



**CATALYST**  
ACADEMIES TRUST

# Attendance Policy

**Approved by:** Catalyst Academies Trust

**Reviewed:** July 2026

### **Statement of Intent**

It is important that children attend school regularly and arrive on time for their lessons. Irregular attendance affects a child's progress at school. Children arriving late at school will miss important instruction and explanation which is vital to their education. It should also be remembered that late arrivals also interrupt the whole class. As a school we are committed, together with parents and carers, to improve our rates of attendance and punctuality, and to help all children establish good routines which will support them through school and into their adult life.

Nationally, good attendance is defined as 96% or more, and at Catalyst Academies Trust, we recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. All pupils are expected to attend school for all sessions that are available to them. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1998 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

All staff are concerned for the children's welfare and happiness and everyone plays a part in promoting regular attendance among the pupils. Good attendance tracking is a key part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding our pupils and as such this policy should be considered alongside our safeguarding policy.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

Under the 2011 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

*The DfE have not provided any guidelines as to what they would consider to be exceptional circumstances. This is solely at the discretion of the headteacher. Where possible, families of schools should look to have a consistent approach to all leave of absence requests – to try to*

*ensure that requests for siblings who attend different schools are met with the same response by each headteacher who receives a request.*

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Thurrock Code of Conduct (£160 per parent, per child / £80 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid, the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

If a second Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, this may result in an immediate £160 penalty notice.

The DfE national framework for a Penalty Notice sets a national threshold. The threshold is met when 10 sessions of unauthorised absences have been incurred within a 10 week school period. The local authority Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for School Absence include one or a combination of the following to meet national threshold:

- Absences be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence all taken within any 10-school week period.
- The unauthorised absence sessions can be consecutive
- The 10-school week period may span different school terms of academic years and is considered to be a rolling period.
- Absences can be 10 separate sessions of absence taken over a number of weeks.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

In line with DfE Statutory Guidance, when a child is unable to attend school for a prolonged period of time due to a health need, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority. The Local Authority are responsible for arranging suitable educational provision for the pupil, the school will support as appropriate.

### **Roles Responsibilities and Procedures**

At Catalyst Academies Trust, our attendance target is 96% with the school actively promoting and encouraging 100% attendance for all of our pupils.

**Pupils with attendance below 90% are defined by the DfE as a persistent absentee.**

### **School**

- The school uses a computer registration system. School starts at 8.40am when children should come into their classrooms for registration
- If children arrive after 8.55am they must go directly to the school office to ensure that an attendance mark and lunch is recorded
- Registrations are completed twice a day at the start of both AM and PM sessions.
- The office records all pupils who are late arrivals and reasons why on a daily basis
- When a child does not turn up at school then the office contacts the parents to ask why. This usually turns out to be sickness, but may be due to difficulties within the

household or traumas. This method of contact has been highly effective and has reduced the number of unauthorised absences. If the school has not been advised of a pupil's absence by the time the register has closed, then a first day call will be made to parents/carers. The school will continue to call those on the contact lists, including emergency contacts, if the parent/carer is unreachable. When contact cannot be made, a home visit will be made to determine the location of the pupil. If a home visit is not successful and no contact is made, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing pupil' and the school have the responsibility to involve external agencies.

- Regular lateness, or poor attendance will be referred to the Deputy Headteacher.

The school is responsible for ensuring that all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

The school also has a duty to work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

It will be the school's responsibility to ensure that each pupil (new and existing) has at least 2 contacts.

### **Parents/carers**

It is the legal responsibility for parents/carers to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, and to send them to school regularly once they are on register.

It is the responsibility of the parents/ carers to ensure that the school hold the contact details of at least 2 responsible adults. This provides the school with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern

Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. **If the child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache or stomachache etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in, if they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them. All efforts should be made for parents to make dental or medical appointments outside of school hours, if possible.** If pupils have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, during the school day, parents should let the school know and are required to provide evidence in the form of an appointment card or letter for the school's records. Pupils' should be brought back to school after appointments. Pupils should miss as little time as possible.

- All absences must be notified to the school as soon as possible by telephone before 9am on the first day of absence. We require you to let us know the exact symptoms of the illness and reason for absence.
- Where a child appears to be having an unacceptable level of absence due to medical reasons, the school will request that medical evidence (such as appointment cards or prescribed medication) be provided to cover all absences. Failure on the part of the parent to provide such medical evidence, will result in absences being recorded as unauthorised.
- Any requests for leave of absence, should only be in exceptional circumstances, as family holidays will NOT be authorised under any circumstances. To request absence

during term time, a request form (available from the school office) should be completed and submitted to the Headteacher.

- Where there are attendance concerns, persistent absence, below 90%, or an unexplained absence may result in a meeting being held with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve any attendance issues. Parents should work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interest of their child; this includes informing the school about any significant influences or changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

### **Pupils**

- Pupils are expected to attend school every day, unless they are unwell and not able to attend. Pupils are expected to be punctual for school and in registration by 9.00am.
- If a pupil is late they must go directly to the office to ensure that they are registered as being at school and their lunch choice is recorded

### **School Attendance Support Team (SAST)**

- Works to reduce persistent absence improve overall attendance and give advice and support to families and schools.
- Carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance

The school may refer a pupil to School Attendance Support Team where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. The SAST will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

### **Rewards/Celebrations**

At Catalyst Academies Trust we reward our pupils for full attendance and punctuality, using a variety of methods:

- Termly certificates of attendance for pupils with 100% attendance
- Attendance Certificate awarded weekly to the classes with the highest attendance, Bronze, Silver and Gold.
- Recognition on the weekly newsletter for classes achieving the highest attendance
- Children with 100% attendance for each term will receive; bronze badge for 1 term, silver badge for 2 terms and a gold badge for 3 terms up to the end of the summer term.

\*where a pupil has absences directly related to a diagnosed medical condition this will be taken into consideration with attendance rewards

### **Consequences of non-attendance**

Attendance is monitored regularly at Catalyst Academies Trust and support is continually offered to parents and attendance letters are created as required and sent to parents, following a Stage Attendance process detailed below.

If parents/carers do not inform the school of their child's absence, either directly by telephone or by leaving a voicemail message on the school answerphone, the school operates a first-day calling system.

Pupil attendance is regularly reviewed and parents/carers of those children who fall beneath the 96% benchmark, receive a Stage 1 Letter, indicating there is a cause for concern. If no improvement is made over a designated period of time, a Stage 2 Letter is sent home and the parents/carers are invited to meet with the Family Support Worker to discuss the matter accordingly. When a pupil reaches Stage 2, any further absences will require a form of medical evidence, if medical absences are authorised the child may remain on Stage 2 however may be asked to attend an attendance review meeting. If absences without medical evidence will be unauthorised.

If absences occur without acceptable medical evidence, for example unauthorised holiday, whereby a pupil's attendance still fails to improve, a Notice to Improve letter is sent to parents/carers inviting them to formally meet with the Family Support Worker and Deputy Headteacher to discuss the reasons for the absence and possible consequences. At this stage, external agencies may become involved if beneficial.

Where pupils are absent due to illness either directly before or after an unauthorised period of leave, the school may request medical evidence. The pupil may not be at Stage 2 of the Attendance Policy, however in this instance if the evidence is not provided this absence may not be authorised, which may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

The school may refer pupils to the School Attendance Support Team (SAST) for further support once all strategies adopted by the school to raise attendance have been exhausted. A CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is usually completed by the school's Pupil and Family Support Worker in conjunction with the parent/ carer. These children categorised as 'PA' are invariably entrenched cases and require additional supportive intervention, from both the school and outside agencies (not the SAST) to reduce pupil absence.

The school has an obligation to send separate letters to parents, even if they reside at the same address, to ensure that each person with parental responsibility is aware of the information.

### **Punctuality Procedures**

Stage 1 – an expectation reminder letter is sent to contacts with parental responsibility, for pupils who have been late to school on 3 occasions.

Stage 2 – where a pupil's punctuality has not improved since the Stage 1 letter, another reminder letter will be sent to persons with parental responsibility. This letter will detail expectations and advise that the pupil will be monitored for improvement to punctuality.

Notice to Improve – following the Stage 2 letter, if a pupil's punctuality still does not improve, the persons with parental responsibility will receive a Notice to Improve letter. This will invite parents/carers to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss the pupil's punctuality. At this stage, external agencies may become involved if beneficial.

### **Late Collection Procedure**

Pupils should be collected immediately at the end of the school day; collections after 3:15pm for KS1 and 3:20pm for KS2 are classed as late collections. If a parent/carers has an emergency whereby they are unable to collect their child at the end of the school day, by 3.15pm, the school must be informed immediately.

On the first late collection within a term, without reasonable excuse, the parent/carer will be sent a letter reminding them to collect their child from school at 3.15pm for KS1 and 3:20pm for KS2.

If the child is collected late a second time, an invoice will be issued. Please refer to the Late Collection Policy for details for the charges on our website.

Children attending after school clubs, if they are collected more than 15 minutes late from a school-run after school club on 2 occasions they will automatically lose their place at after school clubs for the rest of the academic year.

If there has been no contact made after one hour of school finishing, 4.15, the police will be telephoned and Children's Social Care may also be informed.

Should the parent fail to collect the child before 4.45pm then the head teacher will ensure that the child is taken to the police station or the allocated after hours social care.

If a family is persistently late in collecting a child then the head teacher will consider taking further action that may include a referral to Social Care (Thurrock MASH).

### **Traveller Absence**

Some members of our school community are Travellers, whose work requires them to leave the area and travel to a place of work. A Traveller Absence form must be completed prior to travelling, with a copy of evidence confirming the travelling request. This form requests the date of which the family will be travelling from and until, the area to which they are travelling and a contact name, number and address where possible and a form of evidence. The school are unable to authorise absence for the purpose of work without the fully completed form and evidence.

This form also records whether travelling is for work purposes and states that a meeting with the Attendance Officer will be arranged prior to travelling to ensure the academic support of the child whilst absent from school. If parent/ carers are unable to complete this form due to literacy difficulties the school can assist with this.

When Traveller families are travelling but return to the area for an odd day or any period of time, the pupil is required to be in school.

The school encourage respective parents/carers to request a 'Traveller Pack' prior to periods of absence, in order for their children to maintain their schooling offsite. These consist of age-related worksheets from the core subjects, reading books and their Learning Log. The intention is for this learning resource to occupy the child for the remainder of the respective half-term. Once completed and returned to school, a further set will be issued accordingly.

Parents/carers are also encouraged to 'dual roll' their children, whilst the family are working away from the immediate vicinity of the school, so their children can attend school in the area to which they have travelled.

Supporting Traveller children with their education, relevant staff will liaise with the TTAS (Thurrock Traveller Achievement Service), seeking their help and advice, as and when deemed necessary.

**Evaluation and Review**

The Trust will continually review this policy and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Absence and Attendance Codes**

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes are:

#### **Present at School**

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

**Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm**

Present in school during registration.

**Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed**

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

#### **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity**

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

**Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:**

#### **Code B: Off-site educational activity**

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Pupils attending consortia schools as part of their course only need to be placed on the registers of their 'main' school rather than on all of the schools they attend. They should be treated as guest pupils at the other consortia schools. The consortia schools however, must ensure they have suitable systems in place for monitoring and reporting the attendance and absence of the pupils involved, which must be shared with the 'main' school.

**Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment**

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, but only when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

**Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment**

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

**Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity**

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

**Code V: Educational visit or trip**

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

**Code W: Work experience**

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

**Authorised Absence from School**

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

**Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**

Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19). For the school year 2020 to 2021, a new category has been added to record instances when a pupil is 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. 12

**Code X: Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)**

(This code is not counted as an absence in the school census) This code is used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with:

- guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care<sup>12</sup> or
- any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). 12 And their equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if a pupil attending a school in England resides there.

**Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

**Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made**

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

**Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)**

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

**Code M: Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment and all medical evidence must be provided to the school.

**Code R: Religious observance**

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

**Code S: Study leave**

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

**Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

**Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

**Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.**

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

**Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided**

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

**Code K: Attendance at an alternative provision**

The local authority has arranged for medical tuition for the pupil.

**Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

**Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

**Administrative Codes**

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

**Code X: Not required to be in school**

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

**Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

**Code Z: Pupil not on admission register**

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

**Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure**

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

**Different Term Dates for Different Pupils**

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for ‘staggered starts’ or ‘induction days’. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.