

## **Working Together to Improve Attendance in Alternative Provision**

### **Working Policy Academic Year 2022 – 2023**

#### **Pupil attendance**

Working together, we set high aspirations for pupil attendance in alternative provision whilst recognising the individual needs of pupils and their families that have specific barriers to attendance.

The law entitles children of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Legally, local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school <https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school, through alternative provision, or as part of a reintegration timetable. When parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/family-early-help>

#### **Good attendance and punctuality**

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.

The foundation of securing good attendance is that school and alternative provision is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Parents/Carers can find out more about your alternative provider's curriculum, behaviour, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health, and wellbeing by visiting our [Local Offer webpage](#). They can also discuss provision with the HeadTeacher or your named Local Authority Officer.

Some pupils find it harder to attend school than others do. Alternative provision is in place to meet their individual needs therefore we expect good attendance. This means children must attend on time every day of their agreed timetable, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or, when schools have given permission in advance.

We will work with schools, partners, pupils, and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships. The alternative Provision team will discuss attendance openly and sensitively to understand what parents and pupils feel and think will improve attendance using this and the view of other partners to set targets to improve attendance.

Being ready to learn is important, this includes children educated within their homes. Children should be appropriately dressed for learning as far as their health allows with the resources prepared for each lesson.

### **How we monitor and share attendance data**

Our Alternative Providers record attendance and lateness. The pupils' individual timetable states the start and close of the day for registers and the register close times. We collect daily AM and PM attendance marks through [Welfare Call](#). This is monitored daily by the Alternative Provision Team.

As part of our safeguarding duty, we will contact you if your child is absent and you have not provided a reason. If your child is on a school roll, has a Social Worker, Family Early Help Practitioner, or youth justice Officer we will share your attendance record. Additionally, we will send and record 3 days an absence notifications.

The alternative provision team meets weekly to monitor all pupils' attendance. We use this meeting to celebrate good and improving attendance.

We have an increased focus on pupils we are concerned about

- Pupils at or approaching below 90% attendance in alternative provision or school (Persistent absence)
- Pupils at or approaching below 50% attendance in alternative provision or school (Severe absence)

### **Working together to improve attendance – pupils' right to education**

Absence can be a symptom of wider issues a family is facing. Schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support.

### **Pupils supported by alternative provision due to illness**

If there are concerns about a child's attendance a letter will be sent outlining the number of days missed and the timetable. If attendance does not improve, we will convene a face-to-face engagement meeting with parents, pupils, the child's school, and health partners to understand barriers. This includes discussing health changes, reviewing the effectiveness of existing timetables, support, and adjustments, and setting clear targets for support that lead to improvement. We document and share meeting records and agree a monitoring cycle.

In cases where it becomes clear that the child's illness is not the cause of absence or a child is prevented from accessing as much education as their health allows, we may refer to Southwark Family Early Help Education Inclusion Team.

Part of their role is a legal response to failing to ensure regular attendance. Southwark Family Early Help practitioners work using a 'whole family' approach to provide a holistic service to improve attendance, punctuality and reduce unauthorised absences. FEH Service details can be found at [Family Early Help](#). If your child has a Social Worker or Youth Justice Officer, they will take the lead in ensuring plans are integrated.

### **Pupils supported by alternative provision for other reasons**

In cases where there are attendance concerns about pupils supported due to other reasons e.g., permanent exclusion or Year 11 new to the borough; a letter will be

sent outlining the concern, this will detail the child's timetable and the number of days missed. This forms part of Southwark's Three Staged Approach. We will also provide a **leaflet titled 'Improving school attendance – parent information'**

If attendance does not improve, we will convene a face-to-face engagement meeting with parents, pupils, and relevant partners to understand the barriers and set clear targets for support that lead to improvement. We document and share meeting records and agree a monitoring cycle.

Following full exploration of the issues and concerted efforts to improve attendance, we may refer Southwark Family Early Help Education Inclusion Team if there are no improvements. Part of their role is a legal response to failing to ensure regular attendance. Southwark Family Early Help practitioners work using a 'whole family' approach to provide a holistic service to improve attendance, punctuality, reduce unauthorised absences, and improve educational outcomes for our children. Service details are available here: [Family Early Help](#). If your child has a Social Worker or Youth Justice Officer, they will take the lead in ensuring plans are integrated.

Where plans are not successful or there is non-engagement, the law protects pupils' right to an education. It provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. There is a range of legal actions to enforce school attendance such as school attendance orders. Details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

### **Contents of the attendance register**

All schools, except those where all the pupils are boarders, must keep an attendance register in accordance with regulation 6 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

Schools must take the attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion, they must record whether every pupil (with the exception of a pupil who is a boarder) is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity as defined in regulation 6(4); or
- Unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances as defined in regulation

### **Codes for exceptional circumstances**

#### **Illness:**

Where a child is absent due to illness, parents/carers must inform the Alternative Provider and the school they are on the roll of by telephone.

In most cases, children timetables will already take account of the child's illness. Therefore, they will attend most days.

Parental illness is not a valid reason for pupil absence. Parents should consider additional support if needed to support the child to attend their place of education.

School should only request medical evidence where the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

### **Medical including consultant/specialist hospital appointments /Dental Routine Appointments:**

Dental/medical appointments need to be booked outside of school hours. If this is not possible, parents must get the school or alternative provider agreement in advance and the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

### **Leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school**

Parents are expected to plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is unavoidable.

An application for leave of absence should (and from certain schools must) not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with, and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which justify the leave.

The school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school Where a leave of absence is granted. The headteacher will grant a leave of absence at their discretion.

If the child is not on the roll of a school, The Alternative Provider Headteacher together with the Alternative Provider will decide. In the case where leave/holiday is not granted but taken, a referral may the alternative provision team may request a consultation with the Education Inclusion Team.

### **Rescheduling tuition**

Parents must request permission to reschedule any tuition days from the provider in advance. This should be in exceptional and few circumstances. Patterns of rescheduling indicate that the timetable and support may not be the best fit. We will convene a review meeting in these cases.

Further details about register codes is here: [Working together to improve attendance](#)

### **Reviewing our policy**

We will repeatedly evaluate the effectiveness of our processes with our partners in Education, Health, and Local Authority departments.

We will look at trends and cohorts to support our understanding of existing and future cohorts and share this with schools to support TAS Team around the school meetings.

### **Relevant government guidance**

Working together to improve school attendance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs: [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities: [Alternative provision - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour: [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Children missing education: [Children missing education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Keeping children safe in education: [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Working together to safeguard children: [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Elective home education: [Elective home education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England & Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement - guidance 2022 (applies from 1 September 2022): [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges: [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying: [Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)