



# Waltham Toll Bar Academy

## Attendance Policy

<b>Date reviewed:</b>	<b>January 2024</b>	
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>LGB</b>	<b>June 2024</b>
<b>Next review due by:</b>	<b>January 2025</b>	

***For Office Use Only:***

Policy Version: 1.0

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## 1. Aims

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

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

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

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the Academy census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (DfE)

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure Academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy

### **3.2 The Principal**

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the Academy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr. Darren Wood, supported by attendance lead, Mrs. Kayley Taylor-Moore and these members of staff can be contacted via the Academy office.

### **3.4 The attendance lead**

The Academy attendance lead is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Principal
- Working with Education Welfare Officers (EWO) to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance lead is Mrs. Kayley Taylor-Moore, who can be contacted via the Academy office.

### **3.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Academy office promptly at the start of the day and after lunch.

### **3.6 Academy administration staff**

Academy administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the Academy system
- Make calls to chase absence on a daily basis.

The designated administration assistant for attendance is Mrs. A Woodliffe, who can be contacted via the Academy office.

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the Academy to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the Academy with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the Academy day

### **3.8 Students**

Students are expected to:

- Attend the Academy every day on time

## **4. Training Staff**

We recognise that early intervention can prevent continuous poor attendance. As such, members of staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils.

### **4.1. Teachers and support staff**

- Will receive training on the Secondary Attendance and Truancy Policy as part of their new starter induction.
- Will receive regular updates on attendance from the attendance team.

## **5. Recording attendance**

### **5.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each Academy day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the current DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

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

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

Students must arrive in the Academy by 8:40am on each day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:40am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken from 12.20pm.

## **5.2 Unplanned absence**

The child's parent/carer must notify the Academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the Academy admin staff (see also section 7).

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

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the Academy may ask the child's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the Academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## **5.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the Academy in advance of the appointment.

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

The child's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the Academy can authorise.

Parent/Carer must complete a Leave of Absence form giving at least two full weeks' notice.

The Academy will check legislation and guidance, including what constitutes 'special circumstances' and what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances', and reasons for authorising/not authorising Leave of Absence.

The Academy may telephone the parent/carer if insufficient information is submitted. The Principal may grant or deny the request.

The Academy will complete the 'Reasons for Refusal' on Leave of Absence form.

The Academy will return the form to the parent, files copies of all paperwork as evidence, copy retained for Education Welfare Service.

The Academy will monitor attendance/absence over the appropriate period.

The Academy will inform the Education Welfare Service of related unauthorised absence.

Academy and Education Welfare Service liaise to determine course of action which may include Referral, action towards Penalty Notice, Fast Track to Improving Attendance (up to and including Prosecution).

Please note: All requests for Leave of Absence must be submitted prior to a student's absence, as permission cannot be given retrospectively.

## **5.4 Lateness and punctuality**

### **What time will the gates be opened in the morning?**

- Staff will open the gates at approximately 8.20am to receive the students from the bus.
- All relevant staff should be outside as the gates are opened.

- Staff should greet the students at the gates.
- As the students come in, they must go out into the playground.

#### **What happens at 8.40am?**

- All students must enter the Academy and report to their designated tutor groups.
- Heads of Year and Assistant Head of Year will wait at the gates for any late arrivals
- Custodian will begin locking the gates, leaving the main gate open.

#### **What happens if a student arrives after 8.40am?**

- If a student is late, up until 9am the students enter via the side gate next to reception to sign in. After this, the gates are closed and the student must sign in at reception.
- It is important that there is a clear routine for any student who is late.
- Any student who is late will be recorded as such, and will receive a Standards Detention.

#### **When must registers be completed by teachers?**

- Registers should be taken in silence to ensure accuracy (and for good behaviour), and staff should complete a head count upon completion to check the number of students present in the room corresponds to the number marked present on the register.
- They must be taken and submitted in the first 5 minutes of each lesson.
- The register marks must reflect the students in the class at that time (obviously, this might, on occasions, include a student who has arrived but is out of the classroom for any reason when the register is taken).

#### **How should registers be marked for any student who is not present?**

- An 'N' mark must always be entered for any student who is not present when the class teacher takes the register. If any reason for absence has been provided, the mark will be edited by a member of the administration team.
- If a student arrives late, the teacher must edit the mark directly to reflect this.
- This includes any absence we have been notified about in advance.

#### **What procedures are in place for students who are persistently late?**

- If a child is persistently late 5 times within a Half-Term, the Head of Year will contact home for the child to discuss the child's lateness with a parent/carer, to ascertain why they have been late, to ensure parents/carers are aware of the persistent lateness, and to outline the importance of good punctuality. They will also escalate the consequence for the behaviour in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- If there is no improvement over an agreed period of time, the Head of year will consider next steps which may include involvement from the Education Welfare Officer, a formal letter, meeting with parents/carers with the EWO and/or the Assistant Principal; Early Help support.

### **5.5 Truancy**

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a student might be truanting.

If truancy is suspected, the attendance office will contact the student's parents, in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending the Academy.

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

- In the first instance, communication with parents/carers of the student, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the Academy will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally

condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at the Academy.

## 5.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Send a text message to the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the text is not answered, we will follow up with a phone call to give parents a further opportunity to respond. If the Academy cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the Academy may ask the Head of Year Team or the Education Welfare Officer to visit your home, or call the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the Academy will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer or reporting a student as missing in education to NELC.

## 5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The Academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels using SIMS In Touch. Parents can access up to date information regarding their child's attendance.

## 6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

The Academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 full weeks' notice before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the academy office. The Principal may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 5.2 and 5.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the Academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller student's travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the child is attending educational provision



## 6.2 Legal sanctions

The Academy or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent is fined £60, which rises to £120 each if you do not pay within 21 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

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

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

## 6.3 Absence related to a mental health issue

Academy staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions or perform mental health interventions, but they are expected to work to ensure regular attendance for every student by ensuring that the Academy is a calm, safe and supportive environment. The Academy has a duty of care to promote children's mental health and wellbeing, and embed this into the whole-school ethos and policies. As part of curriculum coverage, the Academy has a legal responsibility to teach students through a high quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate curriculum about respectful relationships; emotional wellbeing; mental health. This is in addition to supporting each individual's social and emotional development.

The Academy maintains high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of students who are anxious about attending the Academy and recognise that, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue. The Academy recognises that there can be attendance challenges where a student has an SEMH issue, particularly a severe issue for which the student is receiving clinical treatment. Parents should notify the Academy on the first day their child is unable to attend school, and any absences will be detailed on our system. Many students will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams, or variable moods. It is important to note that students are still expected to attend the Academy regularly. Any associated anxieties about attending the Academy should be mitigated as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance. These adjustments should be agreed by all and regularly reviewed with all parties, including parents/carers.

## 7. Missing Students

Students are not permitted to leave the Academy premises during the Academy day unless they have permission.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a student going missing during the Academy day:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing student will inform the Attendance Officer immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- Available pastoral staff members and SLT will conduct a thorough search of the Academy premises.
- If the student has not been found after a thorough search, then the parents of the student will be notified.
- If the parents have had no contact from the student, then the police will be

contacted.

- The missing student's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the student going missing.
- If the missing student has an allocated social worker, is a LAC, or has any special educational needs and/or disabilities, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- The Principal will take the appropriate action to ensure the student understands they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the student has been located.
- The Principal or designated member of staff will carry out an investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred

## 8. Appointments

- As far as possible, parents should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of Academy hours.
- Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the Academy office.
- If the appointment requires a student to leave during the Academy day, the student must be signed out by a parent with parental responsibility or a chosen approved adult whose details are shared with the Academy.
- Students must attend the Academy before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## 9. Strategies for promoting attendance

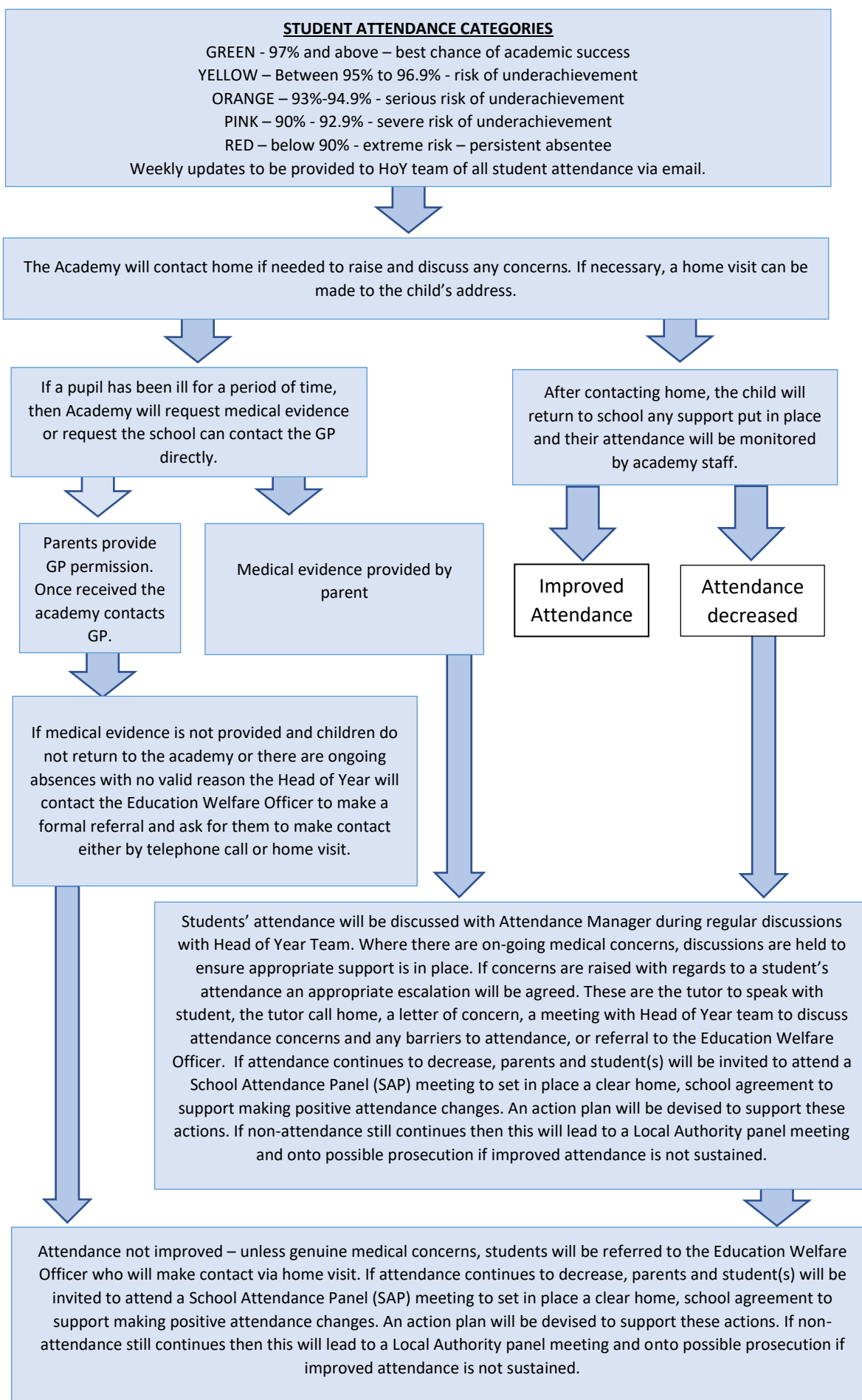
Attendance rewards are given through our system of Class Charts – this is part of a wider scheme, where students can spend Class Charts points on rewards and receive badges for achieving point thresholds.

<b>Attendance</b>	97% attendance – every full week	5 Class Charts Points
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- 100% Attendance draw entries every week, and attendance draws every half term for prizes.
- Attendance for Year 11 Prom requirement is very good attendance throughout the year.
- Rewards trips and events for years 7 to 10, require very good attendance throughout the year.
- Through weekly year group assemblies, tutor groups and students are recognised for good and improved attendance. Weekly attendance initiative rewards students with both good and improved weekly attendance.
- Students are recognised for their attendance on a termly basis in their year group celebration assemblies.

Students with attendance of 97% or above will be rewarded at the end of each full term with a Rewards breakfast during form time in the final week of term.

## 10. Attendance monitoring



### **10.1 The Academy will:**

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the Academy and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Parents will receive letters of concern where student attendance repeatedly falls. They may be invited into the academy to attend meetings with the pastoral team.

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 Academy will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### **10.2 Analysing attendance**

The Academy will:

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

### **10.3 Using data to improve attendance**

The Academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to heads of year and other Academy leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### **10.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence**

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

The Academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the Academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Send letters to notify parents that their child has fallen into persistent absence at the end of each half term
- Add students to a daily 'watchlist' so that their attendance can be closely monitored

## **11. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Mrs. K Taylor-Moore, Attendance Lead. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Principal.

## **12. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day