Leigh Academy Tonbridge

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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1. Introductory Statement

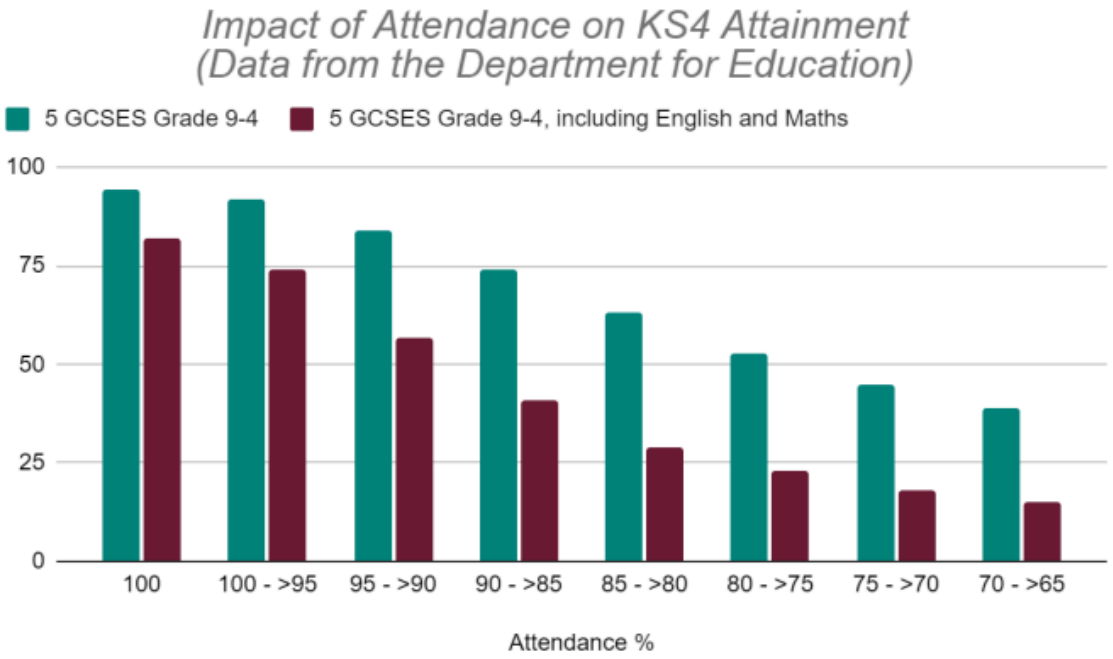
Leigh Academy Tonbridge adheres to the principles and guidance as set out in the DfE publication, “Working together to improve school attendance.” July 2026. The Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance is Vice Principal Patrick Bidder.

Working together to improve school attendance

The Academy has a statutory responsibility to ensure that every child on-roll is safe by recording their daily attendance at morning and afternoon registration and monitoring their physical and emotional well-being during the day. It is a fundamental ethos of the Leigh Academies Trust to celebrate success and achievement and all Academies in the Trust actively promote and encourage 100% attendance by all of our students.

All children have the right to access education every day of the academic year. This enables them to engage, progress and achieve in all aspects of Academy life. Positive life outcomes are fundamentally linked to excellent attendance and punctuality. We know the importance of all of our students benefiting from the 190 days of learning they are entitled to, to ensure they make progress and achieve the results they should. If a school can improve its attendance by 1%, this can result in a 5-6% improvement in attainment.

Parents and carers have a vital role, as well as a legal responsibility, to ensure good attendance and punctuality. As an Academy, developing effective links with parents is a high priority and we are committed to regularly conveying to parents, carers and students the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality. It is an offence in law to permit absence without good reason and may result in prosecution under the Anti – Social Behaviour Act 2003 and under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.



2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Academy will:

● Ensure that all staff are aware of the Registration procedures and receive appropriate professional development with regard to these.

● Complete Registration accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, including registration during every lesson of the day.

● Stress to parents / carers the importance of contacting the Academy on every day of absence, and provide effective mechanisms for them to make contact with the Academy.

● Promote the importance that full attendance and punctuality play in achieving the best possible educational outcomes.

● Promote race, disability and gender equality within all practices and procedures related to attendance and punctuality.

● Through consultation days and reporting systems, ensure that parents, carers and students are made aware of the attendance pattern and provide an opportunity to discuss how it may affect learning and offer supportive strategies to improve attendance.

● Work towards ensuring that all students feel supported and valued.

● Support students who have difficulty accessing education through the work of the Academy support, Trust Attendance and Welfare Officer and Local authority, Early Help / Family Solutions, Schools Liaison Officer/Attendance service.

● Actively promote and encourage 100% attendance.

2.2 The Students will:

The academy minimum expected attendance for each and every student is 100%. This is referred to throughout this policy as “regular attendance”. Excellent punctuality is also an expectation of students. Being punctual each and every day prepares students well for the world of work and later life. All students are expected to;

- Be in school by 8.35am.
- Attend line up and all lessons on time.
- Be punctual to all other events, trips and activities they take part in and that are linked to the school.
- In exceptional cases where a student has a diagnosed medical condition/need, the condition/need is supported by an up to date diagnosis, and if the specific condition/need is known to impact the student’s ability to attend school we will make reasonable adjustments to the application of this policy/attendance processes.
- Where evidence is not forthcoming or there is no clinical professional’s support for the need for absence no adjustments can/will be made.
- Please refer to the Behaviour and Attitudes Policy for sanctions with regards lateness to school and punctuality to lessons.

2.3 The Parents / Carers will:

● Actively promote and encourage 100% attendance.

● Contact the school whenever the student is absent on the first day and on each day after, of absence.

● Provide proof of medical appointments and medical treatment if required to do so by the Academy.

● Avoid removing their child during the Academy day.

● Attend attendance meetings with members of staff from the Academy when requested, working in partnership with the Academy to put in place strategies to improve attendance.

2.4 The Local Authority will:

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with school staff in resolving any problems regarding absence together. This is nearly always successful. If unauthorised absences continue then the school may refer to the Local Authority.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the Principal creates an offence in law. For students whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the School, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

1) The parents/carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice, which carries a fine of £80, per parent/carer, per child. If the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days, it rises to £160 per parent/carer, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated. Each parent is limited to a maximum of two penalty notices for the same child within a rolling three-year period. A second offence inside that timeframe automatically incurs a flat rate of £160 with no early-payment discount.

2) The Local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment. Unauthorised Absences could lead to a referral to the Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) under the Anti – Social Behaviour Act 2003 and under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

3. Attendance Procedures

3.1 The Academy Day and Line-up

MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY & FRIDAY	
8:35am	Students to be on site
8:40am	Lineup followed by form time
9:10am	Period 1
10:10am	Break
10:30am	Period 2
11:30pm	Period 3
12:30pm	Lunch (KS4 and KS5 students can leave site)
1:20pm	Period 4
2:20pm	Period 5
3:20pm	End of day

WEDNESDAY	
8:35am	Students to be on site
8:40am	Lineup followed by form time
9:10am	Period 1
10:10am	Period 2
11:10am	Break
1:30am	Period 3
12:30pm	Period 4
1:30pm	Lunch (KS4 and KS5 students can leave site)
2:00pm	Line up and registration for KS3
2:05pm	End of day

● The statutory recording of attendance and absence at the start of the morning session is known as Line-Up and Tutor Time. This is undertaken within the first 30 minutes of the morning (8.40am to 9.10am) and then at the start of the afternoon session. Wherever possible this Registration is taken ‘electronically’ by register calling.

● Designated staff will be reminded of their legal duty to complete and submit Roll Call at the appropriate time and using the correct registration codes (Appendix 1).

● Registers for Registration will officially close 30 minutes after the start of the am and pm session and 10 minutes after the start of each lesson throughout the school day. Students who arrive anytime between the end of line up and 9.10am will be marked as late. Students who arrive late after 9.10am will be marked as an unauthorised absence, ‘U’, for the morning session and will receive a sanction.

● The afternoon session for registration is undertaken between 12.30pm and 1pm.

3.2 Informing the Academy of Absence If a child is absent Parents or Carers must:

● Contact the Student Absence phone line prior to 8.15am on the first day and subsequent days of absence, advising of the reason and likely length of absence.

● Call the academy on 01732 500600 and choose option 1 to leave a message regarding any absence or email (attendance@tonbridge.latrust.org.uk) to provide any necessary evidence to authorise the absence. This needs to be completed as soon as the evidence is available. The Academy will not chase up medical evidence; this is a parental responsibility to provide it. Wherever possible, all medical appointments should be taken outside school time. Medical evidence can be an attached photo, screenshot or photocopy of:

- letter from medical professional,
- appointment card with student name date and time,
- copy of prescription note,
- copy of prescribed medication sticker on side of medicine packaging

● Request a discussion/meeting with the Academy’s Attendance Officer to discuss extended absence due to illness or if there are any other concerns affecting school attendance. If the Academy is not informed of an absence, it will take the following action:

Day 1

Absence without reason, a call will be made by the Attendance Officer.

Day 2

If no response to day 1 call, 2nd day call made by the Attendance Officer. The Academy will attempt to contact ALL contacts if unable to contact the main parent/carer. If the family is supported by external agencies (e.g., Social Services etc.), they will be contacted.

Day 3

If no response to 1st and 2nd day call, a text is sent from the Attendance Officer. A home visit is arranged and a letter is sent warning that 10 unauthorised sessions will result in a referral to the Local Authority and requesting contact from parents.

Day 4

If there is no response, a meeting with the Director of Progress and College Team will be scheduled.

Day 5

If there is still no response, a referral to the Local Authority will be made, who decide the prosecution route and a Penalty Notice can be issued if a student reaches a total of 10 sessions of unauthorised absences.

3.3 Unauthorised Absence: Absence will be deemed unauthorised where:

● Parents or carers do not provide medical evidence to support absence due to ill health when requested by the Academy.

● Parents or carers remove students from school for holidays or trips during term time

● Students arrive at the Academy after the registration period has closed

● Parents or carers keep children from the Academy unnecessarily

● Parents or carers do not communicate the reason for absence to the Academy

● A student truants and is absent without the parents' or carers' knowledge

Holidays in Term time will never be authorised. The Academy is closed for 14 weeks a year when parents can take holidays and travel abroad. Where there is an exceptional circumstance resulting in a student being absent during term time, a request can be made to the Principal in writing or via email who will then consider the application and respond in writing. The Principal's decision is final.

A student who has 10 unauthorised sessions across a 10 week period may be liable for a fixed penalty notice by KPAS.

3.4 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Students arriving late cannot start the day effectively, may disrupt lessons, and encourage absence or poor punctuality in others. Our Academy is located in a very accessible part of Tonbridge with the majority of students living within walking or cycling distance, therefore only traffic issues that involve students commuting a greater distance will be considered, unless a major incident has taken place. Where students are late to the Academy, with no valid reason the following punctuality protocols will be followed:

● The Academy day starts officially at 8.35am and we expect students to be through the gate and on their way to their morning registration lineup by 8.40am.

● Any student who arrives through the gate after 8.40am will be expected to enter and will be kept separate from line up in the playground. They will be issued a late mark ('L') anytime between the registration period of 8.40am and 9.10am.

● Lateness after 9.10am results in an absence mark for the morning session which, without valid reason, would be deemed unauthorised (U), along with an immediate sanction.

● If a student is late to school or lessons on three separate occasions in a week, the student will be sanctioned with a 60-minute centralised detention. Persistent lateness can lead to a meeting with the Academy Attendance Officer.

● Poor punctuality resulting in unauthorised absences (U) e.g after 9.10am, is classed as irregular Academy attendance and is dealt with accordingly. This may mean that parents or carers could face the possibility of legal action.

● If you know your child is going to be late for a specific reason please call the Academy before 8:30am, following the same procedures for absence.

● If a student is returning to the Academy following an absence during the day they will need to arrive for registration between 12.30 and 1pm, or they would be marked as absent for the afternoon session.

Leaving Site During the Day

● Medical Reasons - The student should seek medical attention from our on-site first aider. With permission, a student may take time out of a lesson (in the first aid room) to see if their condition improves. The first aider may feel that it is not appropriate for the child to be in the Academy due to poor health. Permission from the Attendance Officer or Head of College must be granted before a child leaves the site due to feeling unwell. First aid staff will contact parents or carers to gain permission to send the student home; in some cases the parent will be required to collect their child from the Academy

● Students must NOT personally contact parents during the Academy day and request collection or permission to leave.

● Prior to leaving the Academy site, all students must report to reception and be officially signed out. If Parents/Carers are unable to collect their child and they are of secondary school age, and have given verbal permission for the student to leave the Academy, they will also sign out in reception

● Post 16 students who wish to leave the site during the Academy day must adhere to the signing out procedures determined by the Director of Progress for Post 16.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of attendance is systematic and rigorous to ensure there is a strategic approach to improving a student's attendance where it is below expected and impacting on their progress:

● Academy attendance data will be published for consideration at every Academy board meeting. It may also be submitted to the Trust Academies Standards Committee as required.

● Attendance Data will be produced regularly and distributed to the Senior Leadership Team to enable interventions to occur.

● The relevant Senior Leader and Student Support Manager/pastoral support staff within each college/Academy will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their college/Academy.

● The Head of each College has responsibility for the attendance figures, and actions to improve attendance within their College.

● The Vice Principal in charge of Attendance has overall responsibility for the publication and monitoring of the attendance data for the whole Academy.

● Attendance data will be collected via the DfE Census three times per academic year.

5. Strategies for Improving Attendance and Punctuality

● The school's attendance lead is Mr Bidder (Vice Principal) who will work alongside our attendance officer Mrs Young to monitor attendance across the school.

● The person responsible for leading attendance in each college will meet regularly with relevant staff and make them aware of significant attendance trends and patterns and seek

their support to address any issues with students, parents / carers and other stakeholders. This may include Student Support Managers, form tutors, Directors of Progress, College Leadership teams, and other staff as appropriate.

● Attendance, punctuality and its impact on learning and progress will be a key area for discussion between Tutors, Student Support, College Leadership teams and parents / carers during consultation days.

● A range of positive strategies will be used to reward individual students and groups for outstanding and/or improved attendance.

● Regular attendance meetings will be held between The Vice Principal responsible for attendance, the Attendance Officer, the Trust Attendance team and the LA

● Student attendance data may be shared with Parents/Carers, Local Authority, Early Help / Family Solutions, School Liaison Officer/Attendance Service , Children's Social Services, Police, relevant LEA's, Ofsted and the DfE.

● We understand the importance of working with all stakeholders to improve attendance within the academy and we follow the guidance from the DFE 'Working together to improve school attendance.'

Education for Health Needs including Mental Health

The Academy will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult to cope with due to their mental health issues.

Where the Academy has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where a member of staff has a mental health concern about a student that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

In order to support parents with their child's progress, the school will liaise with parents openly and honestly in a sensitive manner where mental health concerns have been identified in relation to absence.

If a student is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their mental health issues, the school will:

- Liaise with any agencies working with the pupil.
- If felt appropriate, a referral will be put into Family Support/Early Help to request support.
- Liaise regularly with parents/carers and the pupil.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will implement an action plan in conjunction with the parents/carers and the student to support any stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. The plan will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the student is attending school as normal and there has been signs

of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of students with mental health issues, the school will consider:

- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable (for a maximum of two weeks).
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and break times.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

6. Leave of Absence during Term Time

The Academy may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are very exceptional circumstances. Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in writing to the Principal of the Academy. The Principal of the Academy will make the final decision of acceptance or refusal. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

The Government and Local Authority states that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. If your decision remains unchanged and you decide to take your child out of school, it will be recorded as unauthorised and may be subject to a penalty notice.

From September 2013, the DfE amended the Education (penalty notices) (England) Regulations 2007, so that each parent/carer who receives a Penalty Notice for taking their child out of school during term time has to pay £80 within 28 days or £160 within 28 days. Please be aware, non-payment of penalty notices may result in further legal prosecution.

7. Persistent Absence Referrals

A student is deemed to be a PA (Persistent Absentee) if their attendance falls below 90%. The Academy will expect 100%, with students below 96% being considered at risk by the local authority. Students who fall into either of these categories, will be monitored by the Academy attendance teams..

Analysis of attendance by year groups will identify strengths and areas for intervention to further improve attendance. A referral may be made to the local authority attendance service should attendance remain poor after Academy and Trust interventions.

- First day calling for absence by the Attendance Officer.
- SSM regularly reviews attendance within their college.
- Request for medical evidence made by Attendance Officer or SSM.
- When a student has had two sessions of non-attendance the SSM will send a letter of concern

- When that student has three more sessions of non-attendance the SSM will arrange a meeting in which an Attendance Improvement Plan is implemented.
- Continued unauthorised absences will escalate to the Attendance Officer and the Vice Principal responsible for attendance before potentially being referred to LAT Advisor and KCC.

8. Medical Absence and Alternative Provision

The Academy will operate according to it's statutory duties under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 and the DfE statutory guidance 'Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school'. The Academy will refer to the Local Authority regarding alternative provision where a student cannot attend school full-time for 15 days or more, consecutive or otherwise, due to a physical or mental health need that has been medically evidenced.

Under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, a school may only remove the name of a pupil who is unable to attend school due to health needs from its admission register in specific, highly regulated circumstances. This includes situations where the pupil has been certified by a medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither the pupil nor their parent has indicated an intention to continue attending the school after this period.

9. Penalty Notices

The Academy follows set procedures set out by the Local Authority for issuing penalty notices. The Local Authority Attendance Service takes responsibility for issuing Penalty notices and taking other legal actions following referral by the Academy. Ten unauthorised sessions of absence (including Holiday (G) / Unauthorised Absence (O) / Unauthorised Late (U)) may result in a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution through the Magistrates Court. A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

9.1 Unauthorised absence Penalty Notices:

● A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence.

● Parents/Carers and students are supported by the Academy and local authority to overcome barriers to regular attendance. Sanctions of any nature are used where parental cooperation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

● A penalty notice can only be issued as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that its use will secure improvement.

● A penalty notice can only be issued where a student has been absent or late for a period/periods of time and the absence or lateness has not been authorised by the Academy.

● After the Academy has taken steps to resolve attendance concerns/warned the parent/carer of possible Penalty Notice referral, the Academy will refer directly to the local authority, to issue a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence where the student has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions without authorisation during a 10 week period – these do not need to be consecutive.

Suspension:

A penalty notice can be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

10. Removing a Student from the Academy Roll

In Year Casual Admissions

If parents/carers transfer their child to another school or Academy, they should advise the Attendance Advisory Officer and the school Principal as a matter of priority, providing all necessary details, including any new address (if relevant) and the school or Academy the child is transferring to. When in the process of a school or Academy transfer the child must continue to attend Leigh Academy Tonbridge until a start date has been agreed with the new school or Academy. If the Academy does not receive this information and it is evident the child has left Kent, he or she becomes a 'Child Missing Education' (CME). Any child in this category is reported to KPAS, who will follow up the matter under safeguarding legislation and ensure the pupil is on roll within another Local Authority or abroad.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

If parents or carers take the decision to educate a child at home, they must tell the Academy of this in writing – this letter or email should be addressed to the Principal and include the date of decision to home educate and a brief explanation of the reasons for EHE. The Academy will write back to the parent/carer offering a meeting (with the Principal and/or Head of College) to attempt to resolve any issues first along with a 10 day cooling off period. The Academy will inform the Local Authority who will make contact with parents or carers. The student will only be removed from roll after the above actions have been taken and after the 10 day cooling off period as elapsed. If an EHE request letter or email is not received, the student remains on the Academy roll and action may be undertaken following irregular or non-academy attendance procedures; again this could lead to prosecution or an instant fine under the Anti – Social Behaviour Act 2003 and under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996

Failing to attend

Statutory Notification to the Local Authority

In accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the Academy will notify the Local Authority within 5 days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register or removing a pupil's name from the admission register at any non-standard transition point.

Failing to Attend and Child Missing Education (CME)

Where a pupil has failed to attend the Academy within 10 school days immediately following an authorised leave of absence, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend, the Academy and Local Authority will make joint reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is. If unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts, we will submit a Child Missing Education (CME) referral to the Local Authority and remove the pupil from the roll. (School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024)

Where a pupil has failed to attend the Academy for 20 continuous school days or more and the absence is unauthorised, the Academy and Local Authority will undertake joint reasonable enquiries to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts. If both the Academy and the Local Authority fail to locate the child, and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unable to attend due to sickness or any unavoidable cause, we will submit a CME referral and remove the pupil from the roll with the agreement of the Local Authority. (School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024)

Pupils Whose Whereabouts are Known (Severe Absence)

For the avoidance of doubt, pupils whose whereabouts are known to the Academy but who are experiencing severe prolonged absence, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), or school refusal will not be classified as a Child Missing Education (CME).

The Academy will not remove these students from the admission register under unauthorised absence regulations. Instead, the Academy will continue to provide targeted attendance, pastoral, and safeguarding support. Where appropriate, the Academy will work jointly with the Local Authority to explore alternative provision under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 for students who are medically unfit to attend school.

Entrance of pupils on Academies Register

We will only enter pupils on the admission register where we have received written confirmation that the person with control of the pupil's attendance has accepted the school place.

Where the local authority has offered a place at the school but no written confirmation of acceptance has been received from the person with control of the pupil's attendance, we will write to the local authority requesting evidence in writing and will not enter the pupil onto the admission register until this has been received.

If written confirmation is not received within 10 school days, the offer of a place will be withdrawn and offered to another pupil in accordance with our Admissions Policy. We will enter pupils' names on our register on the first day they attend the school. Names must be added before, or at the beginning of the first session on that day.

Where a pupil does not attend on the agreed date, we will send a letter to the person with control of the pupil's attendance asking them to confirm in writing within 10 school days that they wish to take up the place. If written confirmation is not received within 10 school days, the pupil's name will be removed from the admission register and the place offered to another pupil in accordance with the admission policy.

11. Appendix 1

Registration Codes

/ Present (AM) \ Present (PM)

B Educated off site (NOT at an alternative provision must be face to face in person teaching)

C Other Authorised Circumstances

C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated

performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time

Timetable (only if effects AM or PM mark)

D Dual registration (i.e. student attending other establishment)

E Excluded (no alternative provision made)

G Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)

I Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)

J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for

employment or for admission to another educational institution

K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority (section 19 referrals)

L Late (before registers closed)

M Medical/Dental appointments

N No reason yet provided for absence

O Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)

P Approved sporting activity

Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements (delayed bus pass)

R Religious observance

S Study leave

T Traveller absence

U Late (after registers closed)

V Educational visit or trip

W Work experience

X Non-compulsory school age absence

Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law -(coloured red on NHS chart of advice that states cannot attend school)

Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Z Student not yet on roll

School closed to students