Charter Academy

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2024/25

Local Level Policy

Date effective	September 2024
Review Cycle	Annually
Review Date	September 2025
Date of Approval by Governors	
Committee approved by	Charter Local Governing Body
Author	Louise Stewart - Headteacher

Date	Notes

Part of the Castle Phoenix Trust

Leading Learning and Excelling Together

Introduction

The Governors and staff at Charter Academy are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Helping them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Charter Academy values all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance and offer the right service at the right time to try to resolve any difficulties.

The Attendance Lead (Rebecca West) and Head Teacher (Louise Stewart) will monitor attendance and use attendance data to identify any patterns of concern, whilst also celebrating success! Attendance concerns will be raised with parents if reasons are either not known by the school, or if levels of absence become unusually high. This information may be shared with the Local Authority where necessary. Where we have continuing concerns, or lack of engagement from families to improve attendance, we will follow the school's escalated approach to improving attendance. The school's escalated approach is child-centred, and prioritises support and development of strong working relationships with children and their families. We will use the Early Help process to provide support prior to escalation and consider how we can work with families to enable your child to access their right to education.

Our aim is to always to work in partnership with parents. Any referral for consideration of a fixed penalty notice or prosecution is deemed to be a last resort at Charter. Attendance figures for each child will be reported weekly to parents/carers by email, and as part of their annual report. We will also share a child's attendance profile with relevant agencies if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance. Throughout the school year the Attendance Team will report on the overall attendance figures for specific groups, this will be closely monitored for support and reported to the Governing Body.

To support good attendance, and safeguarding, at Charter we:

- Ensure the school is welcoming, and that every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Ensure the school site is open at the stated times.
- Ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is completed by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- Take safeguarding seriously - we will always contact you on the first day that your child is absent from school, this includes before and after-school clubs. If we cannot contact you, we will follow our unexplained absence procedure which includes carrying out a well-being visit to the child's home address.
- Carry out regular and routine home visits where a child's level of absence is unusually high, or where we have reasonable and genuine doubt regarding the reasons for absence.
- Support any children arriving late to school (after 9:00am) with arrival and transition to their classroom.
- Consider any requests for leave of absence in term time individually, and process requests in line with the current National Framework introduced on 19th August 2024.
- Notify the Local Authority within 5 days if a new child is joining the school roll.
- Promptly inform the Local Authority of children whose parents/carers have notified the school in writing of their intention to Electively Home Educate their child.
- Work closely with the Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance teams.
- Promptly notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE Statutory Guidance (August 2024).

A whole school approach to supporting attendance at Charter

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn. Securing good attendance at Charter cannot be achieved in isolation, and effective practices

for improvement will involve working closely with other Leaders within the school. The Attendance Lead will work alongside the Curriculum Leader, Behaviour Leader, SENDCo and Pupil Premium Leader to facilitate a whole school approach.

DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Charter Academy will always work in partnership with our parents

Charter Academy recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional early help that may be required. Safeguarding is a priority and concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection, Zoe Tite. We will always follow the DfE statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, and our Child Protection Policy.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan will be monitored and supported in school. At Charter, we will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking early action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

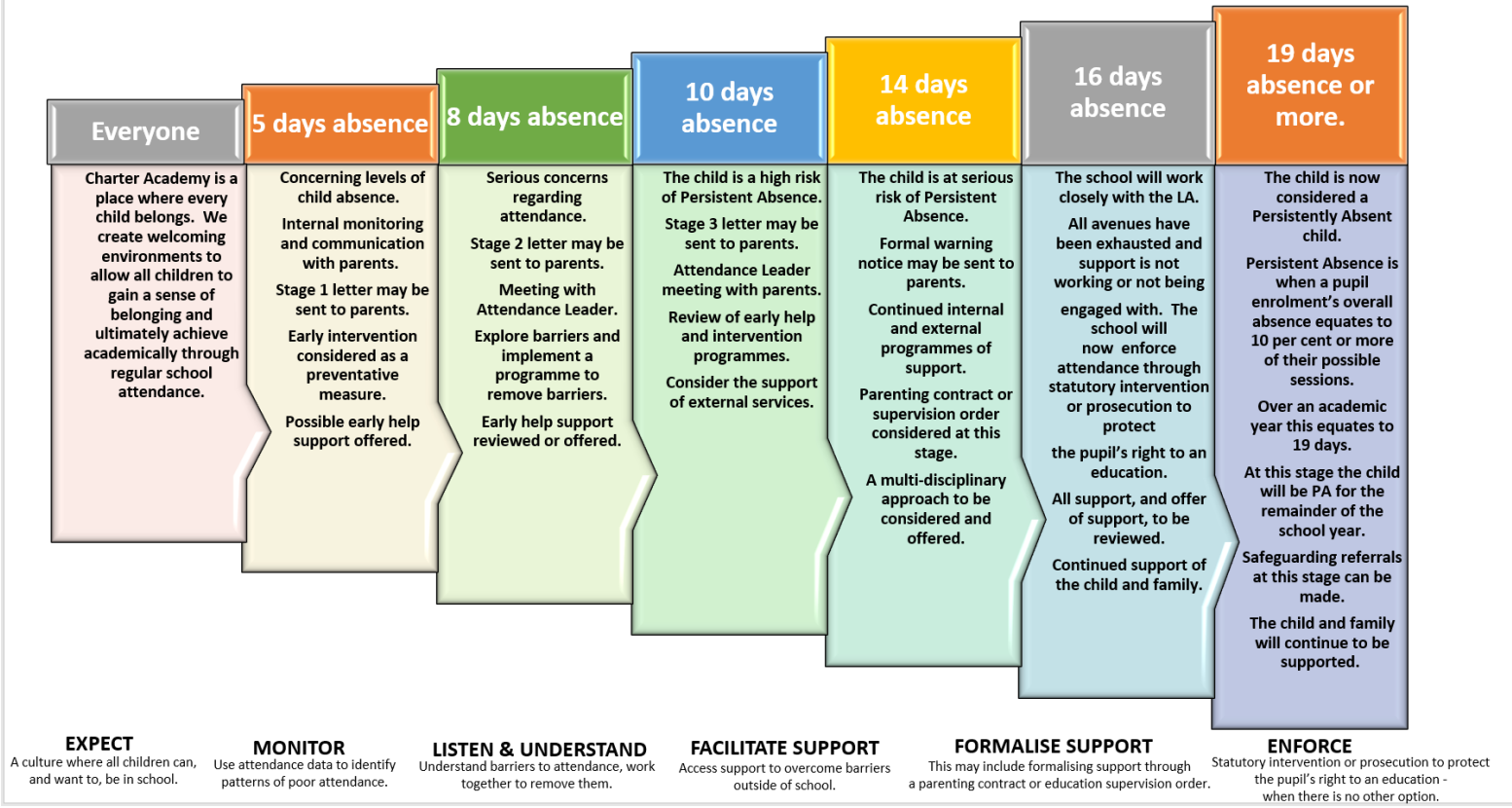
The Attendance Lead will initially:

- Check records, including any from other schools which the child has attended previously.
- Discuss with staff how the child is coping with the curriculum.
- Speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to establish whether the child is on the Special Educational needs register.
- Take into account the voice of the child and understand any difficulties, e.g. curriculum or bullying and their views on how the issue could be addressed.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are considered 'Persistently Absent' from school. Where a child's attendance falls below 50%, the child is considered 'Severely Absent'. Ultimately, this will indicate that all intervention and support offered by Charter Academy has not had the expected impact to improve overall attendance. Where attendance remains a concern, and all other interventions and support have not made a significant impact, we will escalate with external partners.

Attendance Support Map

We will always support children during each stage of our Attendance Support Map. If there is lack of engagement, or concerns regarding the reason for absence, we will follow the Attendance Map to ensure we prioritise a child's learning and right to education.

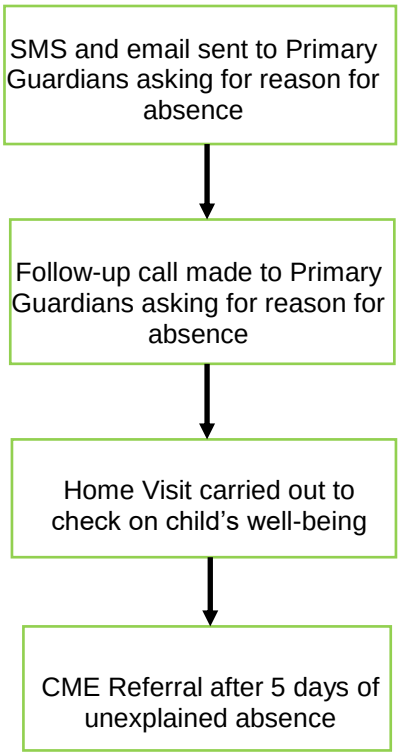


First Day Contact

At Charter Academy we expect our parents to make contact at the earliest opportunity on the first day of any absence. We will always contact you via text message or by calling you if your child is absent and you have not contacted the school to provide a reason for absence. Where contact has not been possible, we will visit the child's home address to check on their well-being. Where we have on-going concerns regarding your child's attendance, we may also visit your home address, and write to you regarding our concerns. We may invite you to meet with the Attendance Lead and other relevant staff members to discuss any on-going concerns regarding attendance. If there are reasons that your child cannot attend school regularly or if attendance becomes of concern, it is important that you talk to the school and engage with support and strategies implemented; **you are legally responsible under Education Act 1996 for ensuring that your child is in school every day and on time.**

Unexplained Absence Procedure

Carried out on each day of unexplained absence



Parents are legally responsible for securing full-time education

Parents are responsible by law for ensuring their children receive a full-time education. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably, always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where absences occur repeatedly due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription, hospital letter etc. Absence may be coded as unauthorised without evidence.

- Parents should wherever possible make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day, both before and after the appointment wherever possible. Appointment cards or Appointment SMS/emails should always be provided as evidence of medical and dental appointments.
- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation, and **it has been accepted by the school**, absence will not be authorised.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- The child or a family member's birthday
- Family visits or events/celebrations
- School uniform is not clean/dry, or shopping for new school uniform
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- Parental illness, or illness of a sibling
- Being tired or not waking up in time for school
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority, and in the absence of a communicable disease.
- Leave of absence during term time taken without prior authorisation of the school
- Head lice – you should let the school know and letters will then be sent to all parents in a confidential manner however your child should still attend school.

Punctuality

Doors open for children at 8:40am, the class register will close at 09:00am. Children arriving after the close of registration will be recorded as late. Punctuality and the number of minutes late is recorded, and this will be added to your child's Arbor record of attendance. Communication will be sent to parents weekly, and at the end of every term regarding punctuality and attendance for every child.
If a child arrives more than 30 minutes after the close of registration they will be U coded, which means the absence is unauthorised and will count towards their absence figure. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. U codes can and will be used as part of a record of unauthorised absence which may eventually lead to an FPN or prosecution.

Transition following long term absence or illness

Regular or long-term absence from school can significantly interrupt the continuity of children's learning and overall development.

During any long-term absence, Charter Academy will:

- Maintain regular telephone, email and face-to-face contact with the child and parents/carers.
- Carry out regular well-being checks and home visits to ensure the child has continuous support throughout their absence.
- Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring the child feels welcome, and regains a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the child feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, appoint a member of staff to work directly with the child and family.
- Ensure the Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant support the child when returning to class, and help them with any work they may have missed.

Leave during Term Time

All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. **The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.**

Parents wishing to apply for leave during term time must complete a written request available from the school office. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Each leave during term time request will be considered on an individual basis.

If a child fails to return and contact with the parent has not been made or received, school may take the child off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil registration, England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child may lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the child is still absent from school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may consider legal action and/or the issue of a Local Authority Fixed Penalty Notice.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will be given to the cultural needs and the family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases, granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

Using attendance data

Children's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies, and with the DfE.

Regular attendance meetings will be held between the Attendance Lead, Senior Leaders and Curriculum Leads. Meetings will focus on agreed actions for those children of concern. The purpose of each meeting will be to understand the progress the school is making when supporting identified individuals or groups of children.

Attendance data will be effectively used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

It is the responsibility of school Governors to challenge and support the school regarding overall attendance, regular reports will be presented to this body. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided for them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as can be.

Persistent Absence

At Charter, we aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19 or more missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three terms. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year.

We will use a 19-day tracking system to make you aware of the number of days your child has missed in education. This will allow us to work together to reduce the number of days and attempt to prevent your child from reaching this number.

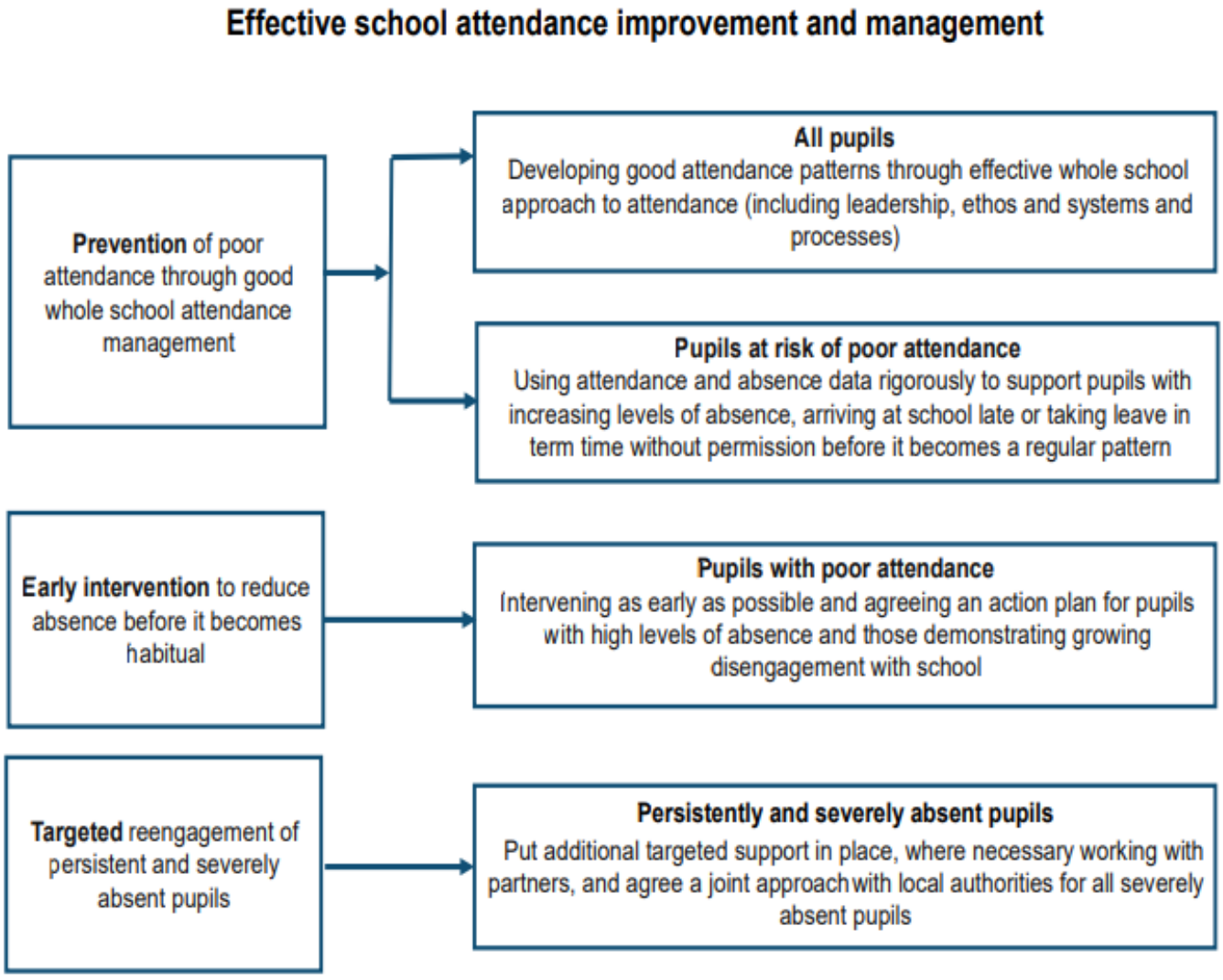
Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or 19 days absence, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school and we will report this to the Local Authority. Charter and the Local Authority may follow legal proceedings in these cases.

Statutory Duty

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is the duty of every parent of children of compulsory school age to ensure they receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement:
https://www.coventry.gov.uk/attendance-inclusion/attendance/2

In accordance with the regulations regarding pupils' attendance at school, Charter Academy keeps an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session children are marked present or absent. The marks are electronically processed and stored on the school's central administrative system Arbor. This information is also shared weekly with the Department for Education as part of a statutory attendance reporting process.



Legal Sanctions

There are several sanctions that school can take to address the issue of irregular or non-attendance. To try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to you first to discuss any barriers or reasons preventing your child from attending school regularly. Charter will always ensure the escalated process map is followed, focusing on the support a child needs at each stage (please access on the school website). However, for lack of engagement in attendance support there are sanctions that will be followed:

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A child is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school, or no request was received prior to the absence.
- A child has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with the National Framework (August 2024) and the Coventry City Council Code of Conduct.

Prosecution

Where intervention through the school's process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.
These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Please refer to Chapter 6 of the DfE Working together to improve school attendance 2024 for more information.

Children at risk of Missing Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown) and/or a children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision but are not accessing this provision and the reason cannot be ascertained. This might be a child who is not at their last known address and *either*:

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown.

It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education and Inclusion team, by making referrals.

Celebrating Success

At Charter we feel it is important to reward children and families who have achieved good or improved attendance.

The school awards good attendance with the following:

- Weekly achievement assemblies to celebrate the classes with the highest attendance. The class with the highest attendance within their phase receives extra play time. The class with the overall highest attendance wins a spin of the attendance wheel for a prize from the list chosen by the School Council.
- Termly attendance success certificates and awards, including 100% attendance, attendance of above 95%, and attendance improvement.
- Weekly 'Attendance Superstar' postcards issued by the Attendance Lead to those children who have shown an improvement, worked hard to overcome barriers to attending school or those who show consistently good attendance.
- Attendance improvement letters to parents when their child has shown good improvement in attendance when previously concerns were raised, especially those children who have previously been considered Persistently Absent.
- We notify parents of our whole school and individual class attendance percentage and/or levels of absence in our weekly newsletter. When a class achieves 95% or above, they will receive a token, when they collect 6 tokens, they can enjoy a movie afternoon!

Charter Academy will always challenge falling attendance and reward improvements. We are committed to the future of all children that attend Charter Academy, and by working in partnership with the school community we believe that together we can achieve more.

We can only achieve this by working in partnership with you, if you have any concerns or anything that prevents your child from attending Charter Academy, or if you would like to become involved in our school, please contact Mrs Louise Stewart – Headteacher.

Other Charter Policies supporting Attendance:

Behaviour Policy

CME Policy

SEND Offer

Pupil Premium Statement and Offer

Safeguarding Offer

Roles and Responsibilities

Charter expectations – Parents

i Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend the Academy regularly and may risk prosecution if they fail in this responsibility.

ii Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, with the correct equipment and in full school uniform.

iii Parents should support the Academy by avoiding, if possible, non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during Academy time.

iv Parents should be aware that they do not have the automatic right to take their child out of the Academy for a holiday during term time.

v It is the parents' responsibility to inform the Academy of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence and in line with the Academy's procedures for informing of absence.

vi All unexplained absences will be monitored and parents will be kept informed about any attendance concerns relating to their own child. Parents are expected to attend meetings when requested and support the Academy in responding to ongoing attendance concerns.

Charter expectations – Children

i. All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.

ii. All children are expected to be in school on time and ready to learn. Children are expected to be punctual to all lessons and registration.

iii. Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness and entering their lesson.

iv. Children who need to leave school for a medical appointment must follow the correct procedures for recording that they have permission to leave and have left the building.

v. Children must not leave the Academy without permission, 'truant'; this will be seen by the Academy as a Safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

Charter expectations - Class Teacher

The Form Tutor and Class Teacher are the key staff members in promoting regular punctual attendance. The Form Tutor or Class Teacher will:

i. provide a good example by always being punctual to registration and meeting children at the door – providing a welcoming environment;

ii. keep an accurate and up-to-date register of attendance;

iii. follow the Attendance Policy procedures when dealing with absences and punctuality;

iv. maintain swift action and effective communication with year leaders, phase leaders, Assistant Head Teachers and/or School Attendance Leaders on all attendance matters concerning the tutor or class group;

v. ensure that children and young people are aware of the importance of the school attendance target and their own individual attendance targets - where appropriate assist them in monitoring their own attendance rates;

vi. ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy;

vii. build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary when children return after an absence.

Charter expectations - Pastoral Team

The Pastoral team take responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children and regularly promote the importance of attendance and punctuality. They will:

i. ensure that their team is aware of their responsibilities with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality and adherence to the attendance policy and procedures;
ii. ensure that rewards and sanctions for attendance and punctuality follow agreed procedures and align to the Academy Behaviour and Attendance Policy;
iii. monitor and track the attendance of vulnerable groups;
iv. monitor the attendance of individual tutor groups and class groups, following up with irregular patterns of absenteeism that are not being effectively addressed;
v. liaise effectively with the Attendance Lead and work together on ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the management of absenteeism and poor punctuality;
vi. have attendance as a regular item during pastoral meetings;
vii. ensure contact is made with parents of poor attendees – always placing support before sanction.

Charter expectations - Attendance Lead

The Attendance Lead is responsible for regularly checking attendance data and ensuring data is accurate and up to date. The Attendance Lead will:

i. ensure that data is input daily into the attendance management system;
ii. ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received;
iii. respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns;
iv. provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
v. be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Senior Leader of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
vi. be responsible for keeping a record of the interventions in place to encourage attendance and for generating all documentation including letters to parents;
vii. be responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Attendance Team to ensure appropriate levels of intervention take place; referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up;
viii. be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems;
ix. regularly meet with the Headteacher, reporting on progress, next steps and planning;

Charter expectations – Senior Leader

The Senior Leader responsible for Attendance will promote good attendance and punctuality. They will:

i. provide training and support to staff;
ii. participate in pre-legal meetings;
iii. use attendance data to make links with attendance and academic performance;
iv. lead attendance reward assemblies;
v. ensure that reference to attendance is included in all school documentation e.g. Academy newsletters, letters to parents, school prospectus, information for booklets;

Relevant Legislation

The Education Act 1996
The Children Act 1989
The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
The Education and Inspections Act 2006
The Sentencing Act 2020 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Relevant DfE and Government Guidance

Working together to improve school attendance 2024
Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour
Children Missing Education 2024
Keeping children safe in education 2024
Working together to safeguard children
Elective home education
Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities
Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England
Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges
Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying
Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance