

Attendance Policy

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Issue Number	006	Author	Nicola Kelly
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Headteacher	Louise Reeks	Executive Headteacher/ Regional Director	Kate Martin

1. Introduction

This Attendance Policy reflects Keys Group’s EPIC values—Excellence, Passion, Integrity, Caring—and the Keys Connect approach, which emphasises relational, trauma-informed practices tailored to support pupils with complex needs and attendance challenges.

Keys Group schools are committed to working in partnership with pupils and families to promote and support high levels of attendance. In line with the Department for Education’s statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (updated August 2024), our approach prioritises early intervention, relationship-building, and understanding the barriers to attendance. We recognise that improving attendance is not solely a compliance issue but a collaborative effort rooted in pastoral care, wellbeing, and inclusive practice. Our schools consistently demonstrate strong engagement with families and pupils, and we aim to build on this strength by ensuring that support is proactive, respectful, and tailored to individual needs. Attendance is monitored rigorously, and strategies are implemented to address persistent or severe absence, always with the goal of re-engaging learners and fostering a culture where every day in school counts.

The policy complies with Part 3, paragraph 15 of the Independent School Standards 2014 (as amended), and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. It recognises the unique barriers faced by many of our pupils, including historical trauma and ongoing challenges, and commits to a personalised, empathetic approach to attendance improvement.

While our aspiration is for all pupils to achieve 100% attendance, we pursue this goal sensitively and realistically, recognising that many pupils join us with persistent absence patterns.

2. Policy Aims

At Unity College, we aim to ensure that every pupil:

- Feels safe, secure, and well cared for within the school community.
- Fully participates in school life, enjoying and achieving their potential.
- Feels valued and trusts staff to safeguard their wellbeing.
- Receives support tailored to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Understands the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name
Governing Body (Chair)	James Madine
Regional Executive Headteacher/Director	Kate Martin
Head Teacher	Lousie Reeks
School Attendance Leader	Louise Reeks
Daily Attendance Contact	Violet Parris

4. Reporting Absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence before the school day starts via Arbour, phone, or email ([Insert contact details]). Arrangements for longer absences will be agreed as needed.

Parents/carers needing support with attendance should contact [Insert Name] via phone or email.

5. Registration and Lateness

- Registration is taken twice daily (AM: 9am, PM: 1:30pm).
- Pupils arriving within 30 minutes after registration are marked late (Code L).
- Pupils arriving after 30 minutes are marked absent (Code U or equivalent).
- Persistent lateness linked to transport or external factors will be addressed collaboratively with families, transport providers, and local authorities.

6. Categorisation of Absence

Authorised absences include:-

- Genuine illness
- Emergency medical/dental appointments (evidence may be requested)
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes

Unauthorised absences include:-

- Family holidays
- Shopping trips
- Birthdays
- Caring for family members
- Transport unavailability

7. Attendance Monitoring and Intervention

- Attendance is benchmarked on admission and monitored daily using ARBOUR data.

- Patterns of absence are analysed to identify pupils or cohorts needing support.
- Attendance improvement meetings are held fortnightly to review data and progress against plans.
- Positive attendance is recognised with rewards and certificates.
- Pupils with attendance concerns receive personalised Attendance Support Plans developed collaboratively with families.
- Home visits and safe and well checks are conducted for unexplained absences, especially for pupils known to social care.
- Multi-agency collaboration is maintained to support attendance improvement.

8. Safeguarding and Children Missing in Education (CME)

- Unexplained absences trigger safe and well checks, including unannounced home visits where necessary.
- The school collaborates with social care and other agencies to safeguard pupils.
- The Local Authority is notified of pupils missing from education as per statutory guidance.
- The school cooperates fully with local authority procedures regarding CME.

9. Legal Framework

- The school adheres to the National Framework for Penalty Notices where applicable, including the new statutory guidance effective from August 2024.
- Parents have legal duties to ensure regular attendance under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, with penalties including fines and possible prosecution.
- The school will work with local authorities to enforce attendance where voluntary support fails.
- Penalty Notices require a preceding 'Notice to Improve' and follow the prescribed fine schedule (£80 within 21 days, £160 within 28 days).

10. Parental Responsibilities

Parents/carers must:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Report absences promptly with reasons.
- Update the school daily during ongoing absences unless agreed otherwise.
- Request leave for exceptional circumstances in advance.
- Provide evidence for planned medical appointments.

- Work collaboratively with the school and other agencies to resolve attendance barriers.

11. Training and Equality

- Staff receive training on attendance policy and its links to safeguarding.
- The policy is implemented with sensitivity to diversity and individual pupil needs.
- Any concerns regarding equality impact should be raised with line management for appropriate action.

Appendices – Procedures and Localisation of Policy

Appendix A – Tiers of Intervention around Attendance

Due to a large percentage of children joining Unity College with significant challenges with their attendance we offer a bespoke approach. The school monitors attendance for all children. Any child below 80% are on the At Risk list and each have identified actions to support attendance progress.

The following strategies can be used by the school to support a child struggling with attendance. These actions are often bespoke to the child and agreed with care homes and professionals.

Attendance Support and Strategies	
<p>A. Tutor or TA contact with parents or student</p> <p>B. Wellbeing calls from Wellbeing/Pastoral Team - parents or child.</p> <p>C. Work sent home in paper or electronic format</p> <p>D. Teams calls with either parent or student to establish a plan to support. This can vary in times and is a bespoke approach.</p> <p>E. Opportunity to visit school outside of school time</p> <p>F. Parental guidance on best approaches</p> <p>G. Building rapport with games in 1:1 session</p> <p>H. 1:1 delivery of support and learning on-site</p> <p>I. 1:1 delivery of support via Teams</p> <p>J. Re-integration meeting to plan strategies and approaches</p> <p>K. Utilisation of differing trusted staff.</p> <p>L. Guidance from external agencies, including Local Authority</p> <p>M. Teams calls</p>	<p>N. Call an Emergency Review</p> <p>O. Meet off-site in an agreed location</p> <p>P. Collect student from home and ring to school</p> <p>Q. Purchase a taxi to support</p> <p>R. Use of peer mentor</p> <p>S. Bug out bags</p> <p>T. Review of timetable</p> <p>U. Contact from favoured staff member</p> <p>V. Letters home addressed to student to welcome to support re-integration</p> <p>W. Emails to students to support re-integration</p> <p>X. Safeguarding referral, if decided with parents, that risks are posed with student being at home</p> <p>Y. Professionals Meeting</p> <p>Z. Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) support/referral</p> <p>AA. Other innovative approach not listed above</p> <p>BB. Change of class or curriculum</p> <p>CC. Other innovative approach not listed above</p> <p>DD. Additional external provision</p> <p>EE. Increased mentoring</p> <p>FF. Adapted timetable provision</p> <p>GG. Alternative Provision implemented</p>

Appendix B – Attendance Management Plan (Stages)

Stage	Description	Actions
Stage 1	Attendance falls below target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send letter to parent/carer informing of concern - Explain impact of low attendance
Stage 2	Continued absence and decline after Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send Stage 2 letter - Arrange home visit or virtual meeting to discuss attendance and create plan
Stage 3	Further absence after Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invite parents for attendance meeting - Review Attendance Support Plan - Explain possible escalation
Stage 4	Unauthorised absences continue after Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue Penalty Notice Warning letter (Headteacher authorised) - Liaise with Local Authority Attendance Team
Stage 5	Persistent absence despite penalty notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request Local Authority to consider prosecution - Continue multi-agency support

Appendix C – Attendance Codes (DfE Guidance Summary)

Code	Description	Usage
/	Present (AM or PM)	Pupil is present in school
L	Late (before register closes)	Pupil arrives after start of session but before register closes
U	Unauthorised absence (late after register closes)	Pupil arrives after register closes without valid reason
I	Illness	Authorised absence due to illness
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence for medical reasons (evidence may be requested)
C	Other authorised circumstances	Authorised absence for other exceptional circumstances
G	Unauthorised absence	Absence without permission or valid reason
N	No reason yet provided	Absence not yet explained
X	Not required to be in school	For example, pupils in approved off-site educational activity

Appendix D – Sample Attendance Improvement Plan

Student Name:	Pastoral Lead/Deputy:
Year Group:	Date:
Present Attendance %:	Authorised Absence %:
Unauthorised Absence %:	

Attendance Concerns:

- [Describe current attendance issues, e.g., frequent absences on Mondays]

Patterns Identified:

- [Describe any significant absence patterns]

Agencies Involved (tick as appropriate):

- ☐ Barnardo's
- ☐ Stronger Families
- ☐ Early Help
- ☐ Social Care
- ☐ IEWO

School Support Provided:

- Daily home calls
- Home visits
- 1:1 mentoring sessions
- Relationship building
- IEWO support

Family Support Actions:

- Communication with school
- Acceptance of support
- Attendance at meetings or response to letters

Attendance Targets:

- Target Attendance:
- By When: _

Actions Required:

By Student	By Parent/Carer	By School
[Action]	[Action]	[Action]

Review Plan:

- **Frequency:** ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Biweekly ☐ Monthly
- Notes for next review: [Insert notes]

Signatures:

Student/Parent: _ **Date:** _

Staff Member: _ **Date:** _

Appendix E – Sample Attendance Contract

Initial/Review Date: [Insert Date]

School: [Insert School Name]

Pupil Name:	Date of Birth:	Year/Form Group:
Ethnicity:	Looked After: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Attendance Champion:
Form Tutor:	Head Teacher/Associate Head:	

Purpose:

To improve the pupil's attendance and address barriers.

Attendance Data:

Attendance Level (%)	Authorised (%)
Unauthorised (%)	Unauthorised Lates (%)

Identified Difficulties:

Difficulty	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>
1. Bullying		7. Punctuality	
2. Medical		8. SEND	
3. EBSA (Emotional Based School Avoidance)		9. Academic	
4. Home Issues		10. Behaviour/Attitude	
5. Transport		11. Other	
6. School Relationships			

Barriers & Actions:

No.	Barrier Description	Action Plan (Start Date, Responsible Person, Review Date)
1		
2		

Agreement:

We agree to work together to improve attendance as outlined in this contract.

Pupil Signature: _ **Date:** _

Parent/Carer Signature: **Date:** _

School Representative Signature: _ **Date:** _