

The Lotus Academy Trust



Supporting children to find opportunities in every difficulty

The Damara School



Specialist SEMH Independent School

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Trust Board

Initial Ratification: 31 August 2019

Review: October 2020; Sept 22; Jan 24, Dec 2025

Next review due by: December 2026

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) 2024

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This attendance policy considers the specific needs of our pupils and is applied fairly and consistently, always considering the individual needs of pupils and their families who may have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of this policy, we have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. School procedures

The name and contact details of the senior leaders and trustee responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school are

Contact Information (complete all contacts noted below)			
Name	Position	Email	Phone
Julie Cox	Senior Attendance Champion	jcox@lotustrust.org.uk	01842 773673
	Attendance Officer		
	Alternate DSL		
Kate Haley	DSL (CPC Contact)	khaley@lotustrust.org.uk	01842 773673
	Head of School		

	SENDCO		
	Pastoral Lead / Family Liaison		
Sandra Govender	CEO	ceo@lotustrust.org.uk	01842 773673
	Alternate DSL		
	Designated Teacher for Looked After children		
Susan Clifton	Trustee responsible for Safeguarding including Attendance	Sclifton@lotustrust.org.uk	01842 773673

Mrs J Cox can be contacted by both pupils and parents should they have any concerns or queries about attendance on a day-to-day basis and for more detailed information and support on attendance.

Mrs S Clifton is the trustee responsible for Safeguarding which includes Attendance.

As part of the monthly DSL meetings and half termly Trust Board monitoring visits, staff and trustees use attendance data to target or challenge attendance improvement efforts to the pupils who need it most.

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken by any member of the school administrative staff, at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent (authorised, unauthorised, illness)
- 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.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive at school by 9am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9:30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:15pm and will be kept open until 12:45pm

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Parents must also notify the school every morning of their child's absence.

The school should not request medical evidence for short periods of illness. However, medical evidence may be requested for longer periods or patterns of absence (periods of more than 5 consecutive days).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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.

If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in termtime must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up on any unexplained 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. Should a pupil be absent without reason, a member of the administrative team must call the parent by 9:35am to ascertain the reason for the absence.

Absence and safeguarding

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat can act as a warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. Our response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying any abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risks of them becoming a child missing education in future (KCSIE paragraph 177). Please refer to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

3.6 Promoting and incentivising good attendance.

The school promotes and incentivises good attendance through several initiatives:

- Weekly attendance certificates
- Termly £2.50 for 100% attendance winner (names of all pupils with 100% attendance for the term are put into a hat to select a winner)
- Termly attendance trips for pupil

3.7 Reporting to parents

We send an annual attendance letter to all parents. This letter is based on the LA letter which sets out the school's expectations, impact of poor attendance and legal intervention.

We report attendance each half term through the reporting process. These are rag rated so parents can immediately see if there is a concern.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The CEO may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the CEO's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Examples of unauthorised absence, such as when term-time holiday will not be approved
- Study leave – study leave is not granted by default and is only granted to pupils in year 11. Provision will still be made available for pupils who wish to revise in school
- Flexi-schooling/part-time timetable requests will be considered on a short-term basis and reviewed every 2 weeks to the following guidelines
- Part-time timetables should only be used as a **last resort** and for the **shortest possible time**
- They must have a **time-limited plan** with a clear return to full-time education
- They require **formal agreement** with parents
- Regular reviews must be documented
- They will be recorded using code C2

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence within a 10-week rolling period triggers consideration of a penalty notice.

Two penalty notices can be issued per parent per child in a 3-year period before prosecution is considered

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the CEO, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school works with parents to support regular attendance – for example, through communicating early about issues, acknowledging positive improvements, celebrating attendance each week, awarding weekly 100% attendance certificates and termly rewards trips.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2) and every day of absence thereafter.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an Attendance & Enforcement Officer from the LA's Attendance Service team, with which the school has a partnership. The school and LA have termly Attendance Targeted Support meetings to discuss school attendance and the need for any formal interventions.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Pupils are classified as "severely absent" if their attendance falls below 50%.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with trustees.

6.1 Attendance support strategy

Stage 1: Universal Support (All pupils)

- Continue promoting the importance of attendance

Stage 2: Early Intervention (Attendance drops below 95%)

- Initial conversation with parents to understand barriers
- Offer of support to address issues
- Clear expectations set

Stage 3: Intensive Support (Persistent absence - below 90%)

- Formal meeting with parents
- Development of an **attendance action plan** with clear targets
- Regular review meetings
- Consideration of early help assessment if appropriate
- Referral to LA attendance service

Stage 4: Severe Absence (Below 50%)

- Immediate safeguarding checks
- Multi-agency approach
- Consideration of legal intervention

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Trust board

The Trust board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school at least termly. It also holds the Headteacher to account for this policy's implementation.

7.2 The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to trustees.

The Head of School also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The attendance officer – Mrs J Cox

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Head of School
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Head of School when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Tutors

Tutors are responsible for promoting good attendance.

7.5 Admin staff

Admin staff are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Head of School. They are also expected to take or make calls to and from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

8. Pupils who miss part of a session

If a pupil leaves school after registration, you must still record them as present at registration, as they will still count as present for statistical purposes. There's no minimum time that a pupil has to be in school to be recorded as attending, so long as they're there during registration.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Head of School. At every review, the policy will be shared with the trust board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Admissions Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil 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 is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil 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 is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil 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 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 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 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 absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	<p>Pupil is unable to attend as they are:</p> <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 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 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 has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil 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