

**Outcomes  
First  
Group.**

**Acorn Education**

**Options Autism**

# **Attendance and Absence Procedures Policy**



## SCHOOLS

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

**Implementation:** It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

This policy should be read in conjunction with, and complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed, including:

- [Keeping Children Safe In Education \(KCSIE\) 2024](#)
- [DFE: Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [DFE: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#)
- [DFE: Children missing education Statutory guidance for local authorities 2024](#)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Parent-School Communication Policy

### 2.0 GENERAL

#### Ethos

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children and young people need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. At Options Barton School we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for our learners. We will encourage good attendance for all children and young people, by offering an environment in which they feel valued and part of the school community.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child/young person has good attendance, the Head teacher, Governors and staff work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children and young people are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

## Aims:

Through this policy, Options Barton School will:

- Make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including students, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of their education.
- Work in partnership with CYP, parents, staff and the Local Authority SEND Teams, so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which CYP feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in CYP a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

## It is recognised that:

- The majority of students want to attend school to learn, to engage with school staff and activities alongside their peers, and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society
- Some students may need to be supported and rewarded in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities
- All students have an equal right and access to, an education in accordance with a curriculum, that meets their needs as a learner with Autism and Complex Needs
- No student will be deprived of their educational opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- All staff, but especially class teachers, play a key role in promoting good attendance.

## 3.0 EXPECTATIONS

### Options Barton School expect all our students will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day

### Options Barton expects that families will:

- Endeavour to arrange health appointments out of school hours wherever possible.
- Inform a student's teacher, Head teacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or EWO of any reason or problem that may prevent a student from attending school.
- Fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure that students attend school.
- Inform school, as soon as is practical and preferably early on the morning, **before 9:30am**, of absence, whenever a student is unable to attend school, for each and every day of absence
- Seek permission from the school for any leave of absence.

**Parents/Carers and students can expect the following from the school:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Early contact with family or care staff when a student is absent without explanation
- Action on any attendance problem notified to the school
- Education staff supporting positive transitions from home to school or care to school as appropriate
- Referral of specific attendance issues to supporting agencies where appropriate
- Attendance figures published in each Student's Annual Education Review Report
- Flexibility and understanding around a student's attendance pattern where related to their Autism and Complex Needs. Examples may include: An agreed delayed start to the day to support positive travel from home to school for a day student
- Accurate recording of arrival into / departure from school in order to inform planning and reporting in order to promote and sustain appropriate attendance / punctuality
- Regular contact from school if a student is absent for a prolonged period (including home/hospital visits, TEAMS calls), with work sent home if appropriate

**We encourage attendance by:**

- Consistent, clear communication with parents / carers and students about the importance of regular, attendance
- Setting targets for improved attendance if needed and sharing these with Local Authority Representatives, parents / carers and students
- The accurate completion of registers at the start of each session
- A coordinated Team-work approach from the Care and Education Teams, with the support of our Clinical Team, to promote full attendance from each student. The focus will be on meeting a student's personalised needs as a learner with Autism and Complex Needs to ensure that they feel safe and motivated to attend school. This will include the clear use of visual supports for transitioning into school as appropriate to each student. Targets for attendance / punctuality / transition times may form part of the IEP if appropriate.

**The school's response to non-attendance:**

Where that has been no contact from parents, and no known reason for the students' absence has been given in advance, the school will follow the procedures as stated in Appendix 1 (Absence Procedures), including:

- Following up with parents/carers if there has been no contact made with the school at certain times throughout the day.
- Contact Home/School Transport and Social Worker if appropriate.
- Inform the Local Authority SEND Case Worker.

Where a pattern of non-attendance / transition problems is emerging a 'Child Centred Planning' multi-disciplinary Meeting will be convened and the parent/carers will be invited to visit school to work with school staff to help resolve the difficulties where appropriate (this could also be arranged via TEAMS if required, although face-to-face meetings are always preferable).

Other, relevant professionals, such as Case Workers from the placing Local Authority, social care, health and Clinical teams, may also be invited. This may result in:

- The students being placed on an Attendance Plan
- And agreed reduced timetable (number of days and/or hours per day) for an agreed, limited period

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- Recommendations to explore alternative avenues of education (i.e. on-line learning), or alternative placements; Or
- An agreement to cease the placement.
- See Appendix 2 – Attendance Flow Chart.

For prolonged absences, regular contact with the parent/carer and student will be agreed and facilitated through TEAMS calls or home visits (if appropriate), and work will be sent home if appropriate.

A Return to School/Transition Plan will be agreed with all parties when the student is able to return to school, which may include a reduced timetable of days and/or hours.

### 4.0 REGISTRATION DETAILS (including Authorised and Unauthorised absences).

#### Registration

Registration begins at 9:00am and ends at 9.30am. Anyone student arriving between 9:31am and 10:00am will be registered as Late (L). Any student arriving after 10:01am will be registered using a U code (Late, after the register has closed).

For students on reduced hours timetables, the registration timings will shift in line with their actual start time. For example, if a student is on a 9:30am to 2:30pm timetable, then a Late mark will be recorded if they arrive between 10:01 and 10:30am. A U Code will be entered if they arrive after 10:31am.

Afternoon registration is at 1pm. A Late mark (L) will be used if a student arrives in school after 1:30pm and a U Code will be used after 2:00pm.

#### Authorised Absence

##### Definition:

An absence is classified as authorised when a student has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a student has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### Examples of authorised absences

- Leave in term time (you should ask permission first, by law, the school can only authorise in exceptional circumstances)
- Short term emergency
- Certain days for religious observation
- Bereavement
- Dentist or doctors' appointment (try to make appointments outside school time)
- Hospital treatment
- Medical Needs

If possible, notify the school of any issues that may affect your child's attendance before the absence occurs.



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### Unauthorised Absence

#### Definition:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a student is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a student is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Unacceptable reasons for absence include, but are not limited to;

- Shopping
- Holidays in term time which are not authorised by school
- Truancy
- Days out / trips
- Oversleeping

Please note that the decision to authorise absences rests with schools and not parents.

### Leave of Absence

With effect from September 2013, the Government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, they will only be allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Leave of absence SHALL NOT be granted unless:

- Consistent,
- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the CYP normally resides, and
- the attendance lead considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES relating to the request.

### Medical Absence

It is recognised at Options Barton School that our students may have medical needs, and this is taken into consideration when recording absences.

### Illness

When a student has an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork and provide where possible and appropriate access to on-line learning, staff visits and/or TEAMS calls to maintain contact.

### Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance, and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as C).



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Review of Whole School Attendance Policy

Options Barton School will review this policy and the associated procedural framework annually.



## 5.0 APPENDIX 1

### Absence Procedures

#### No contact with parents/carers

##### Days 1 & 2

- If a pupil is absent and there is no message/known reason, class staff will inform EWO/SLT by 9:30am
- The EWO/SLT will contact parents by 10:00am and will then make a follow up call before 12:00pm if there has been no response from parents/carers.
- If there has been no response or contact following the two previous phone calls, then a further call will be made after 1:00pm/afternoon registration.
- A follow-up call will also be made to the pupil's social worker (if they have one) if there is still no response from parents/carers after the third phone call.
- EWO/SLT to contact Home/School Transport (if appropriate), to ascertain if they can add any information or updates.
- The second and any subsequent phone calls to be followed up with an email to parents/carers and social worker.

##### Day 3

- If pupil is still absent on Day 3, then follow above Protocol, but if still no response after the second phone call, EWO/SLT to contact LA SEND Officer.
- If no response following afternoon call, then EWO/SLT to contact Social Care Duty Team (if no social worker in place or unable to contact social worker).
- Arrange a Home Visit if necessary and appropriate.

##### Days 4 & 5

- Follow advice from Social Worker, Duty Team or LA SEND Officer.

#### Week 2 and ongoing

- Maintain daily contact with Social Worker, Duty Team or LA SEND Officer, following their advice.

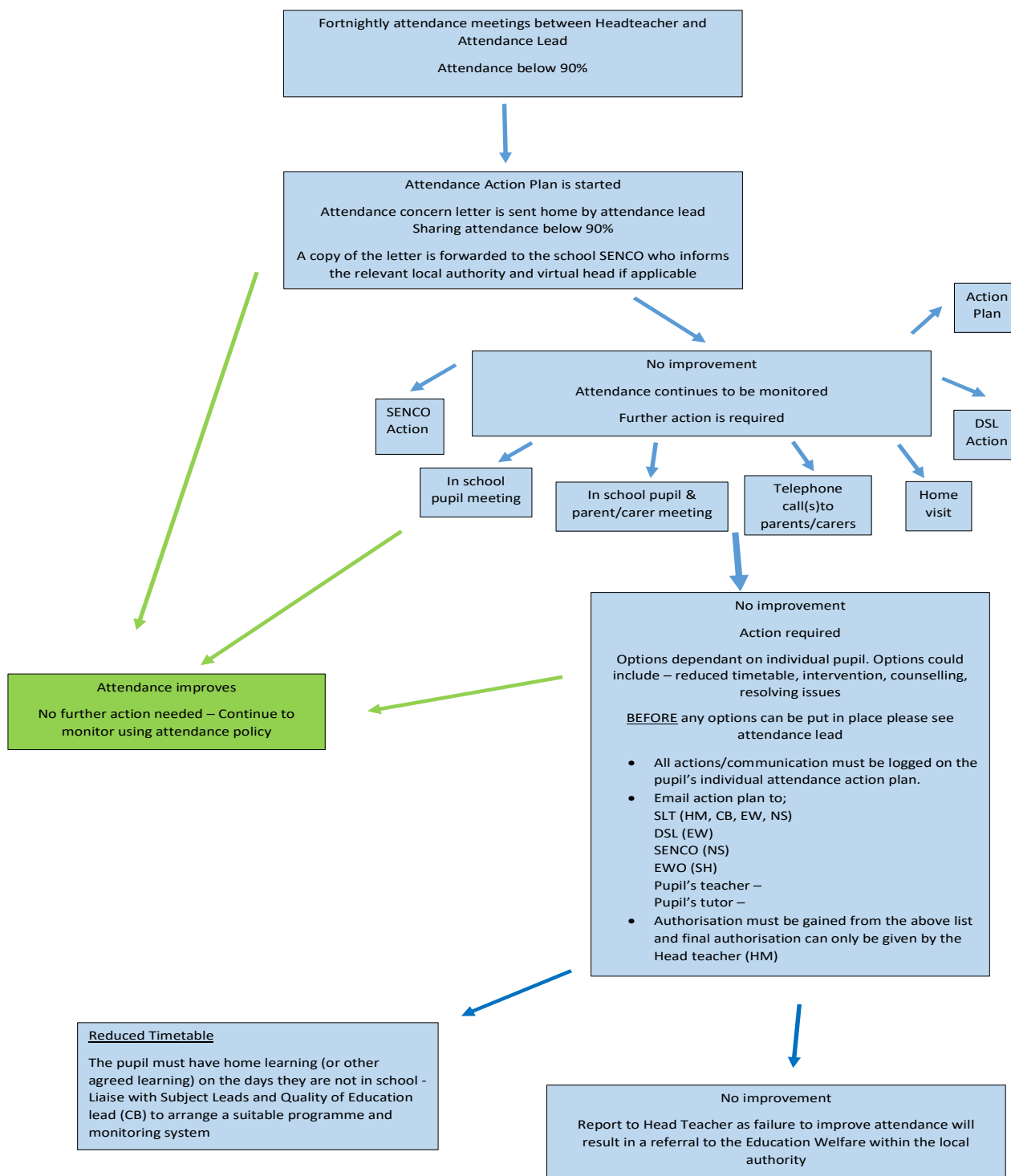
#### Contact gained with parent/carers

- Arrange a meeting with all parties as soon as possible to discuss absence and plan for pupil's return.

## 6.0 APPENDIX 2

**Attendance Flowchart**

The below flowchart is to be used alongside Options Barton Attendance & Absence Procedure Policy



We are part of the Outcomes First Group Family, by working together we will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable children, young people and adults in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

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