will use professional judgement and risk asses the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the pupils' whereabouts before notifying the Police. Timeliness should be on a case by case basis.

If a Child Goes Missing From School

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions during the working day:

- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check with SLT to see if they have an extra-curricular event
- Check the First Aid Room
- Check with reception who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the senior member of staff on duty
- Ask all of the adults and pupils calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the pupil
- Occupy all of the other pupils in their classroom(s)
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search the school grounds
- Check the doors, gates for signs of entry/exit

A record is kept by the school of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

If the pupil is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Inform the DSL and Headteacher
- Ask the Headteacher to ring the pupil's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the school at once
- The DSL would notify the Police
- The Head would arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds
- If the pupil's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with him.
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the school's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The school would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.
- Inform the Proprietor
- The school's insurers would be informed
- If the pupil is injured a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the school, in consultation with the LADO/Police, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.
- A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the pupil was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

If a Child Goes Missing On an Outing

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other pupils were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- Inform the Headteacher and the DSL by mobile phone
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search
- Contact the Police
- The remaining pupils would be taken back to school
- Ask the Headteacher/DSL to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/ the school at once
- The DSL would inform the LSCB
- The school would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Proprietor
- The school's insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)
- A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

If a Missing Child is Found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Headteacher will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LSCB if necessary)
- The Headteacher will promise a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
- Media queries should be referred to the Headteacher (after discussion with the LSCB if appropriate)
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.

If a Child Who Travels Independently Does Not Arrive Home

- Headteacher to be informed immediately
- SLT staff and reception staff to liaise carefully with the parent (or emergency contact if parent not available) regarding details of movements – check if the child was marked on/off school bus if applicable
- Identify the last time the child was seen – location and time and by whom
- Speak to the child's friends – did the child mention going anywhere other than home? Has there been a miscommunication? Did the child go to a friend's house?
- If the child has a mobile phone, call the number
- If the child walked home, an available member of staff should trace that route by foot/by vehicle asap
- If the child has not made it home within a reasonable period of time beyond the time they were expected to arrive, the police should be informed.

DUTY TO REPORT

The school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period **of 10 school days** or more.

Section 6: Procedures When a Child is Not Collected on Time

- If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers.
- If there is no answer, the Teacher/Senior Teacher on duty will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child.
- During this time, the child will be safely looked after. If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers within a one hour period when the premises are closing, the Headteacher or Senior Teacher on Duty will contact the Social Care Duty Officer.
- Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police.
- We will make a full written report of the incident. We undertake to look after the child safely throughout the time that he or she remains under our care, until such a time as he has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative car arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety.
- The school's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents.
- If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the school's child protection policy and procedures detailed in our Child Protection & Safeguarding policy.

Section 7: Monitoring Absence

How We Monitor Absence

- All staff are committed to working with families to reduce absence and ensure pupils have the highest possible levels of attendance.

- All pupils who have 100% attendance and punctuality over a term will receive a special certificate in our final reward assembly of the term.

- The Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 do not apply to independent schools. As such, Spark Academy Group are not required to share the daily attendance data. We recognise that absence that is below 90% is doing considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the fullest support and cooperation from families to deal with this.

- Pupils can sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, family and pupil. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with the family to understand the cause of the problem.

- Any pupil who is absent for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions will always get immediate attention from the DSL.

- We know that pupils who are absent from education for prolonged periods of time and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding concerns and can eventually lead to pupils being missing in education.

- There may be occasions when a pupil's health means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term. We may seek medical evidence to better understand the pupil's needs as per the statutory guidance 'supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' and action will be on a case-by-case basis.

- As per the 'working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance, Spark Academy Group keeps pupils' placing authorities regularly informed of all their pupils' attendance. We are obliged to inform placing authorities when a pupil fails to attend regularly or misses 10 consecutive school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the absence codes statistically classified as unauthorised (paragraph 49). We also inform placing authorities if a pupil misses or is expected to miss 15 days due to illness. However, we actually keep the placing authority informed of all our pupils' attendance records if they present any cause for concern.

- Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Severe absence is when a pupil is missing 50% or more of school.

- The relevant Headteacher or DSL will meet with families whose absence or punctuality are a cause for concern to explain the consequences of severe and/or persistent absence and the potential need for legal intervention in the future. However, the main focus will always be on trying to identify what support can be offered in order to remove barriers and improve attendance.

- When a pupil's attendance drops below 95%, this will usually be addressed through informal conversations with the Headteacher and/or member of the safeguarding team. Where there is a lack of engagement and/or the attendance drops further, a more formal conversation will be had with families to highlight the need for immediate action and to be clear about the next steps, which could include an attendance warning letter (decision on sending these are made on a case-by-case basis) and/or weekly attendance meetings to identify any possible obstacles to attendance and to create a plan of action. If the attendance continues to drop further, the matter will be raised with the pupil's placing authority and, if possible, the relevant attendance support team in order to request further support for the pupil and family.

- Leaders monitor and analyse attendance data on a weekly basis to identify patterns and trends, including pupils at risk of poor attendance and to develop strategies to support individual/cohorts of pupils. As schools, we have a duty to inform families of

their child's attendance and how this can impact on their learning.

- Monthly attendance meetings are held with the safeguarding team and each site's assistant or vice principal to discuss individual pupils and concerns surrounding attendance levels.

- Attendance data is also analysed on a termly and yearly basis at the quality and standards committee meetings, which includes comparisons against similar settings and national data.

- See Annex A for further information on the actions we take to promote good attendance and address absence.

Role of the Local Authority

- We communicate with the local authority if a pupil's attendance falls or we become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs. Where needed, we will work with the local authority to review and amend the EHCP to incorporate the required attendance support.

- Parents & carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any attendance and/or punctuality problems, together. This is nearly always successful.

- If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, we will work with local authority attendance support team to put formal support in place which could include an attendance contract or an education supervision order.

- Support from the attendance support team and/or social care services will be intensified, in particular if absence is severe (below 50%).

- Not all aspects of legal intervention are open to independent schools: education supervision orders, prosecution and parenting orders may potentially be used, however penalty notices and attendance contracts may not be (paragraph 49 of 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance).

- If all of the above has not been successful and if other ways of trying to improve the pupil's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the local authority may look to prosecute families; this could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

Full details of the options to enforce attendance at school are available from the pupil's local authority.

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.

- 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.

Notices to Improve

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

- Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school. They will include:
    - Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
    - The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
    - Details of the support provided so far
    - Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
    - A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
    - A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
    - The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Appendix A: Actions Based on Attendance

Attendance	Probable actions
80 to 94%	■ Headteacher or trusted adults to have informal and supportive conversations. ■ Headteacher or lead therapists to offer further and specific support, based on the reasons around pupils' low attendance – for example, online therapy sessions. ■ Ensuring pupils have access to learning, including via work packs and/or online learning.
70 to 79%	■ All the actions outlined above. ■ Supportive letters sent home, written by staff and pupils (if appropriate). ■ Stage 1 letter to flag attendance as a cause for concern and the need to improve. ■ Safeguarding manager to carry out weekly meetings with families to identify any possible obstacles to attendance and to create a plan of action. This may include home visits, if appropriate.
Below 70%	■ All the actions outlined above. ■ Stage 2 letter issued, along with a referral to external agencies – EWS or early help, requesting additional support to help improve school attendance. ■ Weekly home visits carried out by safeguarding manager / therapy team in order to build relationships and encourage school attendance. ■ Any medical reasons will be taken into account, reasonable adjustments will be put in place depending on the pupil's individual circumstances – medical evidence will be obtained if appropriate.

Appendix B: Attendance Poster (Raising Awareness)

Your Attendance, Every Day Counts!					
0 Days absent	10 Days Absence	19 Days absence	29 Days Absence	38 Days Absence	47 Days Absence
190 Days in school	180 Days in school	171 Days in school	161 Days in school	152 Days in school	143 Days in school
100% Attendance	**96% Attendance**	**90% Attendance**	**85% Attendance**	**80% Attendance**	**75% Attendance**
You're making the most of every opportunity!	**Great progress - small gaps, easily caught up with support.**	**Almost a month of learning missed- we can help you stay on track.**	**Some skills may be missed - let's work together to support you.**	**Big gaps in learning and confidence – reconnecting can feel hard, but we're here to help.**	**Challenging to catch up alone – but you're not alone. We'll support you every step of the way.**

Why it matters:

- Every missed day can affect your **learning**, your **wellbeing**, and your sense of **belonging**.

- Regular attendance helps you build **confidence**, keep routines, and achieve your **goals**.

- If you're finding school hard or something is getting in the way of coming in – **you're not in trouble**. We want to **understand and support you**.

Our promise:

"If you're struggling to attend, we won't punish you. We'll sit beside you and figure it out, together."

Appendix C: Attendance Codes (DfE, 2025)

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