



**Better futures
for children &
young people.**

Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery (CDPS)

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Owner:	L Ellis	Director of Education (Primary)	
Reviewed by:	S Varcoe	Head of Compliance	
Date: September 2022 (version September 2026)			
Approved by:	Headteacher	Date:	September 2026
Next Review Date:		By September 2027	

1. Introduction

Our mission at The Charter Schools Educational Trust (the ‘Trust’) is to inspire and nurture children and young people in South London to excel, through education that transforms lives. A key factor in delivering this is a child’s attendance at school.

It is only by attending school regularly (96% or more of the time) and punctually, will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High achievement depends on good attendance. Children who miss out on lessons are at risk of falling behind and statistics show that children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
99-100%	Excellent	0-4	Less than 1
96-98%	Good	5-9	1-2
95%	Satisfactory	10-13	2-3
90-94%	Unsatisfactory	14-18	3-4
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19 Equivalent to 38 sessions	More than 4

The whole school community, including pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and Trustees and local Governors, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this. The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community are made aware of the policy and have access to it.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable
 - a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
 - b) to any special educational needs, they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age
 - a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year.
 - a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
 - b) if they attain that age on that day, or
 - c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

The Charter Schools Educational Trust and its schools are dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance and punctuality policy accordingly.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

- DfE (2026) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE 2024 Children Missing Education protocols for Local Authorities
- KCSIE 2026
- EYFS Framework

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust/school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

Commented [S1]: Best practice to include this

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The **Trust Board** is responsible for:

- Recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across the Trust's ethos and policies by reviewing attendance data and benchmarking against comparator schools, the LA, and national figures
- Ensuring that there is effective practice on attendance management and improvement across its schools, for example ensuring all relevant staff receive training appropriate to their role
- Considering the appointment of a governor or trustee with a specific focus on attendance.

3.2. The **local governing board (LGB)** has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Working with the school leaders to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Trust's Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

3.3 The **headteacher** is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to take the strategic lead on attendance.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

3.4 All staff at Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

- Providing an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

3.5 A designated member of the school's Senior Leadership Team will be identified as the 'attendance lead' and will be responsible for:

- setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, ensuring these are followed by all staff.
- Maintaining a strong grasp of attendance data to focus the school's collective efforts.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance strategies and processes.
- Liaising with the local authority's School Attendance Support Team, including attending Targeting Support Meetings (see Section [X]).

3.6 The Attendance Officer (Diane Keefe) will:

- be responsible for attendance on a day-to-day basis and will provide support to any pupils whose attendance drops below 96%.
- be responsible for liaising with the class teacher in relation to pupil absence
- Contacting parents/carers to discuss the pupil's attendance where concerns arise.
- Collating attendance data and providing this along with information to the Senior Leader with strategic responsibility for attendance on a regular basis.
- maintaining the electronic registers
- signing in pupils in who arrive late
- carrying out first day calling and, ensuring letters are sent to parents and carers, as directed by the Senior Leader with strategic responsibility for attendance.

Commented [S2]: Attendance officer is responsible on a day to day basis – this should be in someone's JD if its multi role person

3.7 Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Ensure their children attend the school regularly (at least 96% or more) and on time
- Support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- Parents are also be expected to:
 - notify school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless medical evidence is provided which defines the necessary length of absence.
 - Provide medical evidence when asked in order to authorise an absence due to illness.

Commented [S3]: At secondary this can be several people:
 -Receptionist signs in
 -Attendance officer does first day calling
 -Letters sent by AO or PAs on direction of YL and/or Key stage leader

3.8 Pupils are responsible for:

- Being aware of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality.
- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school on time.
- Ensuring they attend the school regularly (96% or more) and on time.
- Speak to their class teacher, a member of the pastoral team or the attendance officer if they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly or are causing them to arrive at school late.

4 Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupil's attendance and punctuality, including those of non-compulsory school age, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents/carers and pupils.

4.1 Class Registers

Class registers are recorded using BROMCOM. Registers are taken at the same time for all registered pupils in a given session. The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session.

4.2 Register retention

Registers are legal documents and are preserved for **6 years** from the date the data was entered. Where an amendment is made to a register entry, the record will show: the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made it. The attendance register, once taken, is only amended where the reason for absence could not be established at the time and it subsequently becomes necessary to correct the entry.

4.3 Morning registration

- CDPS will be open to all pupils from 8:30am in the morning. The school day starts at 8:45am and pupils will be expected to be in their classroom, ready to start the day by this time. The register will be taken at this time.
- Pupils who arrive after 5 minutes after this time will need to report to reception and sign in as late (L).
- The morning registers will close at 9am across the school, and any pupil who arrives after this time will be marked as unauthorised absence (U).
- We will conform to the time on the clock in the office to meet the times listed above.

4.4 Afternoon registration

- Registers must be submitted straight after lunch before afternoon lessons commence at 1pm for Nursery to Year 3 and at 2pm for Years 4 to 6.
- Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classrooms by this time
- The afternoon register will close at 1:05pm and 2:05pm (depending on the year group. See above), and any pupil is not present at this time will be marked as absent.

5 Categorising absence

5.1 Any pupil who is not present during registration will be marked as absent, unless authorised leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher or other designated staff.

Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 1 week, the absence will remain unauthorised.

5.2 Authorised Absence

Absences may be authorised by the Headteacher or other designated staff in the following circumstances:

- Leave has been granted by the headteacher in advance in exceptional circumstances and for a very limited period, (code C) *NB an application must be made in writing on the prescribed form (Appendix 2), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended circumstance wherever possible. Amendments have been made to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. From 1st September 2013 Term-time absence will NOT be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no blanket policy regarding leave under these circumstances, each case is looked at individually.*
- The pupil is performing in a play or filming or is employed abroad (code C1)
- The pupil, who is of compulsory school age and subject to a **temporary, time-limited** part-time timetable (see Section 10) (code C2). *(This code must **not be used** for pupils on an ongoing flexi-schooling arrangement as this is longer term)*
- The pupil has received a suspension or a permanent exclusion (code E)
- The school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend. (Code I)
- The pupil has a medical or dental appointment (code M) (although parents should endeavour to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send them to school beforehand)
- The absence occurs on a school day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs. (Code R). *NB this is usually set aside for well-recognised and published religious observance from one of the six major religions e.g. Eid, Orthodox Christmas. Other types of cultural observance will be considered on a case by case basis by the school. If the request is for more than one day, this will also be considered on a case by case basis. Day one is recorded as code R and subsequent days as code C. Parent/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.*
- The pupil is of no fixed abode, their parent is engaged in a trade which requires them to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, they have attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months (code T)
- Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities – these codes are:
 - Code B – off site educational activity e.g. taster days at other schools.
 - Code D – dual registered at another school e.g. PRU (for the days when the pupils is attending there)
 - Code J1 – Interview for employment or for another educational institution
 - Code K – Attending an education setting that has been arranged by the LA
 - Code P – Sporting event
 - Code S – Study Leave (yr 11 and 13 only) This does not extend to internal examinations such as mock exams, for which study leave will not be granted.
 - Code V – school visit including overnight
 - Code W – work experience
- Flexi - schooling - where the pupil is registered and regularly educated partly at home on a standing basis rather than as a temporary measure. Flexi-schooling absences should be recorded using the school's agreed best-fit code — schools should seek LA/Trust advice, as there is no single dedicated code for this (contact Lucy Ellis lellis@tcset.org.uk). Flexi schooling is by agreement from the headteacher, schools are not obliged to offer it

Notes about certain codes

Code B - Cannot be used if the educational activity is remote and is not overseen by a tutor (so just an online platform). The offsite has to be a physical teacher (either online or in person) the tutor has to be overseeing the delivery of the lesson for it to be code B

Code K - e.g. the pupils have a medical need which means they aren't at your school but aren't at any other school either, e.g. a library. This could be because a CAMHS practitioner has recommended that they are out of school for a period of time (a couple of weeks) but they are still linked to your school. Another example could be if the school can't meet the child's needs but is named in the EHCP, and the LA have put in another provision until another, more suitable, school is named.

5.3 Absence related to COVID 19 (Last guidance issued October 2023)

If a pupil has a **confirmed** case of COVID (through the use of a test (LFT or PCR)), then they should stay at home for at least 3 days. This starts the day after they did the test. After the three days has finished, if they are well and do not have a temperature then they can return to school even if tests are still showing positive.

There is no requirement for any person to self-isolate because they have COVID or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID

5.4 Unauthorised absence

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of unauthorised absence would be:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house
- Staying at home to care for a sick or disabled parent / carer / family member.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Truancy before or during the school day
- The parent / carer has medical appointment
- Siblings are unwell so the child is not coming in
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Unauthorised absence codes are:

Code U - late after the registers close (as detailed above)

Code O - the absence is not authorised by the school, even though a reason may have been given for the absence. Only the school can authorise. *NB - The 2026 DfE guidance on attendance states that schools will not grant a leave of absence for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours*

Code G - a holiday during term time or leave of absence that has not been authorised.

5.5 Administrative codes (do not count as pupil absence)

The following codes are used when the pupil is unable to attend school, largely due to circumstances beyond their control

Code Q - used where a pupil cannot attend because the local authority has failed to provide, or is in the process of arranging transport it is responsible for arranging, or because the pupil is required to attend a school beyond reasonable walking distance without qualifying transport support. This remains an exceptional, catch-all code and should not be used routinely.

Code X - absent but not of compulsory school age (Nursery or 6th form)

Code Y1 - Absence due to transport normally provided not being available

Code Y2 - Unable to attend due to widespread travel disruption

Code Y3 - Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Code Y4 - Unable to attend due to the WHOLE school being closed

Code Y5 - Unable to attend due to being in criminal justice detention

Code Y6 – Absent in accordance with public health guidance e.g. a measles case where Public Health guidance requires exclusion) — but explicitly **not** a child who feels well enough to attend but is still infectious with something like chickenpox (that stays under Code I, illness).
Code Y7 – Unable to attend due to other unavoidable cause (which must be detailed)
Code Z – Pupil not on register yet e.g. prospective pupil

Ground G – **(in conjunction with the local authority only)** for deleting a pupil’s name from the registers under, the “reasonable distance” test.

5.6 Persistent absence/severe absence

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more school sessions across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level has been proven to do considerable damage to any child’s education and we need parent’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Severe absence is when a pupil is missing 50% or more school sessions across the school year. Where this is unauthorised absence (i.e. not due to medical conditions which the school is aware of) this is breaking the law and is extremely serious.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Commented [S4]: We have had children with medical conditions miss >50% of school

6 Collection and analysis of data

The school uses BROMCOM to keep an electronic record of attendance.

The Senior Leader with strategic attendance responsibility will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, to parents and the Local governing body as appropriate. The data will inform the school’s future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by individual child and reasons for absence. Schools decide locally, which cohorts of pupils are included in their data analysis based on their context and school population e.g. gender, SEND, those known to social care, young carers, PPG) or have historically had, lower attendance than their peers. This supports the school in meeting its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Attendance data is benchmarked against local, regional and national figures and the performance of similar schools, using tools including the DfE’s **View Your Education Data** service, to identify where intervention and support is most needed.

As of 19th August 2024, schools must share daily attendance data with the DfE. All TCSET schools do this through their MIS.

7 Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance / punctuality

7.1 Profile & Rewards

Each pupil is encouraged to take part in the Greatness Award. The Greatness Award is a scheme similar to the Duke of Edinburgh Award where children learn new skills and knowledge outside of the classroom. The expectation is that every child will have a hobby and interest which makes school a

unique and interesting place for them to attend. Each term, they evidence what they have done through our values of Academic Excellence, Creativity and Social Intelligence. Each opportunity presented to the child is free and available on a termly basis. E.g we run 54 free after school clubs.

7.2 School Strategies to tackle absence

The Headteacher is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery intervene in non-attendance at an early stage. The Attendance Officer meets with the Senior Leader with strategic attendance responsibility regularly to review any pupils where attendance concerns exist and to monitor the impacts of any actions taken.

Where there is an emerging pattern for a pupil's absence or if staff are particularly concerned, (including those pupils who are of non compulsory school age), the school will contact the parents (read also carers) to discuss reasons for the absences with them. Plans should be put in place with the family and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences may be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. If the pattern persists a Penalty Notice referral may be issued where no improvement is seen.

Our approach to tackling unacceptable levels of absence is bespoke and takes into account the individual circumstances of the family. We recognise that absence may be a symptom of other challenges, and we aim to help address those challenges.

The school engages with the Local Authority's **School Attendance Support Team** through regular **Targeting Support Meetings**, where attendance data and cases requiring joint action are discussed. Meeting frequency is agreed with the local authority (typically termly where attendance is below the national or comparator average, and at least annually otherwise), in addition to routine liaison with the school's named point of contact in the local authority.

7.2a Working with cross-border pupils – which local authority is responsible for different types of support

Early help of supporting families' plan

Assessing and putting in place any early help or multi-agency family support plan in cases where local authority action is needed sits with the Home LA. Where schools are completing the single assessment or acting as the lead practitioner (but with local authority involvement) the school will need to work together with the Home LA.

Children's Social Care

In line with usual processes, any assessment or plan under sections 17 or 47 of the Children Act 1989 sits with the Home LA.

For looked-after children, local authorities have a statutory duty to promote the educational attainment of all children in their care, wherever they live or are educated. When a looked-after child is placed out of area, the Virtual School Head of the Home LA should work with Virtual School Heads from other local authorities to support their attendance and additional educational support needs.

Alternative Provision

Responsibility for arranging any alternative provision a pupil requires under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 sits with the Home LA.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

SEN support: No specific provisions apply, so the expectations of each local authority are the same as for a pupil who is not in receipt of SEN support.

Education, health and care plans (EHCP): Where a pupil has an EHCP, the School LA should alert the local authority which maintains the EHCP about any significant issues emerging over attendance of which it becomes aware, so that the local authority can consider whether needs continue to be adequately supported through the existing plan.

7.3 First-day calling

This is a safeguarding requirement. If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made to establish the whereabouts of the child and that they are safe. School staff will make every effort to establish contact with the parent and speak to them to confirm where the child is.

If we are unable to establish contact with the parents, we will contact the emergency numbers provided.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will routinely share a list of vulnerable children with the school administration team, and the admin team will notify the DSL immediately if a child on that list is not in school, on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day.

If the pupil has a social worker or a youth offending team worker, they will also be informed if there are unexplained absences from school.

7.4 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8:45am every day. For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building.

Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the School Office on arrival (with their parent/carer to sign in and provide an explanation for the late arrival. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.

Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked as absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.

For the same reason it is important that pupils who need to leave the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or return to school later in the day after a legitimate reason, sign in and out and provide a reason for leaving early. On his/her subsequent return to school, they must sign in again to say that they have returned.

8. Tackling excessive sickness absence (Code I and code M)

In aiming to maintain an average attendance of at least 96% across an academic year, a child cannot miss more than 5 days in total. We use this benchmark to consider carefully how we define excessive sickness absence.

We recognise that some of our pupils have medical conditions or disabilities that necessitate them having more days than this. Where a pupil has no known diagnosis and misses many days due to sickness absence over a period of time, the parents/carers will be warned that in order to authorise any further absence due to illness, medical evidence will be required, even if it is for half a day.

We would always give plenty of warning, opportunities for discussion and implement support from other agencies where we can for families, before that decision is taken. This may include a referral to early help (from the local authority) who have access to health professionals who can advise and support. This requirement will never be a surprise or brought in too quickly.

We view medical evidence as something that does not place additional pressures on health professionals, something that is easily obtainable:

- Appointment slip
- Prescription issued
- Email /text message confirming appointment
- Mobile phone record to show the number you called and the duration of the call and the name of the person that you spoke to

8b Absence due to mental health

We are mindful of pupils who are absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and will always work with families and other services to provide additional support. The aim of the support is to ensure regular attendance at school. Where remote education is used to support a pupil's return to school (for example, as part of an EBSA reintegration plan), this will only be as a last resort, for a limited period, and always as part of a clear plan to reintegrate the pupil into full-time attendance in school. Pupils on remote provision should still be **coded as absent**, and schools should **document adjustments considered and declined**

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is something that we take seriously and work with external agencies and the local authority to support pupils and families.

For reference and support:

[Anna Freud Centre](#)

[CAMHS](#) – what parents/pupils can be signposted to whilst they wait for an appointment

8c. Young carers: Some pupils have caring responsibilities at home which can be a barrier to regular attendance. Young carers are recorded in the school census. Where a pupil's caring role may be contributing to absence, the school will work in partnership with the pupil and their parents/carers to understand the barriers and put appropriate support in place, including working with the local authority to facilitate a young carer's needs assessment (under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989) where this is requested or appropriate.

9. Reporting long term sickness absence to the LA

In the guidance '[Children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)' (Dec 2023), page 7 states 'as soon as it is clear that a child will be away from school for 15 days or more because of their health needs, the local authority should arrange suitable alternative provision. The 15 days may be consecutive or over the course of a school year'.

Therefore where a pupil has a long term health condition (either physical or mental) that will likely result in missing 15 or more school days in any academic year, we will give the LA the name and address of that pupil.

Southwark – refer to the [Alternative Provision Team](#)

Lambeth - refer to inclusion@lambeth.gov.uk

10. Part time timetables

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need to be a temporary part-time timetable to meet individual needs - for example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school. In these circumstances we will: (please also see section

- Agree the timetable with the parents (the pupil normally lives with).
- Work with all agencies to support the pupil back to full time education as quickly as possible.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil (where appropriate) and their parents
- Have a proposed end date, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision.

11. Term-time absence due to exceptional circumstances (code C, C1, P, J1)

11.1 The Headteacher will consider each application individually. An application must be made in writing on the prescribed form (**Appendix 2**), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended circumstance wherever possible. Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery will only consider authorising leave of absence for the following: -

- Serious and sudden illness of a close relative and you must leave in an emergency (see 9.2)
- A one off never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time e.g. wedding or funeral
- Any religious observance (one day only under code R)
- A significant educational opportunity afforded **to the child** by a national organisation e.g. ballet, exams, filming for a TV commercial, taking part in a West End production
- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any **leave** in the near future that coincides with **school** holidays.

11.2 What do we mean by serious and sudden?

- Serious means an accident, injury, illness, disease, or physical or mental condition that: poses imminent danger of death; requires inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility.
- Examples of this are: road traffic accident, diagnosis of a life limiting illness, deterioration of a life limiting illness.
- Sudden means it has happened and it wasn't expected.
- For time away from education it has to be the type of situation for where you receive communication that requires you to leave immediately to travel.
- We will require evidence of the seriousness of the situation, which you can bring back with you.

Statutory attendance enforcement

12a. Notices to improve (please refer to the LA Code of Conduct also)

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

The Notice to Improve is expected to include: (an example is in appendix three)

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period.
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

What sufficient improvement looks like can be decided on a case-by-case basis taking the individual family's circumstances into account, and it must be very clear to parents how you are defining 'improved' e.g. no more absences for the next 6 weeks.

If this benchmark is then not reached, a penalty notice can be issued.

12b. Attendance contracts

Where voluntary support has not been effective or engaged with, the school (or local authority) may offer an attendance contract to a parent. This is a formal, written agreement between the parent and the school and/or local authority to address irregular attendance. It is not legally binding and is not a punitive measure — it is intended to provide a structured, supportive alternative to prosecution. An attendance contract will always be explored before an Education Supervision Order or prosecution is considered. Parents cannot be compelled to enter into an attendance contract, and one cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.

The contract will set out: the requirements the parent is expected to meet; the support the school/local authority will provide; and the period the contract will run for (typically 3–12 months). It will be written in accessible language, with translation provided where necessary, and copies given to all parties.

12c. Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)

Where an attendance contract is not appropriate, or has not resulted in improved attendance, the local authority may apply to the Family Court for an Education Supervision Order. An ESO places the pupil under the supervision of a designated local authority officer, who will work with the family to secure regular attendance. Non-compliance with an ESO may lead to further legal intervention, including consideration of care proceedings in the most serious cases.

13. Issuing fixed penalty notices

The Charter Schools Educational Trust will have the option of issuing a fixed penalty notice when the following national thresholds have been met:

- A pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This 10 week period can cross over terms or over academic years
- The threshold can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence codes e.g. 4 sessions of unauthorised absence with 6 code U lates.
- A penalty notice can be considered before the 10-session threshold is met where there is evidence that a parent is deliberately structuring absence to avoid it (for example, repeated short absences timed around inset days or bank holidays).

NB: One session is either a morning or an afternoon – so 10 sessions is the same as 5 full school days.

- A fine is £80 but rises to £160 if not paid within 21 days. However, the second fine is automatically charged at £160. Fines can be issued to both parents
- Only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three year rolling period, if the criteria is reached for a penalty notice for a third time – then prosecution will be considered.
- It is important to note that any referral for penalty notices where the absence is persistent must be supported by evidence of what the school has done to try and support the family.

- Penalty notices for holidays, don't require the same level of evidence, but you must demonstrate that you have warned the parents that this will happen.
- There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice. Details of how these are used are in the Local Authority Code of Conduct

12d. Parenting orders

Where a prosecution results in a conviction, the court may impose a Parenting Order requiring a parent to attend guidance/counselling sessions and comply with specified requirements aimed at improving the pupil's attendance. The court will specify a responsible officer to oversee compliance.

14. Children who are absent from education, including children missing education and the CME Service from the local authority (please also see [Children Missing education statutory guidance for LA and schools Sept 2025](#))

Children who are absent from education

It is important education settings response to persistently absent children and children missing education supports identifying potential abuse, and in the case of absent children, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care or have a social worker, where **being absent from education** may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. Repeatedly going missing from home or education may be a warning sign of a range of significant safeguarding concerns and early intervention is key to identifying any underlying risk.

Children at particular risk of becoming missing from education

The following groups are at particular risk and require additional vigilance:

- **Pupils at risk of harm or neglect** – local child protection procedures will be followed; if a child is in immediate danger, a referral will be made immediately to children's social care and the police if appropriate.
- **Pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families** – if a pupil leaves without naming their next destination school, the school will contact the LA and, where needed, the LA's Traveller Education Support Service.
- **Children of service personnel** – the school will contact the Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service for advice to ensure continuity of education.
- **Missing children and runaways** – should the school suspect a child has gone missing or run away, an appropriate staff member will consult DfE guidance on missing children and, where there is immediate risk, the police.
- **Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System** – where a pupil is registered at the school prior to custody, the school will keep the place open for their return.
- **Children who cease to attend school for unknown reasons** – the LA will investigate where the reason for non-attendance is not known.
- **Children of migrant families** – the school will remain vigilant to the increased risk of a child becoming CME where a family is newly arrived and not yet settled at a fixed address, or may not yet be known to the LA.

‘Children Missing Education’ refers to all children who are of compulsory school age (on or after their 5th birthday), who are not on a school/college roll, or being educated otherwise (for example privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time.

Our schools will:

- maintain accurate admission registers and take a proactive approach to monitoring pupils’ attendance in line with chapter 2 of Working together to improve school attendance
- Carry out initial proactive work to locate a child at risk of becoming a CME, before working jointly with the local authority to conduct further reasonable enquiries to identify their whereabouts – schools will also continue to play their role in conducting joint reasonable enquiries even after they have submitted a CME referral to the local authority
- work collaboratively with the local authority to return CME in their local area into education – this might also involve working with a child’s home local authority, if different
- offer appropriate support to successfully integrate children into their school, including having efficient decision making processes for admissions in place to prevent delays
- carefully follow guidance on removing or adding pupils’ names from or to the admission register, which in some specific cases will involve joint actions to be undertaken between the school and local authority before this decision can be made
- Not remove a child’s name from the school’s admissions register without following the local authority protocols Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Each LA has their own procedures which we follow

- Children missing from education - Southwark Council
- Lambeth CME protocols – please see Appendix 4 of this policy for the form and the guidance

Appendix 1 - Attendance Interventions

Stage One-Informal letter from the Attendance Officer

Stage Two-Formal letter from the school.

Stage Three-Support meeting with Attendance Officer and SLT responsible for early help. Action plan agreed.

Stage Four-Meeting with the Headteacher. Possible referral to local authority.

Appendix 2: Form to request leave from school in exceptional circumstances

*To be completed and returned to the school prior to the leave, along with a letter detailing the "exceptional circumstance for which the leave of absence is required.

Parent/Guardian Name and Address		Guidance
		Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school. As from 1 st September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended Regulation 7 to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advance application has been made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. <u>If your child is absent from school 'on holiday' without authorisation you are risking a fixed penalty notice of £80 being issued.</u>
How to use this form		
- Use for all absences other than sickness. Return form to school in <u>advance</u> of requested absence otherwise the absence will automatically be unauthorised. - Use a separate form for each child and each absence.		Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress. There is <u>no</u> entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time, however, you may apply to the school for leave of absence if you believe there are exceptional circumstances.
Name of child:		Class:
Is this the first request for absence this academic year?		YES / NO
Dates of absence requested: The 1 st day of absence from school is..... I will return to school on..... At 8:45am		No. of school days requested:
Which exceptional reason does your request fulfil? (please tick) • Serious AND sudden illness of a close relative and you must leave in an emergency • A one-off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time, e.g. wedding/funeral. • Any religious observance • A significant educational opportunity afforded to the child by a national organisation e.g. ballet exams, filming for a TV	Please explain in more detail.	

commercial, taking part in a West End production • If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays	
Contact details whilst abroad/absent from school If your child is being taken out of school during term time and the details of their location is not provided, this could turn into a serious safeguarding issue. When a child is absent or missing from school, they could be at risk of harm. The school has a duty to keep children safe and this includes knowing where they are. If the Parent/Carer fails to provide the required information, then the school may make a referral to the police or the Local Authority.	
Address whilst away:	
Telephone number whilst away:	
Email address whilst away:	
Please attach proof of where you will be whilst away	
I make application for my child to have authorised absence from school. I understand that if this is not agreed then any subsequent absence will be treated as unauthorised and this could lead to a penalty notice or a summons to court for irregular school attendance.	
I have read and understood the guidance above.	
Parent 1*: Title: _____ Full Name: _____ Tel: _____ Relationship to child: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____ Parent 2*: Title: _____ Full Name: _____ Tel: _____ Relationship to child: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____	
*This is defined as any adult with legal parental responsibility for a child.	
School to complete	
• Child's current attendance • How many days' holiday already taken this academic year? • Is the Education Welfare Officer working with the family? • Is Children's Services supporting the family? • Is the request for leave during the exam period? • Has the school received proof of where the child is stay during absence? • Does the request fit the exceptional criteria? • Has a written response been sent to all parents/carers? • Penalty notice to be issued?	
This request for term time leave is:	Authorised / Unauthorised.
Reason for decision:	

Signed: _____ Headteacher Date: _____

Please attach the letter that you sent to the parents along with any other information from the parent regarding the original request.

Appendix 3: Notice to Improve Template

School Attendance Notice to Improve

(Please read this letter carefully)

[Address Starts Here]

Date

Dear XXXXXX

School attendance is hugely important. For your child to gain the full benefit from their education, for their learning, wellbeing, and wider development, they need to attend on time, every day possible.

If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the child's parent may be guilty of an offence under s.444 Education Act 1996.

You, «FORENAME» «SURNAME» are a parent/carer of «Students_Name», (called in this notice "the pupil") who is a registered pupil at «School_Name».

The school have offered support to you and your family to try and help improve «Students_Name»'s attendance, including:

1. **Telephone calls.** The school contacted you when your child was absent to understand why your child was absent and to offer their support with any issues your child may be having.
2. **An Attendance Overview Letter.** The school wrote to you, letting you know about «Students_Name»'s attendance, the impact of their continued absence, and inviting you to contact the school to discuss the situation further.
3. **An Attendance Support Meeting Invite.** The school invited you to a meeting to discuss your child's unauthorised absences and to offer support to ensure that their attendance improved. You were notified of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and you did not effectively engage with the support offered.

Unfortunately, despite the support that was offered to your family, attendance remains a cause for concern. Between «WARNING_START_DATE» and «WARNING_END_DATE» the pupil failed to attend regularly at «School_Name», which resulted in 10 sessions (half days) or more of unauthorised absences being recorded. Please see the attached registration certificate for details.

You now have thirty school days (6 weeks) in which to improve your child's attendance. During this time your child must show significant improvements in attendance and avoid having any unauthorised absences from school during this period. Should we not see sufficient improvement and further unauthorised absences take place during this period, a penalty notice may be issued.

NB -If unauthorised absences are recorded, a penalty notice may be issued before the end of this improvement period.

More information regarding this notice can be found on XXXX Lovcal Authority website School Attendance page [School Attendance – Southwark Council](#) / School Attendance – Lambeth Council. If you wish to discuss this notice, or discuss what further support is available within school, please contact:

Contact Name: Preferred school contact name
Telephone: contact number
Email: email address for preferred school contact

Yours sincerely

Signature

Name

Headteacher

«School Name».

Appendix 4: CME REFERRAL CHECKLIST FOR LAMBETH SCHOOLS

Before you refer any students on your roll as CME to the Lambeth Local Authority
Have you done the following things?

- Has the family been contacted within 10 days of non-attendance? Have you written to the family?
- Have you called the family on their contact numbers?
- Has a home visit been made to the last known address?
- If the child has extended family have you contacted any possible aunts, uncles, grandparents to establish if they know where the child is.
- If the child has moved away, have you tried to establish where they have moved to?
- Have you requested forwarding addresses/ contact numbers/ email addresses for the family
- If the child has moved overseas have you requested the new address overseas and details of a new school

If you have carried out all the above, after 10 days of absence you must refer to the Education Welfare Officer for further investigation. Once the Education Welfare Officer has attempted to visit the family, write to the family and phone.

At 20 days of absence, in order to off roll the child, you must be able to provide evidence of having followed the DfE off rolling regulations:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1751/regulation/8/made>

Please email CME referrals to the Inclusion Team's CME officer at Inclusion@lambeth.gov.uk
Please fill out all of the sections of this form as completely as possible

SCHOOL ROLL AMENDMENT NOTIFICATION

Referring school			
Removal from roll	Yes/No	Addition to roll	Yes/No
Removal date		Addition date	
Grounds upon which the pupil is to be deleted (if applicable) If the pupil is a child missing education please provide details/ evidence of home visits made/ phone calls and letters to the family in order to contact and locate the pupil.			
New school (If applicable)		Start date	
Previous school (If applicable)		End date	

Pupil Details					
UPN:					
Surname			Forename(s)		
Date of birth		Gender		Ethnicity	
Home address					
Phone Numbers					

Parent/Carer Details			
Parent/carers name		Parent/carers name	
Relationship to child		Relationship to child	

New Parent/Carer Details (if applicable)			
Parent/carers name		Parent/carers name	
Relationship to child		Relationship to child	
(Where has the pupil gone? Please provide details as accurately as possible.) New Address (If applicable)			
Resident from			

Completed forms should be relayed to:
 CME Officer **and** the School Admissions Team
Email: inclusion@lambeth.gov.uk **and** schooladmissions@lambeth.gov.uk
Phone: Inclusion: 020 7926 6928
 Admissions: 020 7926 9503

