

Yorke Mead Primary School

Attendance Policy

December 2022



Our School Vision Statement

BRINGING LEARNING to LIFE

We are a school dedicated to creating an environment where children are able to grow into happy, well-rounded individuals with a love of learning through which they can achieve to the best of their abilities.

We want our pupils to enter the wider world as

- o Happy, positive individuals*
- o Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution*
- o Confident, resilient, healthy & life-long learners.*

DARE TO...

D - Determination

A - Ambition

R - Resilience

E – Enjoyment

T - Trust

O - Openness

At Yorke Mead Primary School, we want the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance helps the children in this school community to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Yorke Mead School aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

We believe that good school attendance assists children and young people to achieve the following 5 outcomes:

- To be healthy
- To stay safe
- To enjoy and achieve
- To make a positive contribution
- To achieve economic well-being

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

At Yorke Mead attendance levels are reported termly to the whole governing body and monitored in more depth by the Children's Committee.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, in consultation with the local authority
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

3.3 The attendance secretary

The school attendance secretary is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Contacting parents if their child is absent to enquire about reasons for absence
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leaders and the headteacher
- Working with the local authority attendance secretaries to tackle persistent absence
- Supporting the headteacher to issue fixed-penalty notices by providing appropriate notices etc.

The attendance secretary is Susan Dawkins and can be contacted via telephone or email

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. This happens at the start of the school morning session and again at the start of the afternoon session.

3.5 School admin staff

School staff will:

- Take calls from parents [and pupils] about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:50am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when their child is expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto 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 whether every pupil is:

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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

At Yorke Mead school starts at 8:45am and doors open at 8:40am. Gates are locked by 8:50am and any child arriving after this must be signed in by a parent at the school office. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45am and will be kept open until 8:50am. The register for the second session will be taken straight after lunchtime.

School finishes at 3:15 pm.

Breakfast Club opens at 7:45 am.

Nursery runs from 9:00 am until 3 pm. Children have flexible hours in Nursery.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7). Alternatively, parents can email admin@yorkemead.herts.sch.uk with details of the absence and the reasons for this.

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer 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 about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The time children arrive is recorded and pupils consistently arriving late will receive communication about the amount of learning lost. The headteacher may request a meeting with parents/carers to explore ways improvement to punctuality can be supported.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may visit the home address or consider whether it is necessary to take further measures such as contacting the police. This would be relevant if there are safeguarding concerns.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

Where there is no contact with parents and the pupil is absent from school, without reason, the school will implement procedures with the local authority as per the children missing from education policy.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels on an annual basis if there are no concerns. If attendance becomes a concern the school will make parents aware of this in the following ways:

- Attendance may be discussed at a parent consultation meeting
- The headteacher may write a letter informing parent of attendance concerns
- Parents may be invited to a meeting to discuss attendance concerns

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as circumstances that could not be reasonably foreseen and for which there was insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances. There are some key religious and civil events we may consider exceptional such as the wedding of a family member.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The attendance of the pupil to date, current and previous years, is also taken into account when considering applications.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments that cannot be arranged out of the school day

- 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
- An approved activity such as a music exam, attendance at a sporting/art event organised through an official club e.g. touring with a theatre group etc.

Unauthorised Absence from school would include:

- *No explanation of an absence*
- *The school is not satisfied with the explanation or has informed parents that medical evidence is required*
- *An unexceptional special occasion e.g. a birthday*
- *Shopping*
- *Illness that could be managed in school such as minor cold, minor cough etc*
- *Minor parent/ sibling illness*

Where a child has been seen out in the community on a day that they are absence from school, or tells us on their return information about their day of absence that promotes concern around the authenticity of the reason for the absence, this may be questioned with parents and the absence may subsequently not be approved.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The key aim at Yorke Mead is to create a school where children feel safe and happy – this is the first and most important way we promote positive school attendance. Where attendance begins to fall, the initial strategy is to look at the reason for this. When the reason is identified we can employ strategies to improve this. Our general strategies include:

- termly attendance badges and certificates of achievement.
- establishing greater support and relationships in school with a keyworker to help the child (and parent) feel supported and encouraging good relationships.
- meeting children at the door and at the gate to support them in taking first steps into school.
- daily phone calls to chase children not in school who we have not heard from.
- supporting parents by administering prescribed medicines in school.

- bringing attendance to parents' attention and discussing this at parent consultations.
- termly letters highlighting attendance concerns.
- letters to parents when attendance has improved.
- encouraging good attendance from the start (EYFS) to try to prevent poor habits developing.

7. Attendance monitoring

The school will monitor attendance regularly (at least monthly) and consider whether any pupil requires an attendance support intervention.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school, and monthly at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Where attendance is below 90% and is not improving, an attendance improvement plan will be put in place. Parents will be asked to meet regularly with a member of the SLT to explore strategies to support improved school attendance

7.5 Actions the school will take when attendance becomes persistent or is at risk of becoming persistent

If the positive strategies identified in section 6 do not succeed in improving attendance, the school will consider how to support parents to understand why we are concerned about their child's attendance, and to encourage an improvement in this. These will include:

- meeting with parents and sharing attendance data with the absences and lateness coloured and highlighted to show patterns.
- when absence patterns are the result of regular short illnesses, and there is concern that a child could be in school with these, informing parents these will no longer be authorised.
- conducting home visits when a pattern emerges of a parent not responding to phone calls during a period of absence and there is a concern – this may be to check the reason for absence or to deliver a letter in relation to the absence.
- creating an attendance improvement plan with the parent to support improved school attendance looking at ways we can help a child get into school more regularly.
- involving the attendance improvement team at county level.

If the strategies above are not successful and/or parents will not engage with the processes the school will work with the local authority and this may result in a penalty notice being issued.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum will be reviewed every three years by the senior leadership team and headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
I	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
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Parents are responsible for making sure that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

Section 7 of Education Act 1996 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise