

Whole School Attendance Policy

The UET Pathfinder School

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents about this policy when their children join our school and regularly thereafter through our school newsletter and other relevant opportunities.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Trust Board on at least an annual basis. This policy was ratified by the Trust Board in October 2023. It is due for review in September 2024.

Signature K Warren Director of Specialist Provision
Date: Sept. 2023

Signature A Jones Chair of Trustees Date: 2/10/23

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1. Introduction/Aim

At the Unity Pathfinder School we believe that regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We value the attendance of all pupils. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. There is a [wide range of evidence](#) as to the health and wellbeing benefits of school-age education. [Research](#) commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

Our attendance policy aims to give clear guidance to staff, parents, pupils, and governors to:

- Support pupil's achievement by establishing the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance;
- Provide a clear framework for monitoring and responding to pupil absences;
- Make parents / carers aware of their legal responsibilities and ensure their children have access to the education to which they are entitled.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant legislation.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority to ensure that parents are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

A “Parent” is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

3. Roles and Responsibilities

At the Unity Pathfinder School, we believe that improving school attendance is everyone’s business. That it is a shared responsibility by trustees, all school staff, parents, pupils, and the wider school community.

Role	Name	Contact details
Senior Attendance Lead	Jenna Keyes	jkeyes@unityeducationtrust.uk
Attendance Officer	Emma Cashman	ecashman@unityeducationtrust.uk
Trust Responsibility for Attendance	Locksley SIB Pathfinder Review Board	c/o 01362 696884

The Trustee Board of Unity Education Trust recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school’s ethos and policies. They take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded from harm.
- Identifying a member of the Trustee Board to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school’s attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the school engages and work effectively with the local authority Attendance Team and wider local partners and services to address barriers to school attendance.

- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.

The Senior Management Team at the Unity Pathfinder School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that the regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governors and on a half-termly basis to the lead governor for attendance.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance.

All staff at The Unity Pathfinder School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the regulations and other relevant legislation.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

The member of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support. The member of staff responsible for attendance will support good attendance, respond to concerns, and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data.
- Undertaking weekly attendance meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other relevant staff members.
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting excellent whole school attendance.
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance.
- Managing individual pupil casework files.
- Coordinating individual action plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of an Early Help Assessment and Plan and/ or the implementation of a parenting contract.
- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to if a child is absent from school without contact from parents.
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes.
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies.

The Unity Pathfinder School requests that parents:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school, and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and where they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them by school staff, parents and through the school timetable.
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or guardians to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen.
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

4. Categorising Absence and Attendance

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department for Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

4.1 Leave of Absence

Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance mean that Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to

have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. At the Unity Pathfinder School leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Head of School and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The Unity Pathfinder School will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Headteacher at least a month before the planned leave (see Appendix 2). If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Headteacher, and it will be marked as unauthorised. The Unity Pathfinder School will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should: -

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Head of School, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

4.2 Medical Appointments and absence due to illness

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. If a pupil must attend a medical

appointment during the school day, they must provide written/photographic evidence of the appointment. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised without the need for parents to supply medical evidence unnecessarily. In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has an emerging a pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent/carer. We will invite parents to attend school-led Attendance Support Panel as an appropriate early intervention strategy. As part of this support, we may seek consent from parents and the pupil as appropriate to make a referral to the 5-19 Healthy Child Programme team and/or to liaise with the child's healthcare professional.¹

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#) and Norfolk County Council policies via the [Medical Needs Service](#). We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

The Unity Pathfinder School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

4.4 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage in education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school. There are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. Schools and Local Authorities can make a big difference to their life chances through:

- Clear high expectation of all pupils, regardless of their background
- An inclusive culture that welcomes all communities
- Strong engagement from parents

¹ This is in accordance with the NSCP [Joint Protocol between Health Services & Schools in respect of the management of pupil absence from school when medical reasons are cited](#)

In line with The Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) the school will authorise the absence of a pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because:

- the parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place,
- that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
- if the child has attained the age of six, that he has made at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted

This provision applies *only* when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. In these circumstances, parents have a duty to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When a family is trading or otherwise conducting their business in or around Norfolk, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. The Unity Pathfinder School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended The Unity Pathfinder School in the last 18 months. Parents can register their children at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at The Unity Pathfinder School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

4.5 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Head of School. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

5. Our Procedures

5.1 Register Keeping and Recording

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.²

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

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

“Regular” attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- 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
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

5.2 Late Arrival at School

At the Unity Pathfinder School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at 9.00am. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this. The school register will be taken by 9.00am. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the main office/reception and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is before 9.15am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 9.30am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

5.3 Expected absence procedure for parents:

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then absence protocols will be instigated.




If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:



- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9.30am and where no reason for absence is known.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned
- If school cannot contact a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission
- These calls will be logged on SIMS and the individual communication log for the pupil

In certain circumstances the School may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement
- Refer to an external agency/ support service to offer support, guidance, and advice
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through [Children Missing Education procedures](#)
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.

5.4 Attendance Rewards & Interventions

	99 – 100%	Head of school/base lead and ACL	Possible actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm welcome • Attendance matter sessions • Praise texts, planner notes • Form tutor award for consistent weeks & 100% weeks • Amend attendance ladder each week and offer praise to movers • Request notes for unauthorised and update MIS • Talk with yellow to red to offer motivation and add notes to MIS • No engagement from parent considers use of legal intervention
	96 – 98%		
	92 – 95%	Head of School/Base Lead and ACL	Possible actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green letter when moving up the ladder • School, student, and family develop attendance plan • Weekly check ins with attendance officer • Home visits, Minibus pick up • At 93% at risk letter 2 • Monitor three weeks • Attendance support panel

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No engagement from parent considers use of legal intervention
	Under 90%	Head of School/Base Lead Emma Cashman	Possible Actions: Yellow/Orange letter when moving up the ladder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School, Student, and family develop PA/at risk of PA plan • Three weeks monitoring of plan • Home visits, Minibus pick up • Letter 3 intent to Fast Track • Involvement from LA and external agencies with consent from parents • School, Student, Family and • Attendance support panel • No engagement from parent considers use of legal intervention
	Under 50%	Emma Cashman	Possible actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal support such as parenting contracts will be in place • Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement • No engagement from parent considers use of legal intervention

At the Unity Pathfinder School we will investigate any pupils who are on track to be persistently absent (PA) and will not wait until attendance is below 90%.

“Persistent absenteeism” (PA) as:

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

“Severe absence” (SA) as:

- Missing 50% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

The Unity Pathfinder School collects and uses attendance data in the following ways:

- Weekly attendance report is produced and shared with Heads of School
- Overall week attendance report
- 100% Attendance report
- PA report
- Individual attendance report for pupils who are subject to attendance action plans and/or Fast Track proceedings.
- Termly herringbone audits
- Head of School monitoring

- Attendance stages

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Trust Board and Academy Review Committee (ARC) or School Improvement Board (SIB)

Data and reports are stored securely using the school information management system.

5.5 Support Systems

At the Unity Pathfinder School we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- First day calling and follow up
- Attendance stages protocol
- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Pupil voice activities
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Rewards such as certificates, prizes and trips
- School displays
- School newsletters
- Additional learning support/intervention
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Discussion with the attendance improvement officer
- Attendance panel meetings
- Referral to other supporting agencies
- Liaison with the County Attendance team

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support

offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Reward systems for good attendance are bespoke to the individual Pathfinder schools.

5.6 Persistent Absence and the use of legal interventions

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice for parentally condoned absence, consideration of an Education Supervision Order or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

5.7 Part-time timetables

All schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils and we are committed to every child's right to a suitable, full-time education offer. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, reduced timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs and only where it is safe to do so. We will not use a part-time timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. We will never put a part-time timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family

In line with Norfolk County Council [guidance](#), we will notify the Attendance Team of all part-time timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

6. Deletions from the Register

At the Unity Pathfinder School we will add and will only delete pupils from our school roll in line with the Pupil Registration Regulations. In most circumstances, we will know in advance about pupils leaving our school; this will be planned and discussed with the parent in advance of the pupil leaving. At the Unity Pathfinder School we will always work with families to gain information about the pupil's next school and/or address before the pupil leaves to reduce the risk of pupils becoming a child missing education through lack of shared information.

We follow Norfolk County Council's Child Missing Education procedures and will inform the Children Missing Education Team of all removals from our school roll no later than the date the child is removed in line with statutory responsibilities.

If a child is removed from roll to home educate, we can only de-register the child if we receive, in writing, the parent's intention to educate their child other than at school. The pupil will be de-registered on receipt of such a letter and Norfolk County Council will be informed of the removal from roll as outlined above. We will also inform Norfolk County Council's Services to Home Educators Team by completing a referral form.

The Unity Pathfinder School will follow Norfolk County Council's [Children Missing Education procedures](#) when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown, and the school will carry out joint enquiries with Norfolk County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

7. Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

- safeguarding including child protection
- medical needs
- admissions
- anti-bullying
- exclusion
- special educational needs
- behaviour

8. Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- [Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, \(September 2022\)](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE \(January 2015\)](#)
- [Children missing education, DfE \(September 2016\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education, DfE \(September 2022\)](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children, DfE \(July 2018\)](#)

9. Appendices

The following pages contain appendices relevant to this policy.

Appendix 1: Fixed penalty notice whole school warning letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Regular School Attendance and Parent's Legal Responsibilities

At the Unity Pathfinder School our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The important legal information

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil with at least **9 sessions (4.5 school days) of unauthorised absence within 6 school weeks** meets the criteria for legal intervention. The intervention could be in the form of a fixed penalty notice. Any pupil at the Unity Pathfinder School who meets that criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If issued, the penalty notice is £60 when paid within the 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. When penalty notices are issued, each parent will receive one per child. Therefore, each parent could receive multiple notices if they have more than one child who has been absent. Failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

There is no right of appeal against a fixed penalty notice.

In some circumstances, the Norfolk County Council Attendance Team may choose not to issue a penalty notice and may instead choose to prosecute a parent under the Education Act 1996 S444.

Requests for leave of absence

The DfE advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is

granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday during term time as they would not typically be seen as an exceptional circumstance.

If the school does not receive a request for leave, we will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 2: Example leave of absence request form

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME
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Important Information for Parents – please read before completing this form

We expect every pupil's attendance at school to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence. Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time. It is the Headteacher who decides whether a period of leave during term time will be authorised or not in line with legislation. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended in September 2013) make it clear that Headteachers cannot grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.

Every request for leave of absence during term time will be reviewed on an individual basis with due consideration of the circumstances but the Headteacher can only grant leave of absence if they consider exceptional circumstances apply. If the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Headteacher will determine the length of the absence to be authorised.

All requests for leave of absence should be made in advance and before any arrangements are confirmed or money committed. This form must be completed in full by the parent who intends to remove the pupil from school during term time. Failure to make a request for a leave of absence in advance will result in the absence taken being recorded as unauthorised.

I have read the above information and wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school for:

Child's Full Name:	Date of Birth:	Class:

Parent/Carer Details (please list all parents)

First Name:		Surname:	
Date of Birth:		Relationship to the child:	
Address and postcode:			
Telephone number:			
First Name:		Surname:	
Date of Birth:		Relationship to the child:	
Address and postcode:			
Telephone number:			

Siblings: Please provide the name of any siblings and the school that they attend

Child's Full Name:	Date of Birth:	School:

Details of the absence

Date of First day of absence:		Date of last day of absence:	
Total Number of days absent:		Expected date of return to school:	
Please provide the reason for this request including supporting evidence:			
<p>Please read the following statement and sign to indicate you understand the this:</p> <p>I would like to request the above absence. I understand that the school strongly advises against taking unnecessary absence during term time and accept that this may have a detrimental impact on my child/ren's progress. I understand that a penalty notice may be issued if this request is denied and my child is absent during this period. I understand that a fine will be payable per child, per parent of £120 if paid within 28 days but reduced to £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days.</p>			
Signed:		Full name:	Date:
Signed:		Full name:	Date:

To be completed by the school:			
Date request received by the school:		Total number of days requested:	
Child's Name:	Current % Attendance	Application Authorised or Declined?	
Reason for school's decision:			
Headteacher:			
Signed:		Date:	

Appendix 3: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

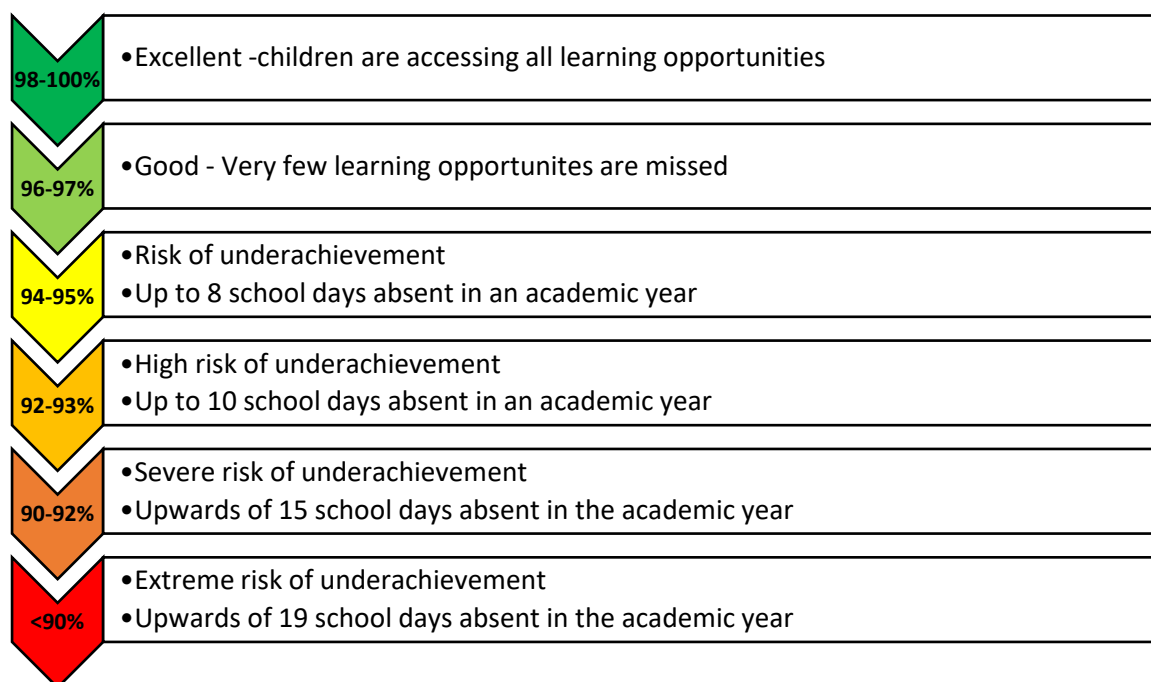
Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

We expect pupils to attend school for 100% of the academic year.

You can support your child to have excellent attendance by taking these steps:

- Ensure your child arrives on time for school every day and is ready to learn. Arriving after registration is recorded as an unauthorised absence. Pupils must be in school by 9.00am
- Avoid taking holidays during term time.
- If your child appears to be only slightly ill, send them in to school. We have staff who will contact you if their condition deteriorates.
- Book any medical appointments outside of school hours. If this is unavoidable, please book for as late in the afternoon as possible and inform the school of appointments in advance.
- Supply a copy of the appointment card or hospital letter if your child has an appointment during school hours.

If your child becomes reluctant to go to school or you need help, please contact the school immediately; we are more likely to be able to work together to solve any problems if we act early.



‘On the day’ absences: what should I do if my child is not ‘fit’ to go into school?

On each day your child is unfit to come to school, please report this absence using the main school phone number and selecting the “reporting an absence” option before 9.00am to let us know. In the message you must leave your child’s full name, year and tutor group and give

the specific reason for absence. The information you give will be recorded on our official register.

Leave of Absence

There may be exceptional circumstances where you need to request a leave of absence for your child. Please use our 'Leave of absence request' form to make these types of requests. The form should be submitted in advance of the leave of absence, via your child's school admin team. You will receive a letter in response, to advise if the request has been granted or declined.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive on time for school in the morning and for every lesson during the day. Your child is late to school if they are not present in their classroom ready for the register to be taken.

The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment. I hope we can count on your support in this matter.

Please contact Emma Cashman, ecashman@unityeducationtrust.uk, if you require any support with ensuring your child's regular school attendance.

Appendix 4: Attendance Stages Letters

Stage 1 Letter template:

Dear <<salutation>>

Re: Attendance for <<name>> <<%>>

At the Unity Compass School we want to provide the best learning opportunity for <<name>> and ensure that we provide <<him/her>> with opportunities to access and develop the skills and knowledge to take in <<his/her>> next education placement.

Attendance is a key part of this and research shows that pupils who attend school regularly are much more likely to make good progress and meet their potential. The target for attendance at the school is 96% and attendance below 90% is classed as persistent absence.

As you can see from the top of this letter <<name>> is below this target and as a result we have started an Attendance Action Plan to help <<name>> to raise this attendance figure. Enclosed is a copy of the attendance contract that you signed when <<name>> was admitted to the school.



We would be very happy to discuss this issue with you at your convenience and request that you make contact with Emma Cashman, our Attendance Officer by either calling 01603 508527/07706 323714 or emailing ecashman@unityeducationtrust.uk

Yours Sincerely

Mr S Plume

Executive Headteacher- Pathfinder

Stage 2 Letter Template

Dear <<salutation>>

<<forename>> <<surname>> <<DOB>>

<<current attendance percentage>>

The Unity Compass School attendance target: 96%

We are concerned to see that <<name>> currently has an attendance level which is significantly below the school target and is now classed as a persistent absentee. In order to support <<name>> to improve their attendance and to prevent formal action being taken it is important for us to investigate all possible reasons for absence.

Attached to this letter is a list of unexplained absences for which we have no reason given for <<name>> on the dates stated. It is essential that these absences are accounted for. Please indicate the reason for absence, sign and date the document and return it to us using the envelope provided and we will then amend our records accordingly.

As I am sure you are aware, it is important that <<forename>> maintains regular attendance as absences may affect their academic progress and future opportunities. As unauthorised absences can potentially lead to further action, as outlined in a previous letter we sent to you, it is important that in the first instance any absence is reported every day by leaving a message on the correct phone line for your child's school before 8.45am in the morning.

The school contact details for <<name>> are:

Due to <<name>> being below the 96% attendance target any absences for illness/appointments will now require evidence to be supplied in the form of appointment letters/cards etc.

We would like to invite you into school to discuss the attached record of your child's attendance and any other possible causes for non-attendance so we can agree a plan for improvement and ask that you contact Emma Cashman, Attendance Officer, on 01603



508527/07706 323714 or via email ecashman@unityeducationtrust.uk to make an appointment.

Thank you for your continued support.

Stage 3 Letter Template

Dear <<salutation>>

<<forename>> <<surname>> <<DOB>>

<<current attendance percentage>>

The Unity Compass School attendance target: 96%

I am writing to inform you that <<forename>> attendance has now dropped below 80% and they are missing an average of 1 day of school per week and we are very concerned that <<forename>> is missing a significant amount of learning. Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning as well as it being a legal requirement.

Given the high frequency of absences we can no longer authorise any future absences without the support of medical evidence. This could be a doctor's certificate stating that your child is unfit for school, a copy of your child's prescription or the medication that has been prescribed and has your child's name and the date on it.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on all parents to ensure that their children receive an efficient, full time education. Parents who are seen to fail in their duty can be brought before the Magistrates Court where a maximum £2,500 fine and/or up to a three month prison sentence can be imposed.

Obviously there may be unavoidable reasons for your child's absence. If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on <<forename>> attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact Emma Cashman, Attendance Officer, to discuss this matter. She can be contacted by phone on 01603 508527 or 07706 323714 or via email ecashman@unityeducationtrust.uk

We will continue to monitor <<forename>> attendance and look forward to seeing an improvement which will therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented.

Stage 4 Template Letter



Dear <<salutation>>

<<forename>> <<surname>> <<DOB>>

<<current attendance percentage>>

The Unity Compass School attendance target: 96%

We are concerned that <<forename>>'s school attendance has fallen further to <<attendance percentage>> and is well below what the school and the Local Education Authority expect from a pupil. <<forename>> is missing a significant part of learning and regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have a serious detrimental impact on the development and embedding of skills and understanding.

We are now unable to authorise any future absence without the support of medical evidence. This has to be a doctor's note stating that your child is unfit for school. The school will no longer authorise any absences with a copy of your child's prescription or medication that has been prescribed.

Should <<forename>>'s attendance remain irregular or drop further, the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty in all parents to ensure that their children receive an efficient, full time education. Parents who are seen to fail to their duty can be brought before the Magistrates Court where maximum £2,500 fine and/or up to a three month prison sentence can be imposed.

Obviously, there may be unavoidable reasons for your child's absence and we would like to invite you in to discuss these concerns so that the school can look to address any other concerns for <<forename>> to help <<him/her>> to improve <<his/her>> rate of attendance. Please contact Emma Cashman, Attendance Officer on 01603 508527 or 07706 323714 or via email ecashman@loc.unity-ed.uk to make an appointment.

We hope that you will work with us to improve <<name>>'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented.

Day 5 Template Letter

DATE

Five days of Continuous Absence (10 sessions)

Dear Parent/Carer

We have not seen your child for 5 school days and we have a safeguarding duty to ensure your child is safe, particularly during school hours.

We have a safeguarding procedure to follow for periods of continuous absence and sending you this Day 5 letter is part of this procedure. On or before the 10th day of continuous absence we will conduct an unannounced home visit, the aim being to see your child to check that they are safe. If we are not able to see them during this visit and we are not able to make contact with you and see them before Day 12, we will then request that the local police undertake a safeguarding welfare check at your home.

This letter is also to alert you that the criteria for referral has been met. We will be seeking to issue either (a) a fixed penalty notice OR (b) instigate fast track to attendance proceedings in order to reach an outcome of improved attendance.

(a) If a fixed penalty notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment within 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice of £60 per parent per child is issued; both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

(b) If Fast track to attendance proceedings are instigated it will require meeting with the Attendance Officer to set attendance targets, and a further meeting to review whether targets have been met. If targets are met, there will be no further action but we will monitor your child's attendance closely to ensure it remains improved. If targets are not met, we will refer to the Local Authority for prosecution. Parents who are seen to fail in their duty can be before the Magistrates Court where a maximum £2,500 fine and/or up to a three month prison sentence can be imposed.

If you wish to discuss your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to make contact with our Attendance Officer Mrs Emma Cashman by either calling 01603 508527 or 07706 323714 or emailing ecashman@unityeducationtrust.uk

We very much look forward to seeing your child in school and to working together to improve their attendance level.

Day 10 Template Letter

Name and address

date

Ten Days of Continuous Absence

Dear Parent/Carer

We have not seen your child for 10 school days.

We want your child to attend school and to make the most of the educational opportunities we offer but also have a child protection duty to ensure our students are safe and well, particularly during school hours. To this end we have a safeguarding procedure for periods of continuous absence.

You will have received a Day 5 letter as part of this safeguarding procedure. Now that we have reached the 10th day of continuous absence we will be conducting an unannounced home visit, the aim being to see your child to check that they are safe.

If we are not able to see them during this visit and we are not able to make contact with you to see them before Day 12, we will then request that the local police undertake a safeguarding welfare check at your home.

As indicated above what we want is for your child to attend school. We very much look forward to talking to you and to working together to improve their attendance

Assessment Letter Template

Five days of Continuous Absence (10 sessions)

Dear Parent/Carer

We have not seen your child for 5 school days and we have a safeguarding duty to ensure your child is safe, particularly during school hours.

We have a safeguarding procedure to follow for periods of continuous absence and sending you this Day 5 letter is part of this procedure. On or before the 10th day of continuous absence we will conduct an unannounced home visit, the aim being to see your child to check that they are safe. If we are not able to see them during this visit and we are not able to make contact with you and see them before Day 12, we will then request that the local police undertake a safeguarding welfare check at your home.

This letter is also to alert you that the criteria for referral has been met. We will be seeking to issue either (a) a fixed penalty notice OR (b) instigate fast track to attendance proceedings in order to reach an outcome of improved attendance.

(a) If a fixed penalty notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment within 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice of £60 per parent per child is issued; both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

(b) If Fast track to attendance proceedings are instigated it will require meeting with the Attendance Officer to set attendance targets, and a further meeting to review whether targets have been met. If targets are met, there will be no further action but we will monitor your child's attendance closely to ensure it remains improved. If targets are not met, we will refer to the Local Authority for prosecution. Parents who are seen to fail in their duty can be before the Magistrates Court where a maximum £2,500 fine and/or up to a three month prison sentence can be imposed.

If you wish to discuss your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to make contact with our Attendance Officer Mrs Emma Cashman on 01603 508527 or 07787 006199.

We very much look forward to seeing your child in school and to working together to improve their attendance level.

Yours faithfully