Attendance Policy

Kirk Merrington Primary School

Academic Year

2026/2027

Policy Review Date: September 2027

Attendance Key Contacts

If a pupil is going to be absent from school please contact the school office before 8:45am.

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact the school office by telephoning the school office on 01388 816230 or by emailing kirkmerrington@durhamlearning.net.

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupils whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treat as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Kirk Merrington Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance, whereby each member of the school community feel wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance.

We recognise the relationship between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from 8:55am. Children should enter through the side gate. Doors open at 8:45am for a soft start to the school day.

Registration is 8:55am. The register will close at 9:25am. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended).

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close at 9:25am (no more than 30 minutes after the registration period ends).

Pupils who are not present before the register closes but attend during the session will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact us if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on your child's attendance register.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions:

School will contact you to discuss ways in which you can be supported to ensure your child attends school on time.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality:
A meeting will be arranged to discuss options to address concerns i.e. soft start to the day, breakfast club offers or possible referral to the Local Authority for action if unauthorised.

Term dates and planned Inset days
These can be found on the school website and school newsletter.

Leave of Absence in Term Time
Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission must be requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form which can be obtained from the school office.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

Attendance Procedures

On the first day of absence
If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone or email the school office giving a reason for the child's absence before 8:45am. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call or email from home by 9.15am, school will send an absence text message asking parents to get in contact. If parents/carers do not contact school following the absence text being sent school will then phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they must return. Children are expected to remain in school for the full school day unless proof of a medical appointment is given.

Periods of extended absence
Where illness requires a specific exclusion period absence will only need to be reported on the first day of absence. However, if absence continues beyond the required exclusion period,

parents are expected to contact school to provide further information. For other common illness such as coughs and colds that do not require specific exclusion periods parents are expected to update the office daily.

No reason for absence provided

If there is no contact from home school will send a dojo message to parents requesting a reason for absence. If school do not receive a response to the reason for absence text school will try to contact parents by telephone. If there is still no response an email will be sent to parents to inform them that a welfare check will be carried out if school cannot ascertain a reason for absence.

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. Good attendance is key to successful schooling and our school target attendance is 96%. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Percentage Attendance	**Days missed over a school year**
100%	0 days missed
95%	10 days missed
90%	20 days missed
85%	30 days missed
80%	40 days missed

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance on the school website and letters home.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance to pupils;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences;
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance;

Attendance data

The school will analyse absence across school with weekly monitoring meetings taking place with the School Attendance Champion.

We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.

In line with regulation 13(a) school must make an attendance return to the local authority of any pupil who is marked absent using the illness code and will be or has been unable to attend school due to sickness for a total of at least 15 days during the school year, whether consecutive or not.

We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents, carers, staff and other professionals as appropriate to support improved attendance. This may take the form of family support, signposting to other services or support in school.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence
Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent.

Pupils are monitored through data analysis and conversations with parents and attempts are made at an early stage of absence to support children's improved attendance. Parents are notified when a child's absence begins to fall. A letter detailing the child's absence will be sent home and parents offered a meeting in school to discuss reasons for absence. Where a significant need is identified, school will offer tailored support for the the child and family.

Severe absence
Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent.

Where support mechanisms do not improve attendance, families are requested to attend a planning meeting to set formal targets for improvement, with additional support in place, including external services and the local authority. The school works alongside the local authority to ensure that children attend regularly and maximise their educational achievements. Where appropriate, joint planning meetings with other services are held.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions (5 school days) recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

Our policy is in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the child. All discussions and decisions are made based on the individual needs and family circumstances with support always being the first step in improving attendance. Advice will be sought from specialist services as required.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding and positive behaviour.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

Statement of expectation –

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

Monitor

The Head Teacher (or Deputy Head Teacher in their absence) will monitor attendance weekly. Supportive approaches will always be used in the first instance to improve attendance.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

Attendance is everyone's responsibility and will be discussed with parents at regular intervals including parent's evenings, informal discussions and planned meetings. School will also offer advice and support.

Facilitate support

Through conversations with families to identify reasons for absence, support and reasonable adjustments can be offered in the short term to improve attendance. Where poor attendance persists, advice from additional services may be sought and a formalised meeting held to overcome the barriers faced.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, school will work alongside the local authority attendance team and other appropriate services to explain to families the consequences of continued poor attendance and the potential of formalised support through an attendance contract with specific targets focused on the child.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.