

St Mark's CEP School

Attendance policy

Approval Arrangements

All policies in the Trust are ultimately the responsibility of the Trust Board. To enable it to discharge this responsibility appropriately and in collaboration with the constituent schools, the Trust Board will

1. set a full Trust wide policy which applies in the same way to all schools,
2. require individual schools to 1 - adopt, 2 - amend or 3 - adapt policies set by the Trust

This is a level 2 policy against the Scheme of Delegation and supersedes any previous version.

Approval Body:	Board of Trustees
Amended/adapted by:	Headteacher
Date Approved:	16/09/2026
Author:	Director of Education
Next review:	September 2027
review period:	1 year
Version:	1.0

All TST policies are Board approved.

Some policies are uniform in their application, regardless of school context. For example, those relating to finance and people matters. These are adopted policies.

Some policies are for school level amendments. For example, where key school staff need to be named within policies. Headteachers are responsible for amended policies.

We have a few Board approved policies that are for schools to adapt. The policies set the framework, but schools need to adapt them for their context. Headteachers are responsible for adapted policies.

Trust Vision

Our policies support us in living our values and delivering our vision. [Our Vision and Values - Tenax Schools Trust](#)

Legislation and Guidance

This procedure is based on the Government's latest best practice guidance and model complaints procedure for multi-academy trusts, published 12 March 2021.

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- This policy should be read in conjunction with our other school policies including our safeguarding policy supporting pupils /students with medical conditions and the behaviour policy.

1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#) from the Department for Education (DfE). We aim to achieve this through our whole-trust culture and ethos that values good attendance, which includes:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils/students
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil/student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils/students have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#) and [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1751/contents>[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- The [Equality Act 2010](#)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/757/regulation/2/made> It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- [Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit](#)

This policy also complies with our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Tenax Schools Trust board of trustees

The Tenax Schools Trust board of trustees is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all trust and school leaders, staff, pupils/students and parents/carers
- Making sure trust and school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
- Making sure all schools in the trust record attendance accurately in the register, and share the required information with the DfE and local authorities
- Making sure all schools in the trust work effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keep them informed regarding specific pupils/students, where appropriate

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the trust's policies and ethos
- Making sure the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils/students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the trust has high aspirations for all pupils/students, but adapts processes and support to pupils'/students' individual needs
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole trust and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils'/students' needs
- Identifying and monitoring attendance patterns across the trust's schools to identify common issues and barriers, and share effective practice between schools

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the local committee
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils/students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Referring cases for penalty notices to the local authority, where necessary and/or authorising Attendance Champion to be able to do so
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils/students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils/students with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils/students with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil/student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's/student's needs,
- Communicating with social workers for pupils/students who are looked after, or who have a named social worker in relation to attendance patterns
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils/students and parents/carers through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
 - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's/student's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils/students who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils/students who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The Trust Attendance Lead / Director of Education

The trust attendance lead/Director of Education is responsible for:

- Driving attendance improvement across the trust
- Working more intensively with schools who require support to improve attendance
- Acting as a central contact point for schools with attendance queries

- › Liaising with the DfE's regional teams for advice about wider support programmes

The trust attendance lead/ Director of Education can be contacted through the Trust at enquiries@tenaxschoolstrust.co.uk

3.4 The designated leader responsible for attendance

The designated leader is responsible for:

- › Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- › Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- › Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- › Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- › Liaising with pupils/students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- › Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- › Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils/students and their parents/carers
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils/students and families

3.5 The school attendance officer

The school attendance officer at each school is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- › Benchmarking attendance data 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
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- › Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.6 Teachers/form tutors

All teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office by 8.55am and 1.15pm.

3.7 School admin/office staff

Staff will:

- › Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- › Transfer calls from parents/carers to the attendance officer where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.8 Parents/Carers

Where this policy refers to a parent/carer, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- › All those who have parental/carer responsibility for a child/young person

- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child/young person (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child/young person attends every day/timetabled session on time
 - Call the school to report their child's/young person's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
 - Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child/young person. If the child/young person is in the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers, where possible.
 - Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child/young person are made outside of the school day
 - Keep to any attendance contracts/support plans that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the attendance officer, who can be contacted via the school office.

3.9 Pupils/Students

Pupils/Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time
- Attend every timetabled session, on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils/students on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil/student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Absent – unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils/students of compulsory school age whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil/student is attending an approved educational activity

- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil/student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.15pm.

Pupils/students must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 8.55am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's/student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am, or as soon as practically possible, by emailing the school staff, who can be contacted via office@st-marks.kent.sch.uk

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If attendance is below 90% and/or where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's/student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. A form must be completed using the school's procedure.

Parents/carers should make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil/student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's/student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence a week in advance or as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil/student who arrives late:

- Lateness to school will be considered as an attendance concern, given its impact on learning
- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has been closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code, absent for registration and any lessons missed will be coded as unauthorised absence. Using code U.
- In some schools within the trust, repeated lateness to school will result in detentions at lunchtime, after school or a Saturday detention depending on how persistent the problem is. It may lead to further consequences if the issue persists. If registration or lessons are missed repeatedly it could contribute to a Penalty Notice if the lateness affects learning time.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

- The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.
- Follow safeguarding procedures to ensure the student is safe.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's/young person's attendance and absence levels.

5. Authorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil/student during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil/student is authorised to be absent for. Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as a reason that prevents the leave of absence being taken during normal holiday times and where the timings are out of the parent/carer's control. **Leave of absence for holidays will not be granted during term time.**

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Leave of absence for holidays will not be granted during term time. Should parents/carers choose to take their child/young person on holiday in term time; this will be classed as unauthorised and will result in a fixed penalty fine and/or prosecution.

5.2 Other reasons for authorised absence

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's/student's parent(s)/carer(s) belong (s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's /carer's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s)/Carer(s) travelling for occupational purposes – a pupil /student is a mobile child/young person if their parent/carer is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil/student is travelling with them. In these circumstances a pupil /student will be considered as a mobile child,/young person provided they are of compulsory school age and have **no fixed abode** and whose parent /carer is in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place
- Study leave is not granted by default. Students in year 11 will be expected to continue to attend school and lessons until May half term.
- If the pupil/student is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

5.3 Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil/student to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil/student is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience

6. Supporting pupils/students with poor attendance

Our schools will make use of the full range of support and potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

6.1 Attendance contract

We use attendance contracts as a form of attendance support.

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent/carer and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance contract is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Parents/Carers cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and the school cannot agree an attendance contract in a parent's/carer's absence.

Where an attendance contract would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer (and pupil/student if they are old enough to understand) to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's/student's attendance.

Where parents/carers fail to comply with an agreed attendance contract, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents/carers to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance contract remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

6.2 Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents/carers do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents/carers a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil/student attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's/student's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents/carers under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of 20 school days for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

6.3 Penalty notices

Where statutory thresholds have been met the headteacher will refer the child's/young person's case for a penalty notice to the local authority. The Local authority or the police can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child/young person from school, where the child/young person is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Each parent/carer who is liable for the pupil's/student's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/carer who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent/carer must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same pupil/student, the parent/carer must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child/young person within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents/carers allow their child/young person to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents/carers that the pupil /student must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, are not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent/carer must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

7. Supporting pupils/students who are absent or returning to school

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's/student's needs, we will inform the local authority and seek external guidance where relevant.

Schools will provide guidance on how to use a graduated approach to support a child/young person to return to school.

Schools will provide care and support for children/young people who are experiencing ill health and can signpost families to agencies who offer therapeutic therapies and access support from the Local Authority when needed.

8. Attendance monitoring

The school monitors attendance and absence data to spot patterns emerging in a student's attendance. The school will use this information to discuss with parents/carers any concerns and to offer support for the student and family.

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The trust and school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality)

Specific pupil/student information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The trust and school will

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils/students, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify pupils/students whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Identify attendance patterns across the trust to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The trust and school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Share information and work collaboratively with other trusts and schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's/student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils/students, where appropriate

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil/student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil/student misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the trust and school's strategy for improving attendance.

The trust and school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils/students who the trust and school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils/students. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil/student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil/student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil/student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil/student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil/student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil/student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil/student is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil/student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil/student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil/student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil/student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil/student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

S	Study leave	Pupil/student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil/student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil/student is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil/student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent/carer travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil/student is a ‘mobile child/young person’ who is travelling with their parent(s)/carer(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil/student is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil/student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil/student has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil/student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil/student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil/student is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open

Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil/student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil/student is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's/student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil/student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil/student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil/student not on admission register	Pupil/student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays