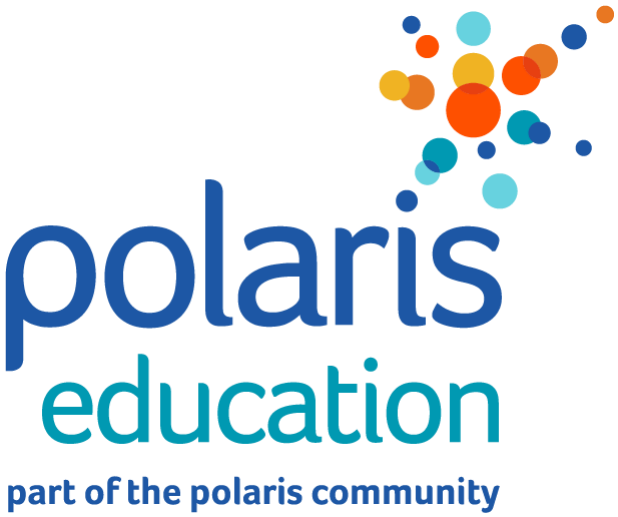


Attendance Policy

Procedure Owner:	Polaris Education
Approved by:	Managing Director
Date approved:	August 2026
Next review date:	August 2027
Version No:	04

Associated Documents:	This policy should be read alongside all other relevant policies, procedures, and guidance documents, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Trauma Informed Relationship and Behaviour Policy Exclusion Policy Medical Needs Policy Data Protection Policy

All group companies are detailed in the current legal structure.
This policy forms part of the Group Quality Management system ISO 9001.

Introduction

This policy reflects the vision and aims of the school by:

- Encouraging staff, parents, and pupils to maximise the learning experience in order that all pupils can reach their full potential.
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Principles

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils. We believe high attainment and future success depends on good attendance allowing each pupil to experience the full school offer.

We expect all school staff to support and promote excellent school attendance by acting as role models and to work hard to provide a learning environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel safe and valued and enjoy coming to school.

Sometimes a pupil's absence or lateness may not be their fault and in these circumstances, it is our policy to be supportive of the child and not to make them feel guilty or inadequate. Also, at times we have to give allowances for religious beliefs and individual family circumstances.

We believe it is essential to regularly remind parents of the importance of good attendance and its links to pupil attainment. The Education Act 1996 clearly states that the prime responsibility of parents/carers is to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

This policy has been written with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the Education Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years. Every pupil at a Polaris Education school holds an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and this policy should

be read alongside our SEND Information Report, our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and our procedures for children missing education.

Many of our pupils have experienced significant difficulty engaging with education before joining us, including extended periods of non-attendance. In line with the Polaris Education ethos, we hold the same high aspiration for attendance for every pupil as we would for any child, while recognising that reaching it will often take sustained, individualised, and relationship-based support delivered in partnership with families, placing/home local authorities, and other professionals – not sanction.

What is Good Attendance?

Good attendance means attending school every day, arriving on time, and being ready to learn. We believe that all pupils benefit from attending school regularly, as this supports their learning, wellbeing, relationships, and future outcomes. We therefore promote excellent attendance for every pupil and aspire for all pupils to attend as often as they can.

At the same time, we recognise that many of our pupils join us having experienced significant barriers to education, including long periods of absence, anxiety, trauma, health needs, or difficulties associated with their SEND. For these pupils, progress in attendance may be gradual and achieved in small but meaningful steps. We celebrate improvements from a pupil's individual starting point, recognising that moving from very low attendance towards more regular engagement can represent significant success. Our focus is on supporting each pupil to make sustained progress towards regular attendance, while maintaining high aspirations and recognising achievements along the way.

Aims

- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm.
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school.
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.
- To work with our other schools to share good practice to improve practice and policy.
- To recognise and respond sensitively to the additional barriers to attendance experienced by pupils with SEND, an EHCP, or Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), so that support – not sanction – is always our first response.
- To work in genuine partnership with parents/carers, placing/home local authorities, and health and care professionals, recognising that many of our pupils need coordinated, multi-agency support to attend school regularly.

Responsibility for the Policy and Procedure

Role of the Proprietor/Governing Body

The Proprietor and Governing Body will:

- Delegate powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school staff are aware of and comply with this policy.
- Nominate a link governor to visit the school regularly, to liaise with the Coordinator and to report back to the Governing Body.
- Ensure that the attendance policy is carried out.
- Monitor attendance trends and seek assurance that appropriate action is being taken to address persistent absence.
- Monitor termly progress.
- Take responsibility for ensuring this policy and all policies are maintained and updated regularly.
- Take responsibility for ensuring all policies are made available to parents.

Role of the Headteacher (who is also DSL)

The Headteacher will:

- Ensure the 'Pupil concerns list' is up to date and accurate and is known by the key staff.
- Ensure that unexplained absences, particularly involving vulnerable pupils, are assessed from a safeguarding perspective and that appropriate welfare checks and multi-agency referrals are undertaken where required.
- Act as the school's Senior Attendance Champion (or formally delegate this role to a named member of the leadership team), holding overall responsibility for setting the vision for attendance, maintaining a strong grasp of attendance data, and ensuring this policy is applied consistently.
- Ensure all school staff, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy.
- Undertake the daily monitoring of school attendance via the First Day Contact approach by using the appropriate and effective registration system.
- Monitor attendance according to gender, age, ethnicity, first language, eligibility for Free School Meals, special educational needs, children with a social worker or who are looked-after, young carers, and pupils on a part-time timetable or receiving alternative provision.
- Target intervention and support for children identified as having low attendance, or whose attendance has been highlighted through monitoring and data analysis.
- Have in place a system for parents to report a child's absence.
- Report the attendance figures and progress to the Governing Body.
- Remind parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Publicise good attendance during assemblies, newsletters and the termly

report to the Governing Body.
- Introduce rewards and incentives to encourage punctuality to lessons and positive attendance.
- Organise training for school staff on the use and understanding of attendance codes and authorised and unauthorised attendance.
- Work closely with the link governor and First Day Contact person – school administrator.
- Work closely with the pastoral team who will have the role of family liaison for those pupils who struggle to maintain high attendance.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy.
- Annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy.

Role of the School Office/ Administration Staff

The office personnel are responsible for:

- Implementing the policy with the Headteacher.
- Monitoring individual and class attendance on a daily basis.
- Keeping the Headteacher informed of attendance figures and trends.
- Contacting parents regarding concerns about their child's attendance – First day response call.
- Liaise with Pastoral team leader who will then contact /arrange home visits for any pupils where there is cause for concern.
- Compiling attendance data for the Headteacher, the Governing Body and the EWO.
- Ensuring registers are completed in a timely way and are kept up to date.

Role of the First Day Contact person (school administrator)

The First Day Contact person is responsible for:

- Contacting parents if they have not reported their child's absence by 9-30 a.m.
- Note whether any child who has not arrived in school is on the 'concerns list' and liaise with pastoral lead.
- Sending an email/ text/ letter if no contact is made.
- Continuing attempts to establish contact throughout the day and escalating concerns to the DSL and pastoral team where a pupil's whereabouts or welfare cannot be confirmed.
- Contacting the key worker if a child is on the school's pupil concerns list and no reason has been given for the child's absence.
- Informing the Headteacher of trends in absence.

Role of School staff

School staff will:

- Comply with and implement this policy.
- Set an example of punctuality and good attendance.
- Ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate times and are accurate and up to date.
- Monitor class and individual attendance patterns.
- Inform the school office of any concerns about attendance.
- Emphasise the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- Discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations.

Role of the Nominated Governor

The Nominated Governor will:

- Work closely with the Headteacher and the coordinator.
- Ensure this policy and other linked policies are up to date.
- Ensure that everyone connected with the school is aware of this policy.
- Report to the Governing Body every term.
- Annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy.

Role of Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance.
- Informing the school on the first day of absence.
- Informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
- Collecting their child/children promptly at the end of the school day.
- Supporting the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school.

Role of Pupils

Pupils are responsible for:

- Arriving at school on time.
- Knowing the value of good attendance.
- Taking part in questionnaires and surveys.

Welfare Checks and Safeguarding Response to Unexpected Absence

The school recognises that an unexpected absence may be an indicator that a child is at risk

of harm, neglect, exploitation, mental health crisis, missing episodes, or other safeguarding concerns. The welfare and safety of the child will always take precedence over attendance monitoring.

Where a pupil is absent without explanation, and the school has not received a satisfactory reason for the absence, the following actions will be taken:

- First-day contact procedures will be initiated as soon as possible.
- Reasonable attempts will be made to contact all known parents/carers and emergency contacts.
- Where the pupil is identified as vulnerable, is on the school's pupil concerns list, is looked after, has a social worker, or where there are known safeguarding concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed without delay.
- A welfare check may be undertaken, including a home visit by appropriate school staff where this is considered necessary and proportionate.
- Where the school is unable to establish the child's whereabouts or safety, advice may be sought from Children's Social Care, the placing/home local authority, the police, or any other relevant agency.
- All actions taken, contacts attempted, and decisions made will be recorded on the school's safeguarding system.

The school will adopt a risk-based approach. For pupils known to be vulnerable, welfare checks and safeguarding enquiries may be initiated immediately and without waiting until the end of the school day.

If the school has reason to believe that a pupil may be at risk of significant harm, is missing, or their safety cannot be assured, safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Dealing with Lateness

The office personnel and teaching staff monitor lateness and inform:

- The Headteacher of patterns of lateness.
- Parents of the school's concerns.

Absence

Holidays during term time – leave of absence for a holiday will only be granted at the Headteacher's discretion in exceptional circumstances. Every request is considered individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances of the pupil and family. A need or desire for a holiday for leisure or recreation is not, in itself, considered an exceptional circumstance. Parents/carers are asked to submit any request in writing and in

good time, using the school's leave of absence request form.

Religious Observance -- where a day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious community to which a pupil's parent/carer/key adult belongs, this will be recorded as authorised absence for that day. Where a family requests more than one day for the same occasion, only one day can be recorded against the religious observance code; any further days requested will be considered, on their individual merits, as a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, at the Headteacher's discretion.

Medical, Dental or Hospital Appointments – we encourage these appointments to take place out of school time (where possible) in order not to disrupt the child's education.

Pupils who struggle to attend school

Many of our pupils have found attending school difficult in the past, and some may be anxious or reluctant to attend. We take this seriously and respond with curiosity and support rather than assumption. Any concerns about a pupil's attendance are worked through collaboratively between the school, the pupil, their parents/carers, and, where involved, other professionals and the placing local authority. Avoiding a difficult conversation about attendance, or allowing avoidance to continue unchallenged and unsupported, rarely helps a child in the long term – so we combine high aspiration with genuine, sustained support, recognising that this may take time and may need to be revisited as a pupil's circumstances change. If there are any concerns it is always best to work with the school staff to try to resolve the issues to then support the pupil to attend school well.

Repeated unexplained absences, sudden changes in attendance patterns, or situations where the school is unable to confirm a pupil's safety and wellbeing will be treated as potential safeguarding concerns. In such circumstances, the school will undertake proportionate welfare checks and work with parents/carers and partner agencies to establish the child's whereabouts and safety.

Supporting Pupils with SEND, EHCPs, and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Pupils attending a Polaris Education school usually have an Education, Health and Care Plan. Many will also experience anxiety, trauma, sensory or communication needs, or other factors that can present as Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). We recognise that:

- The ambition for regular attendance is the same for every pupil, but the pathway to achieving it will look different for each child.
- Non-attendance linked to anxiety or SEND is a sign that a pupil needs support, not a behaviour to be managed through sanctions.
- School staff are not expected to diagnose or treat a pupil's underlying health needs, but are expected to work with families, clinicians, and other professionals to identify reasonable adjustments and put support in place.
- Where a pupil's SEND or health needs mean they may benefit from a phased

return, reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010, or a temporary part-time timetable. This will be planned, agreed with parents/carers, and regularly reviewed (see Part-Time Timetables, below).

- Any pattern of emerging non-attendance will be discussed with the pupil's key worker, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and, where relevant, considered at their next EHCP annual review, so that support responds to the whole picture of the pupil's needs.
- We will never assume that a pupil's reluctance to attend is simply defiance, and we will avoid punitive responses to anxiety-based absence.

Persistent and Severe Absence

In line with national guidance, we define persistent absence as attendance below 90% (the equivalent of one day or more a fortnight) across the school year, and severe absence as attendance below 50% – a pupil who is absent more than they are present.

Given the complex needs and educational histories of many of our pupils, reaching these thresholds is treated first and foremost as a signal that a pupil needs more support, not as a matter for sanction. Where a pupil's absence reaches either threshold, we will work with the pupil, their family, the placing/home local authority, and any other professionals involved to agree and regularly review a support plan, in line with the graduated response set out in this policy.

Attendance Codes

In line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, every session is recorded using the national attendance and absence codes. These include, but are not limited to: I (illness), C (leave of absence – exceptional circumstances), C2 (part-time timetable), M (medical/dental appointment), R (religious observance), D (dual registration at another school or setting), K (education arranged by the local authority), E (suspension or exclusion), and the Y-series codes (unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause, such as Y6 for criminal justice detention or Y7 for another unavoidable cause). Staff receive training on the correct use of these codes, and any code is amended promptly – with a clear reason, date, and author recorded – where the reason for an absence becomes known after the register was taken.

Part-Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, and only where it is in a pupil's best interests, we may agree a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable – for example, as part of a phased transition into school or reintegration following a significant period of non-attendance.

A part-time timetable will only be used where:

- It is agreed by the school and the parent/carer and the placing local authority (LA).
- It forms part of a clear support, health, or reintegration plan, with a defined ambition.
- It has a proposed end date and is kept under regular review, involving the pupil and their parents/carers and LA.
- It is never used as a way of managing behaviour.

Where a pupil has an EHCP, any part-time timetable will always be discussed with the local

authority responsible for maintaining the plan, so that the plan itself can be reviewed if needed.

Authorised and Unauthorised absence

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.
This includes:

- **parents keeping pupils off school unnecessarily**
- **truancy before or during the school day**
- **absences which have never been properly explained**

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Placing Local Authority (if appropriate the Social Worker).

It is not usually appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which cannot be managed out of school time.

All other absences and holiday requests

As an independent school, we are not bound by the same leave of absence regulations as maintained schools; however, we follow the same principles of good practice set out in national guidance. The Headteacher will not authorise leave or absence from school unless satisfied that the circumstances are genuinely exceptional to that pupil and family, each request is considered against the best practice set out by the DfE. Any such request must be submitted in good time and in writing, and a decision, with reasons, will be given to parents/carers in writing.

Information about individual school targets

The school has adopted the following attendance targets:
Any attendance which falls below 95% is enough to set off initial support plans. Attendance of less than 90% will lead to enhanced checks and support planning.

Dealing with Trends in Attendance

When there is a pattern of poor attendance then the following procedure will take place:

- Parents are invited to attend an informal meeting with the Coordinator/Headteacher to explain their child's repeated absence.
- Support will be offered if there are underlying reasons for the absence.
- If not, then the situation will be monitored for improvement.
- If there is no improvement, then appropriate action will be taken.

Working in Partnership with Families

We recognise that strong, trusting relationships with families are fundamental to improving attendance. Many of our pupils have experienced barriers to education and require a collaborative, supportive approach that values the expertise and perspectives of parents and carers. We will work in partnership with families by-:

- Maintaining regular, open, and respectful communication regarding attendance, wellbeing, and any emerging concerns.
- Seeking to understand the underlying reasons for absence and working with families to identify practical solutions and appropriate support.
- Involving parents/carers in attendance planning, reintegration arrangements, and reviews of support strategies.
- Recognising that attendance difficulties may be linked to SEND, anxiety, trauma, health needs, or family circumstances, and responding with empathy and flexibility where appropriate.
- Ensuring families know who to contact for support and encouraging them to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Celebrating successes and progress in attendance, recognising that for some pupils positive change may occur gradually over time.

We are committed to a relationship-based approach that combines high expectations for attendance with understanding, compassion, and shared responsibility. By working together, we aim to help every pupil feel safe, valued, and able to engage fully in education.

Working with the Placing (Home) Local Authority

Many of our pupils are placed with us by a local authority other than the one in which the school is located. We will work jointly with the placing (home) local authority to support attendance, including:

- Sharing attendance and absence data in line with our data protection and information sharing arrangements.
- Involving the placing local authority, Virtual School Head (for looked-after children), social worker, or other named professional in support planning wherever a pupil's attendance is a concern.
- Agreeing with the placing local authority when formal support (such as an attendance contract or Education Supervision Order) may be appropriate – recognising that, as an independent school, we cannot issue penalty notices, and that any decision to prosecute rests with the local authority.
- Ensuring that every pupil's EHCP annual review considers their attendance, the barriers affecting it, and the support in place to address them.

Raising Awareness of this Policy

We will raise awareness of this policy via:

- The school website.
- Meetings with parents such as introductory, transition, parent-teacher consultations, and periodic curriculum workshops.
- School events.
- Meetings with school staff.
- Communications with home such as weekly newsletters and of end of half term newsletters.
- Headteacher reports to the Governing Body.

Review Dates

Date:	Version:	Summary of Changes:
August 2026	04	Routine Review