PensMeadowSchool

Living, Growing, Learning

# Attendance Policy

SEPTEMBER 2026

NEXT REVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 2027

Staff Responsible: Michal Pawlowicz

**Disclaimer**

Pens Meadow School makes every effort to ensure that the information in this document is accurate and up-to-date. If errors are brought to our attention, we will correct them as soon as practicable.

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## 1. Introduction

Good attendance helps pupils in our school community to maximise their learning, wellbeing and wider life chances. At Pens Meadow School, we recognise that attendance is an essential foundation for positive outcomes and an important protective factor for vulnerable pupils. We are committed to enabling every pupil to access the educational opportunities available to them. The school shares its daily attendance data with the Department for Education (DfE).

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance officer is **Mr Michal Pawlowicz, Deputy Headteacher**, and can be contacted via mpawlowicz@pens-meadow.dudley.sch.uk. Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

## 2. Legal Framework

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 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2026) 'Working together to improve school attendance' (statutory guidance, July 2026)
- DfE (2026) 'Keeping children safe in education 2026'
- DfE (2025) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2026) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Sharing daily pupil attendance data'
-

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour for Life and Learning Policy
- SEND Policy
- Administration of Medication Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

*The governing board 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.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- 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 school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

*The headteacher is responsible for:*

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role.
- 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.

*Staff 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.

*The attendance officer is responsible for:*

- Acting as the school's Senior Attendance Champion and leading the overall strategic approach to attendance.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance, evaluating the impact of interventions and reporting regularly to the headteacher and governing board.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

*Pupils are responsible for:*

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

*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.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Ensuring pupils are on time at school
- Proactively engaging with any attendance support offered by the school and the LA.
- Notifying the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent and advising when it is expected that their child will return.
- Requesting leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances, and in advance.
- Booking any medical appointments around school where possible.
- Following any family-based support implemented by the school to improve attendance.

## 4. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

*Absence:*

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending the registered school for any reason

*Authorised absence:*

- Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad

- Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
- Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
- Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
- Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to part-time timetable
- Code D: Dual registered at another school
- Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
- Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes
- Code R: Religious observance
- Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
- Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded

*Unauthorised absence:*

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- 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
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

*Persistent absence (PA):*

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

*Severe absence:*

- Missing 50 percent or more of possible school sessions for any reason

*Missing education*

- Not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school

## 5. Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

At Pens Meadow School the school day times depend on the site, which the pupil attends:

| | Pre 16 | Post 16 |
|---|---|---|
| **Arrival** | 8:45AM – 9:00AM | 9:00AM – 9:15AM |
| **Registration closes** | 9:15AM | 9:30AM |
| **Afternoon registration** | 1:00PM – 1:15PM | 1:00PM – 1:15PM |
| **Registration closes** | 1:30PM | 1:30PM |
| **End of the school day** | 3:00PM | 3:15PM |

When the school day starts at respective sites, pupils will go to their classroom, ready to begin learning without delay. Pupils will have a morning break, which will last for a maximum of 20 minutes, and a lunch break at 12:00PM, which will last until 1:00PM – pupils will be expected to have returned from each break and be ready to recommence learning at the stated times.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

For each site and session, the register will be taken at the published time for all pupils, including pupils on temporary part-time timetables. Individual transport arrival times do not alter the statutory session or registration time.

- The morning register will be taken at the published start of the morning session, at the same time for all registered pupils at the relevant site. Pupils arriving after the session begins but before the register closes will receive code L (late before the register closes).
- Pupils will receive a mark of unauthorised absence (U) if they do not attend school before the registration closes.
- The afternoon register will be taken once during the afternoon session, at the same time for all registered pupils at the relevant site. Pupils arriving after the afternoon session begins but before the register closes will receive code L.
- The afternoon register will close at 1:30PM. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present

Where possible, pupils will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff.

Punctuality of pupils is monitored on a termly basis. Parents of pupils, who are regularly late will receive a letter of improvement. Parents of pupils with improved punctuality will receive an appreciation letter. Continuous lateness with result in a meeting being organised with parents, SLT member of staff and Family Outreach Team worker.

## 6. Absence Procedure

Parents will be required to contact the school office via school email or telephone after 8:00AM and no later than 8:30AM on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

Parents must provide a reason for every absence. Where illness is reported, the school will not routinely request medical evidence. Evidence may be requested only where the school needs clarification to code the absence accurately or understand what support is required, and the request will be reasonable and proportionate.

Where a pupil is persistently or severely absent, or at risk of becoming so, the school will listen to the pupil and family, identify barriers, agree an individual support plan and involve the local authority and

relevant partners where needed. Statutory attendance returns will be made to the local authority at the required frequency, including sickness returns where the school reasonably believes a compulsory-school-age pupil will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.

Attendance concerns will be addressed as soon as patterns emerge; support will not wait for a fixed percentage threshold. The response will be proportionate to the pupil's circumstances, with particular attention to persistent absence (10% or more sessions missed) and severe absence (50% or more sessions missed).

## 7. Attendance register

The school uses Arbor MIS to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members, teachers or higher-level teaching assistants, will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.

If the reason for the absence is known this will be recorded as a note for a particular day.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances
- S = Study leave
- C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 = Leave of absence for part-time pupils
- E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made
- J1 = Leave of absence for job or education interviews
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- K = Attending provision arranged by the LA
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Traveller absence

- Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements or due to the pupil having to attend a school that does not qualify for travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live.
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity, with supervision being physically provided by an appropriately trained and knowledgeable person
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- W = Attending work experience
- Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available
- Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption
- Y3 = Absent due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4 = Absent due to the school site being closed
- Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention
- Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law, despite the pupil being well enough to attend
- Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause, the nature of which must be documented by the school.
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Pupils who are absent from school but receive outreach provision will be recorded as absent using code C – for statutory school age, and X – non-statutory school age. When the sessions are being delivered this will be recorded with the code B – educated off-site. Outreach provision is authorised by the headteacher in exceptional circumstances with the agreement with SEN Team of the Dudley MBC.

Pupils who are absent from school but receive remote education will still be recorded as absent using the appropriate absence code. Remote education will be used only as a last resort, for a limited period, and as part of a plan to reintegrate the pupil into face-to-face education.

Code B will be used only where the pupil is attending a supervised approved educational activity off site and all statutory conditions for that code are met. Code C2 will be used only for a compulsory-school-age pupil on an exceptional, temporary part-time timetable agreed with the parent; it will not be used for flexi-schooling, dual registration or other full-time education delivered across settings.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Code N will be replaced with the correct code as soon as the reason is established and no later than five school days after the session; if no reason can be established, it will be amended to code O. The register will remain open for no longer than 30 minutes.

Every entry in the admission and attendance registers will be preserved for six years from the date the entry was made.

## 8. Authorising parental absence requests

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason.

### *Exceptional circumstances*

The school will grant leave of absence only in the specific circumstances permitted by regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Requests for leave due to exceptional circumstances must be made in advance, normally at least two weeks before the proposed absence, using the school's written form. Each request will be considered on its individual facts and merits; the school will not operate a blanket policy that automatically grants leave. Leave cannot be granted retrospectively.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

### *Illness and healthcare appointments*

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

### *Religious observance*

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

### *Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence*

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks

in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

## 9. SEND and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

The school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHCPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support their attendance the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan through TAC processes.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Family Assessment.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable on a short term basis.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

## 10. Leave during lunch times

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the headteacher – it is at the headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the headteacher. The headteacher will consider the request and will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns, as well as the timely return of their child at the end of lunch time and their child's behaviour when not on the school premises. The headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision within one week of the request.

Pupils will leave the school premises within 10 minutes of the start of lunch and will return no later than 5 minutes before the end of lunch.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office reception when taking them off the premises – the pupil will be signed out and back in using the lunch time register at the school office. A member of staff will be available at the school office before the pupil leaves the premises and upon their return to sign them back in. No pupil will leave the premises before the member of staff at the school office has given their permission.

The headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the headteacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the headteacher.

Permission will be updated on a termly basis – letters will be sent to parents at the beginning of each term to confirm whether they would like their request to continue.

## 11. Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 9:00AM at Ridge Hill site and 9:15AM at Pensnett Site and 1:00PM (both sites), where the teacher will record the attendance electronically. At Pens Meadow School pupils do not have permission to leave the site unaccompanied.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If further unauthorised absence occurs, the school will provide or facilitate appropriate support and consider formalising that support before enforcement, unless support is not appropriate in the circumstances.
- Where the national threshold is met, the school must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in the individual case. A penalty notice is not automatic; the school and local authority will consider the support offered, engagement, obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and whether another intervention is more suitable.

The DSL will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## 12. Missing children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher.
- All staff conducting the search will ensure they have a two-way radios switched to Channel 10.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - All classrooms
    - All toilets
    - Changing rooms
    - All specialist areas
    - Other school site
    - Sports Hall
    - Forest School
    - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the police and parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

## 13. Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by the SLT, will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.

- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
    - Sending letters to parents.
    - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
    - Using fixed penalty notices.
    - Creating attendance clinics.

The school will use attendance data, in line with the 'Monitoring and analysing absence' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- 100% Attendance certificates given out in an assembly on a monthly basis
- Pupils with 100% attendance for a particular month will have their photograph displayed
- Improved punctuality is rewarded by an appreciation letter to parents at the beginning of spring term and beginning of summer term

## 14. Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will endeavour that there are three, but ensure no less than two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues

within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

## 15. Persistent absences

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and Persistent Absence, such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils with a social worker and/or youth offending team worker
- Pupils with long-term physical or mental health conditions
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

At Pens Meadow School, we recognise there may be significant barriers for our pupils to secure outstanding attendance. We will use a range of supportive systems and processes to ensure each pupil attends the school to the maximum of their ability. These include:

- Discussions in weekly TAC meetings
- Family Outreach support
- Outreach sessions
- Pastoral support from the key worker

The school will prioritise pupils who are persistently absent, severely absent or at risk of reaching either threshold. It will work with the local authority and other partners to identify and address wider barriers, using an individual action plan and a regularly reviewed contact-priority list.

Where a pupil at risk of persistent or severe absence may also be at increased risk of harm, the school will work with relevant agencies, including children's social care, the Virtual School Head and/or the Youth Offending Team as applicable. Unexplained absence and continued severe absence may be safeguarding indicators and will be escalated in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

## 16. Legal intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after one term, the attendance officer will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Officer and Family Outreach Team if appropriate.
- Working with the local authority to put an attendance contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher will issue a notice to improve as a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is considered.

Where a pupil reaches the national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, the school will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. Each case will be considered individually to determine whether a penalty notice or another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

A fixed penalty notice will be issued in line with the LA's code of conduct and the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance.

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a particular pupil is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second notice to the same parent for the same pupil within three years is £160, payable within 28 days, with no reduced rate.

A penalty notice of £120 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 five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. This will be reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

Parents will only get up to two fines for the same child in a three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

Parents who are prosecuted and attend court because their child has not been attending school may be fined up to £2,500.

### *Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)*

Where interventions have not been successful, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. LAs will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward.

Once an ESO is secured, a supervisor from the local authority will decide any actions or requirements. These may include:

- Requiring the parents to attend support meetings.
- Requiring the parents to attend a parenting programme.
- Requiring the parents to access support services.
- Requiring an assessment by an educational psychologist.
- Review meetings involving all parties to be held every three months.

Failure to comply with an ESO may lead to prosecution and a fine, and the local authority will consider whether further action is required.

## 17. Monitoring and analysing absence

The attendance officer will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual year groups.

- Individual pupils.
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. LAC and pupils eligible for FSM.
- Pupils at risk of persistent absence.

The attendance officer will analyse data regularly, including half-termly, termly and across the full year, to identify emerging patterns and trends early. Analysis will compare current data with historic school data and appropriate comparator schools, local authority, regional and national data. It will include, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

The attendance officer will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The attendance officer will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will benchmark attendance against schools with comparable characteristics, as well as local, regional and national data. Comparisons will be interpreted in the context of Pens Meadow's specialist provision and pupil needs, used to identify priorities, and never used to lower expectations for individual pupils.

## 18. Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it

The governing board will provide dedicated and enhanced attendance training to the attendance officer and other staff with specific attendance functions in their role – this will include training regarding interpreting and analysing attendance data and supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and know how such concerns should be managed.

## 19. Deletions of names from the admission register

The school will ensure that it only deletes names from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance Regulations. A pupil's name will never be removed for any other reason and the school is aware that doing so could constitute off-rolling.

At Pens Meadow School, pupils are admitted following consultation from the SEN Team. Once the school is named in child's EHCP, it is only SEN Team's decision when the school can take a pupil off roll. It includes pupils that are suspended and permanently excluded.

Names will never be retrospectively deleted from the admission or attendance register – these registers will remain an accurate record of who is a registered pupil and their attendance at any given time. Pupils' attendance will be recorded up until the date that their name is deleted from the admission register.

## 20. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 90 percent – full details of the school's absence levels can be found on the school website.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the deputy headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2027.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.