



# **PARKSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

**Dated: September 2024**

**Review date: September 2025**

**Headteacher.....**

**Chair of Governors.....**



## **Parkside Middle School Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **The importance of good school attendance**

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and the most effective schools recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. We recognise that good attendance is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with Parkside Middle School being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

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

Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with our schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

### **Aims**

Parkside Middle School aims to promote the best possible attendance and punctuality. We believe that regular school attendance is key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance.

This includes:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Monitoring and supporting pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty
- Providing an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Working with other agencies to provide families and/or pupils with further support to attend school
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending school (registrations and lessons) and in doing so promote patterns of behaviour which will prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life.

## **Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of *Working together to improve school attendance* (Published February 2024) from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

[Working together to improve school attendance applies from 19 August 2024 .pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The following documents outline the legislation, setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

The Children Act 1989  
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 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024  
The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) 2007  
The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, as amended  
The Sentencing Act 2020  
The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963  
The Equality Act 2010  
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024  
Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## **The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

### **Governors**

The governing body is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the importance of school attendance is promoted across the school's policies and ethos
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties as set out in this policy

- Regularly monitoring, reviewing and challenging attendance figures for the whole school
- Ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

**The Headteacher is responsible for:**

- Implementation of this attendance and punctuality policy at the school
- Monitoring absence data and reporting it to the governing body
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Making requests to the Local Authority to issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Allocating the responsibility of attendance to a member of the Senior Leadership Team

**The Designated Senior Leader for attendance is responsible for:**

- Leading attendance across the school, setting of attendance targets, and making sure that the importance of school attendance is promoted across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis with a focus on identified groups, persistent absentees and Children Missing Education (CME)
- Devising in collaboration with the Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL) specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Liaise with Worcestershire Local Authority's Education Welfare Service as required
- Ensuring training is delivered on attendance e.g. register completion
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

**The school Attendance Officer is responsible for:**

- Preparing, managing and co-ordinating attendance through Bromcom
- Taking calls and emails from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording these on the school system
- Following up any unexplained absences and ensuring that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data and using this to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher
- To make a judgement in conjunction with the Headteacher whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Working with the LA and other agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to request that the Local Authority issue fixed-penalty

The Attendance Officer is Miss Leanne Harper and can be contacted via email at [absence@parkside.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:absence@parkside.worcs.sch.uk)

The role of the Attendance Officer is invaluable in supporting the school and families in improving attendance. Those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 94% are particularly vulnerable to becoming Persistently Absent students, as a result their attendance is monitored.

**Form tutors are responsible for:**

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class
- To record the reasons for absence given to them on Bromcom
- To respond promptly to any issue raised in the weekly analysis of registers by office staff

**Pastoral Staff, including Heads of Year are responsible for:**

- Monitoring attendance data for their year group
- Devising in collaboration with the SMHL specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance for individuals and groups identified through data
- Liaising with the Attendance Officer on a regular basis
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues
- Referring to relevant pastoral colleagues, including tutors, as appropriate
- Ensuring good attendance is promoted and rewarded e.g. in assemblies
- Ensuring attendance is discussed with tutors in Year Team meetings/briefings

**Form Tutors are responsible for:**

- Taking the register accurately in tutor time, every morning on Bromcom, using the correct codes
- Following up with the pupil any unexplained absence (N marks) in morning and afternoon registration to ascertain the correct attendance code to use on Bromcom
- Delivering messages to support and promote attendance
- Form tutors may be required to arranging calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues, as discussed with the relevant Head of Year and Attendance Officer

**Subject Teachers are responsible for:**

- Taking the register promptly and accurately in every lesson on Bromcom, using the correct codes

**Parents/Carers are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that at least 2 emergency contacts are given to the school
- Supporting children in their attendance and ensure that they arrive on time
- Notifying the school **each day** if their child is absent
- Providing evidence of any medical appointments in advance
- Completing a medicine request form (available from the school office) to enable staff to administer medicine to your child so that they can attend school
- Attending any appointments or meetings that are made to discuss punctuality and attendance
- Ensuring that your child shows respect and care for themselves, others, and the environment
- Ensuring that the school is updated with any changes to their contact details
- Communicating with the school if there are any issues they feel will affect the pupil's attendance

School begins promptly at 8:50am. If your child arrives after this time, they must report to the school office so we can mark them as present but late on the register. If your child has not arrived at school by 9:20am, then a text/phone call will be made to establish why your child is not in school. It may be that they have arrived late and NOT reported to the office, but we still need to establish where they are. If you do not notify school of the absence the mark given will be unauthorised.

We understand that there are sometimes circumstances in which your child cannot attend or may be late and, in these situations, we ask that you approach us to discuss. We want to help your child to receive the very best out of their time at our school and excellent attendance and punctuality is key.

**If you wish to discuss anything at all concerning your child's attendance/punctuality, please contact the school office. We are here to help.**

**Pupils are expected to:**

- Attend school and lessons every day on time

**Promoting Good Attendance**

Parkside Middle School regularly promotes good attendance in school. We discuss the importance of attendance in school with the children, in form time, assemblies and lessons.

We recognise that good attendance should be rewarded. Certificates will be awarded via Bromcom for 100% attendance and for 100% attendance each year. We also recognise rewards can be a strong motivator for students who have made efforts to improve a poor attendance record and individual rewards will be given.

We recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, Parkside Middle School is expected to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support.

We believe that good attendance starts with close and productive relationships with parents and pupils. We aim to treat all pupils and parents with dignity and our staff should model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.

In working in partnership with parents, we do discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works alongside and supports the family and wherever possible the person should be kept consistent.

## **School Procedures**

Parkside Middle School uses Bromcom to store and monitor its legal responsibilities in relation to attendance. Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance.

If a child is absent from school during the morning registration period their absence must be recorded as authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised. The coding for any absence will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department for Education.

## **Reporting Absence**

Parents/Carers should contact school on the first and any subsequent days of absence by 9am either by phone call or email, giving the child's name, class, and reason for absence.

Where we are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence we will, wherever possible, contact parents/carers by text/telephone on each day of absence. If a reason cannot be established the absence will be marked as 'O' unauthorised.

If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the DSL or DDSL will be informed.

## **Pupils with a social worker and/or youth offending team worker**

To facilitate effective working across the local authority area, we are expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school. Children missing education officers or a school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team should also inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if their name is to be deleted from the school register.

## **Registration/Lateness**

Class teachers complete the registers electronically during morning registration from 8.45am – 9.00am, any pupils arriving after 9.00am are marked with 'L' indicating late arrival. Pupils arriving after 9.20am will be marked as 'U' which indicates an unauthorised late mark, unless a legitimate reason has been provided, i.e., medical appointment. Pupils with three or more lates within a week will be issued with a B1, resulting in a break time detention. Each term late marks will be analysed, and a letter sent out to Parents/Carers advising them of the pupil's late record if more than four late marks have been recorded during the half term.

## **Leave of Absence in term time**

All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. Parkside Middle School will consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

In line with the Government Guidelines, we have renewed appeals to parents not to take their children out of school during term time. Parkside Middle School's governing body support this and students will only be given permission to take holidays in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers cannot and will not authorise school absence purely for the reason of a family holiday. If you feel you have an exceptional circumstance, please speak to the school in the first instance. You must complete an absence request form detailing the reasons as to why your child will be absent during the school term.

Please note we advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreements from the school first. The school cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstances.

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children receive education in accordance with section 7 of the Education Act 1996 and if on a school roll that they regularly attend school.

When submitting an application for leave of absence during term time, both parents with parental responsibility must sign the form. In the absence of a parental signature, the school will contact the parent who has not signed the request to inform them that an application form for a planned absence has been submitted for their child without their consent.

Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be subject to a Penalty Notice fine by the Local Authority.

- Fine: A Penalty Notice will be issued in cases where 5 days or more of unauthorised leave is taken during school term time. resulting in a fine. Your local council can give you a fine of £80 for each child taken out of school, which rises to £160 if you don't pay within 21 days. If you don't pay the fine after 28 days, you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school. In case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a

second fine for the same child within a three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

- Prosecution: You could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

## **Medical and Dental Appointments**

Where possible these appointments should be made out of school hours particularly if they are for follow-up treatment or are non-urgent. However, we do recognise that this cannot always be possible and, therefore, if an appointment must be made during a school day, it should be towards the end of the day. When appropriate, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. IN some exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parents to obtain a letter from a GP or the school may seek parental permission to contact the GP directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil.

The NHS has produced a helpful guide for parents regarding childhood illness and school: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## **Education off site**

All schools can also allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools or settings:

- To attend an offsite approved educational activity.
- To attend another school at which the pupil is registered (dual registration).
- To attend provision arranged by the local authority. e.g. alternative provision or as part of an education, health and care plan.
- To participate in an approved sporting activity.
- To attend an educational visit or trip arranged by the school.

As these circumstances are part of delivering a full-time education they are not classified as absences for statistical purposes.

## **Part-time timetables**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. In some circumstances their education may be provided partially at school and partially at another educational setting or through education otherwise than at a school in line with section 19 of the Education Act 1996 or section 42 or 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Time away from school to receive education in other ways must be recorded in the attendance register using the appropriate codes. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time, and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible.

A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both Parkside Middle School and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.



- Have a proposed end date that considers the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process.

In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a part time timetable for a prolonged period.

Where the pupil has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process.

If the pupil has an education, health and care plan, the school will discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, Parkside Middle School has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence accordingly (normally using code C2).

### **Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation**

All absences both authorised and unauthorised absence will be reported to the parent/carer at the end of the academic year within their child's report. So that parents can benchmark their child's attendance the Governing Body agree targets of attendance in line with national policy. These are outlined below:

100%	Excellent
98% - 99.9%	Very good
96% - 97.9%	Good
94% - 95.9%	Satisfactory
Under 94%	Unsatisfactory
Under 90%	Concerning

Children whose attendance is less than 96% are monitored. Those students whose attendance has fallen below 94% are particularly vulnerable to becoming Persistently Absent students, as a result their attendance is monitored. Standard practice for our school will be for the Attendance Officer to send a 'warning letter' home as soon as a student's attendance drops to 92% - if there are no other extenuating circumstances.

If absence continues and is not authorised the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Department.

Attendance data will be collected monthly to establish patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with:

- Incomplete weeks
- Monday and Friday absences
- Lateness; periods of extended absence
- Periods of unauthorised absence
- Children who are persistent absentees (School-age pupils are persistent absentees if they miss more than 10% of their possible sessions in a school year)

This data will be discussed with the Safeguarding Team as part of the regular meetings.

### **Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts of students that need additional support with their attendance
- Use this analysis to identify barriers for attendance
- Use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Use other statistics as available e.g. FFT
- Provide regular attendance reports to the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance, other school/pastoral leaders, Heads of Years, and Form Tutors to facilitate discussions with students and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

## **Working together to promote good attendance**

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families.

All partners should 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 and 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 an attendance 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: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **Reducing persistent and severe absence**

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

The school will:

- Closely monitor their attendance
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Send letters to parents/carers to inform them of our concern about their child's attendance
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of a pupil who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access and/or signposting to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Ensure the Senior Mental Health Lead is made aware in the case of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)
- Ensure the Designated Safeguarding Lead is made aware, and the actions are put in place
- Work with the Education Welfare Service for further intervention

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming/or becomes problematic, Parkside Middle School will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers

to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.

As a minimum, this should include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions should be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners:

- If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of mentoring, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.
- Where engagement in support is proving challenging, schools should hold more formal conversations with the parents (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This is likely to be led by the school's senior attendance champion and may include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team. These meetings should clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but should also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, Parkside Middle School will work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of an attendance contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a Notice to Improve and/or penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach. In very few cases will all options have been exhausted therefore partners are expected to work together to continue offering new approaches. If a particular form of support is refused or does not work initially, schools and partners are expected to provide further opportunities to engage in that support, try something else or ultimately take legal action if support is not appropriate.

Parkside Middle School is expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

These are:

- Attendance Contracts
- Education Supervision Orders
- Attendance Prosecution
- Parenting Orders
- Penalty Notices

Where they are used, it should be clear that it is the most appropriate intervention to change parental behaviour and in making the decision to use an intervention, headteachers and local authority officers should have regard to their safeguarding duties as set out in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Schools and local authorities should decide which parent(s) to involve in attendance legal intervention, but this should usually be the parent or parents who have allowed the absence.

## **Pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities**

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

Our school staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. They should also work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil, but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case include:

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school staff are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil.

They should:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.
- Make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code 'I' (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, Parkside Middle School is expected to:

- Work in partnership parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work in partnership families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.

- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

Parkside Middle School should:

- Make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available.
- Consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals.
- Where external support is provided work together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

If the child has an education health and care plan, school staff should:

- Communicate with the local authority where a pupil's attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Where possible, agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the education health and care plan in collaboration with parents.
- Where needed, work with the local authority to review and amend the education health and care plan to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified.

Medical evidence for recording absences should only be needed in a minority of cases.

Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, schools can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance in supporting pupils at school with medical conditions or arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

Where parents do not engage in support, schools should work with the local authority or other local partners to formalise that support and as a last resort, enforce attendance through legal intervention.

Parkside Middle School should ensure data is regularly monitored for pupils with long term illnesses and or special educational needs or disabilities including at governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

**Further information can be found at:**

[Working together to improve school attendance applies from 19 August 2024 .pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

**Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour, Attitudes and Relationships Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy

**Date of policy: September 2024**

**Review date: September 2025**