Attendance Policy v6

July 2026

Document Control				
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6.0	21/7/26 for September 2026	Director of Education	All Plymouth CAST Schools	Updated policy reflecting DfE statutory guidance, best practice and Plymouth CAST 'Broken Weeks' attendance strategy
Approvals				
Board	**SELT**	**Date Approved**	**Version**	**Date for Review**
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1. Our Vision

The Catholic Church insists on the highest standards of academic achievement in its schools, so that our young people leave us as 'agents of change' – educated and caring people who have the qualifications, knowledge and skills they need to flourish as human beings and make the world a better place.

Inspired by our Teacher, Jesus Christ, and his good news to the poor, Plymouth CAST is committed especially to those who are disadvantaged. We are determined that a child's start in life need not determine their future.

In all our schools we will develop a culture of high expectation and aspiration, based on our fundamental belief in the dignity of all human beings. We want all pupils to flourish in safe, happy and enriching environments, taught and supported by adults who are skilled, motivated and committed to our shared vision and values.

We will work together as one Trust, one family of schools, a community inspired by a vision for excellence. We commit ourselves to deepen our mission and raise standards in order to provide an excellent Catholic education for every child in our care.

Attendance is fundamental to this vision.

2. The Importance of School Attendance

Improving attendance is everyone's business.

Good attendance is central to:

- safeguarding and wellbeing;
- academic achievement;
- positive mental health;
- friendship and belonging;
- future employment and life chances.

The barriers to attendance are often wide, complex and individual to each child and family. Plymouth CAST schools therefore work collaboratively with families, external agencies and local authorities to identify and remove barriers to attendance at the earliest possible stage.

If a child misses…	That equals at least…	Which is the same as….	And over 13 years of education that's…	Or at least…
1 day a fortnight	80 lessons per year	4 school weeks per year	Nearly 1.5 years	1040 lessons
1 day a week	160 lessons per year	8 school weeks per year	Over 2.5 years	2080 lessons
2 days a week	320 lessons per year	16 school weeks per year	Over 5 years	4160 lessons
3 days a week	480 lessons per year	24 school weeks per year	Nearly 8 years	6240 lessons

Regular attendance is one of the strongest predictors of educational success.

National evidence demonstrates that:

- pupils with attendance of 95–100% are significantly more likely to achieve expected standards and strong GCSE outcomes;
- even small amounts of absence negatively affect progress;
- persistent and severe absence are associated with poorer safeguarding outcomes, vulnerability and reduced life chances.

Within Plymouth CAST, attendance is viewed not simply as a statistical measure, but as a core element of school improvement, safeguarding and inclusion.

3. The Law on School Attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child receives suitable full-time education.

Where a child is registered at school, parents/carers have an additional legal duty to ensure regular attendance.

This means pupils must attend every day the school is open except in a limited number of circumstances, such as:

- illness;
- authorised leave granted in advance;
- religious observance;
- unavoidable cause.

Plymouth CAST schools will always seek to work supportively and collaboratively with families. However, where attendance concerns persist and support is not effective, schools and local authorities may use legal intervention to protect a child's right to education.

Exceptional Circumstances Leave of Absence

By law, Headteachers are not allowed to authorise absence during term time unless the circumstances are exceptional. A family holiday **would not** normally be considered as an exceptional circumstance.

All requests from parents for term time leave of absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school's form (available on the website or from Reception). Wherever possible, a request must be made at least 3 weeks (15 school days) prior to the requested leave of absence. Parents will receive written notification to confirm whether their request has been authorised.

Each application from parents for an 'exceptional circumstance' leave of absence during term time will be considered on its own merit - see Appendix 8 Exceptional Circumstances Request Form

4. Working Together to Improve Attendance

This policy reflects the principles of the Department for Education statutory guidance:

Working together to improve school attendance - August 2024 - GOV.UK

Plymouth CAST schools adopt the DfE's graduated model:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and families.

MONITOR

Identify patterns of absence early through rigorous analysis of attendance data.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

Work in partnership with pupils and families to understand barriers.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Provide support and remove barriers wherever possible.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where concerns continue, formalise support through structured intervention plans.

ENFORCE

Where support is not successful or not engaged with, use statutory intervention proportionately.

Plymouth CAST schools are committed to a support-first model rooted in strong relationships with families.

5. Expectations of Plymouth CAST Schools

All Plymouth CAST schools are expected to:

- develop and maintain a whole-school culture promoting high attendance;
- make attendance everybody's responsibility;
- identify attendance concerns early;
- act before absence becomes entrenched;
- build strong relationships with families;
- use attendance data intelligently and proactively;
- maintain accurate attendance registers;
- provide proportionate support and intervention;
- work effectively with local authorities and external agencies;
- prioritise safeguarding throughout attendance processes;
- ensure attendance processes are inclusive and responsive to SEND and medical needs.

Each school will:

- have a designated Senior Attendance Champion;
- hold regular attendance reviews;
- track attendance patterns weekly;
- report attendance concerns through safeguarding systems where appropriate;
- ensure pupils feel safe, valued and included.

6. Whole-School Culture and Attendance

Good attendance is a learned behaviour.

Plymouth CAST schools recognise that attendance improvement is not a standalone initiative but a reflection of:

- strong relationships;
- effective safeguarding;
- excellent teaching and curriculum;
- belonging and inclusion;
- positive behaviour culture;
- emotional wellbeing support.

Schools will:

- communicate clear attendance expectations regularly;
- celebrate attendance improvement and full attendance sensitively;
- ensure attendance messaging is visible and consistent;
- promote punctuality;
- reinforce the importance of every lesson and every week.

Key Trust messages are:

- “Every Week Counts”
- “Patterns Matter”
- “Intervene Early”
- “Support First”

7. Aims

Plymouth CAST is committed to:

- promoting excellent attendance for all pupils;
- reducing absence, persistent absence and severe absence;
- reducing broken weeks in pupils’ learning;
- intervening early where attendance patterns emerge;
- identifying barriers quickly;
- ensuring every pupil accesses their entitlement to full-time education;
- supporting vulnerable pupils effectively;
- ensuring consistent attendance systems across the Trust;
- ensuring all attendance processes remain child-centred, proportionate and legally compliant.

We will also promote and support punctuality.

8. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- Education Act 1996;
- Education Act 2002;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2024;

- Equality Act 2010;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024);
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School;
- Mental Health Issues Affecting Attendance Guidance;
- Children Missing Education Guidance;
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance.

This policy should also be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Exclusions and Suspensions Policy.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Plymouth CAST recognises that improving attendance is everyone's responsibility.

Creating and sustaining excellent attendance requires a whole-school and whole-Trust culture where:

- attendance is prioritised at every level;
- all staff understand their role;
- attendance is viewed through safeguarding, inclusion and school improvement lenses;
- families experience consistency of expectations and support.

Attendance cannot be the responsibility of one individual or one team alone.

9.1 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- promoting the importance of attendance across all Trust policy, practice and ethos;
- ensuring attendance remains a strategic Trust priority;
- setting high expectations for all leaders, staff, pupils and families;
- ensuring schools fulfil statutory attendance duties;
- ensuring schools maintain accurate registers and comply with attendance legislation;
- ensuring the Trust and schools work effectively with local authorities and external partners;
- ensuring attendance improvement is appropriately resourced;
- monitoring Trust attendance performance and trends;
- reviewing Persistent Absence, Severe Absence and Broken Weeks data;
- challenging variation between schools and vulnerable groups;
- ensuring attendance remains central to safeguarding and school improvement;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate attendance training;
- holding the Senior Executive Leadership Team to account for effective implementation of this policy, including primary school and secondary school attendance that is at least in line with national averages; persistent absence rates that are no higher than national averages, and an increasing number of trust schools have attendance at least in line with national averages and their ABIE

The Education and Standards Committee of the Board will receive regular attendance reports and challenge Trust-wide performance.

9.2 Senior Executive Leadership Team (SELT)

The Senior Executive Leadership Team is responsible for:

- leading Trust-wide attendance strategy and improvement;
- ensuring attendance is prioritised consistently across all schools;
- monitoring Trust attendance performance and Broken Weeks patterns;
- supporting and challenging school leaders;
- ensuring schools implement this policy consistently;
- identifying schools requiring additional attendance support and challenge;
- ensuring attendance remains closely aligned with safeguarding, inclusion and school improvement;
- ensuring schools maintain effective relationships with local authorities and attendance support services;
- monitoring the impact of Trust attendance initiatives and interventions;
- Providing challenge and support to school leaders to ensure effective implementation of this policy, including pupil attendance that is at least in line with national averages and ABIE, and persistent absence rates that are no higher than national averages.
- ensuring attendance systems remain legally compliant and aligned with DfE guidance.

9.3 Local CAST Boards (LCBs)

Local CAST Boards are responsible for:

- promoting the importance of attendance within the school community;
- monitoring school attendance performance;
- reviewing attendance data, trends and vulnerable groups;
- challenging school leaders appropriately;
- ensuring attendance remains a school improvement priority;
- monitoring the impact of attendance interventions and strategies;
- ensuring safeguarding implications of attendance concerns are understood;
- ensuring school leaders maintain high expectations for attendance and punctuality.
- providing challenge and support to school leaders to ensure effective implementation of this policy, including pupil attendance that is at least in line with national averages and ABIE, and persistent absence rates that are no higher than national averages.

9.4 Headteachers

Headteachers are responsible for:

- implementing this policy consistently;
- creating and sustaining a culture of high attendance;
- ensuring attendance is prioritised across the school;
- ensuring attendance systems are robust and effective;
- ensuring attendance concerns are identified and addressed early;
- ensuring attendance remains central to safeguarding and inclusion practice;
- ensuring attendance data is reviewed regularly;
- ensuring attendance meetings are held consistently;
- ensuring vulnerable pupils are prioritised;
- ensuring attendance support is proportionate, child-centred and effective;
- ensuring staff understand their attendance responsibilities;

- ensuring staff receive appropriate training, support and challenge to fulfil their roles
- ensuring appropriate communication with families;
- ensuring legal intervention is considered proportionately and appropriately.

Headteachers are ultimately accountable for attendance within their school.

9.5 Senior Attendance Champion

Each school will appoint a designated Senior Attendance Champion.

The Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- leading attendance improvement across the school;
- championing a culture where attendance matters;
- ensuring implementation of the Plymouth CAST Broken Weeks strategy;
- establishing and maintaining effective attendance systems;
- analysing attendance and Broken Weeks data;
- identifying pupils requiring support or intervention;
- leading attendance meetings and reviews;
- overseeing PSP processes and targeted intervention;
- working collaboratively with families and external agencies;
- ensuring attendance barriers are identified and addressed early;
- ensuring attendance intervention remains proportionate and supportive;
- monitoring attendance trends for vulnerable groups;
- evaluating the impact of attendance interventions;
- reporting attendance concerns and trends to senior leaders and governors.

9.6 Attendance Team

Attendance Officers and attendance staff are responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- completing first-day response procedures;
- monitoring daily attendance;
- identifying attendance concerns and patterns;
- tracking Broken Weeks weekly;
- maintaining accurate attendance records and registers;
- communicating promptly with families;
- escalating concerns appropriately;
- supporting attendance meetings and PSP processes;
- conducting attendance checks and follow-up procedures;
- supporting home visits where appropriate;
- liaising with school leaders and external agencies.

Attendance staff play a vital operational role in ensuring concerns are identified quickly.

9.7 SENCo

The SENCo is responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- championing attendance for pupils with SEND;
- ensuring attendance concerns are considered in relation to SEND needs;

- identifying barriers linked to SEND;
- ensuring reasonable adjustments are considered;
- supporting reintegration and graduated attendance support;
- working collaboratively with parents/carers and external professionals;
- monitoring attendance patterns for pupils with SEND;
- ensuring attendance concerns contribute to wider SEND reviews where appropriate.

9.8 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- ensuring attendance concerns are viewed through a safeguarding lens;
- monitoring attendance for vulnerable pupils;
- ensuring appropriate safeguarding action where attendance presents a welfare concern;
- working jointly with attendance leaders and external agencies;
- monitoring children missing education concerns;
- ensuring attendance concerns contribute to wider safeguarding assessment and planning;
- ensuring safeguarding systems reflect attendance concerns appropriately.

The Trust recognises that poor attendance may be an indicator of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health concerns or wider vulnerability.

The Trust also recognises that absence from school is a safeguarding risk itself. When not in school, pupils may be more vulnerable to abusers; engage in high risk activities; be at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation, or be exposed to environmental dangers such as traffic, open water, machinery etc

9.9 Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

The Designated Teacher is responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- championing attendance for looked after and previously looked after children;
- working closely with the Virtual School and external agencies;
- monitoring attendance patterns and barriers;
- ensuring attendance concerns are identified and addressed early;
- alerting the virtual school and where appropriate, the named social worker, as soon as attendance concerns are identified
- supporting reintegration and emotional wellbeing;
- ensuring attendance remains central to Personal Education Plans (PEPs);
- advocating for vulnerable pupils effectively.

9.10 Designated Lead for Disadvantaged Pupils

The Designated Lead for Disadvantaged Pupils is responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- monitoring attendance patterns for disadvantaged pupils;
- identifying attendance gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils;
- ensuring disadvantaged pupils receive appropriate support and intervention;
- ensuring attendance remains central to pupil premium strategy and school improvement planning;
- working collaboratively with attendance, safeguarding and pastoral teams.

9.11 Class Teachers / Form Tutors

Class Teachers and Form Tutors are responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- promoting high expectations for attendance and punctuality daily;
- building positive relationships with pupils and families;
- recognising emerging attendance concerns;
- Working with SENCO, parents, children and outside agencies to ensure that barriers to the attendance of children with SEND are effectively identified and mitigated
- identifying patterns and changes in behaviour or attendance;
- reinforcing attendance expectations consistently;
- celebrating strong attendance and improvement sensitively;
- communicating concerns to attendance and safeguarding staff promptly;
- supporting reintegration following absence;
- helping pupils feel safe, valued and included.

Teachers and tutors are often the adults best placed to notice early changes in attendance patterns.

9.12 School Administration, Office and Reception Staff

Administration, office and reception staff are responsible for:

- supporting the effective implementation of this policy
- maintaining accurate attendance records;
- ensuring registers are completed and followed up promptly;
- operating first-day response systems;
- recording absence information accurately;
- maintaining clear communication with families;
- identifying concerns or patterns emerging through contact with families;
- escalating concerns promptly to attendance and safeguarding leaders;
- ensuring attendance processes remain professional, supportive and consistent.

Office and reception staff are often the first point of contact for families and therefore play an important role in shaping school attendance culture.

9.13 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- support the effective implementation of this policy
- ensure regular attendance;
- ensure punctuality;
- contact school on the first day of absence;
- provide appropriate explanations for absence;
- engage positively with school support;
- attend meetings where requested;
- provide medical evidence where appropriate;
- work collaboratively with the school to remove barriers.

9.14 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- support the effective implementation of this policy
- attend school regularly and punctually;
- engage positively with support and intervention;
- communicate concerns where possible;
- contribute to a positive culture of attendance.

10. Recording Attendance

Schools will complete attendance registers in accordance with statutory requirements.

Registers will:

- be completed accurately and promptly;
- use the correct DfE attendance codes;
- comply with School Attendance Regulations 2024.

Schools will:

- operate first-day calling procedures;
- follow up unexplained absence promptly;
- maintain accurate contact information;
- escalate safeguarding concerns immediately where appropriate.

Schools may:

- conduct home visits;
- contact emergency contacts;
- liaise with external agencies.

Persistent unexplained absence may be treated as a safeguarding concern.

11. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Only the school can authorise absence.

Examples of authorised absence may include:

- illness;
- medical appointments;
- religious observance;
- exceptional circumstances approved in advance.

Examples of unauthorised absence may include:

- term-time holidays;
- absence where no satisfactory reason is provided;
- persistent lateness after registers close;
- avoidable absence.

Schools may request medical evidence where:

- absence patterns become concerning;

- repeated illness absence occurs;
- attendance support plans are in place.

Medical evidence may include:

- appointment cards;
- prescription evidence;
- NHS correspondence;
- health professional letters.

12. Broken Weeks – Plymouth CAST Attendance Strategy

12.1 Core Principle

Plymouth CAST schools use “Broken Weeks” as the key operational trigger for attendance intervention.

This reflects the Trust’s commitment to:

- early identification;
- proactive intervention;
- pattern recognition;
- support before Persistent Absence is reached.

This approach aligns with DfE expectations that schools should identify patterns of absence early and intervene before absence becomes entrenched.

12.2 Definition

A “Broken Week” is:

Any week in which a pupil misses one or more sessions.

This includes:

- authorised absence;
- unauthorised absence;
- illness absence;
- partial attendance.

12.3 Rationale

The Trust recognises that:

- attendance percentages alone can mask emerging patterns;
- pupils may maintain attendance above 90% while still developing concerning absence habits;
- repeated broken weeks are often the earliest visible sign of declining attendance.

The Trust therefore expects schools to:

- act early;
- focus on patterns, not just thresholds;
- intervene supportively and proportionately.

12.4 Trust Expectations

Schools will:

- track broken weeks weekly;
- monitor patterns across cohorts;
- review pupils with repeated broken weeks;
- include broken weeks within attendance meetings and reports;
- use broken weeks alongside attendance percentage.

Trust reviews will consider:

- pupils with 2+ broken weeks;
- pupils with 3+ broken weeks;
- repeated patterns of single-day absence;
- attendance trends over time.

12.5 Key Messages

- Every week counts.
- Patterns matter.
- Early intervention matters.
- Support comes before enforcement.

13. Attendance Support and Intervention Pathway

UNIVERSAL – All Pupils

Expectation

Full weeks in school are the norm.

Core Practice

- Strong relationships and school culture
- Daily attendance monitoring;
- First-day response;
- Attendance promotion;
- Positive attendance culture;
- Celebration of full weeks and attendance improvement.

Initial Response to Broken Weeks

- Teacher acknowledgement;
- Informal discussion;
- Reinforcement of expectations.

TIER 1 – Early Concern

Trigger

- 2 broken weeks within a half term;
- emerging absence pattern.

Actions

- attendance team monitoring;
- phone call or informal parent contact;
- identify barriers;
- reinforce expectations;
- support provided for pupil/family
- record concerns on CPOMs

Intended Outcome

- family/pupil feels supported
- prevent escalation;
- restore full-week attendance quickly.

Schools may issue a Tier 1 Early Concern Letter.

TIER 2 – Targeted Support (PSP)

Trigger

- 3 or more broken weeks within a half term;
- no improvement following Tier 1 intervention;
- increasing attendance concern.

Actions

- formal communication with parents/carers;
- Pupil Support Plan meeting;
- barrier identification;
- attendance targets established;
- consideration of multi-agency support;
- support provided for pupil/family
- review within 4 weeks.

Areas Explored

- school-based quality of provision issues, including teaching and relationships
- anxiety and emotional wellbeing;
- routines and sleep;
- SEND needs;
- health concerns;
- family circumstances;
- safeguarding;
- transport;
- friendship or bullying concerns.

Additional Measures

Where absence is linked to repeated illness:

- medical evidence expectations may be introduced;

- schools may require additional information to authorise future illness absence.

Intended Outcome

- remove barriers;
- secure sustained attendance improvement.
- pupil/family feel supported

TIER 3 – Escalation

Trigger

- continued broken weeks despite intervention;
- lack of engagement with support;
- movement towards Persistent Absence or Severe Absence.

Actions

- referral to Education Welfare Officer;
- formal warning letter;
- home visit;
- support provided for pupil/family
- attendance contract consideration;
- legal intervention consideration.

Intended Outcome

- protect the child's right to education;
- secure improved attendance;
- pupil/family feel supported
- ensure statutory compliance.

14. Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs, SEND and Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Plymouth CAST recognises that some pupils face additional barriers to attendance.

Schools will adopt a supportive and inclusive approach.

Pupils with SEND

Schools will:

- consider reasonable adjustments;
- follow the trust SEND/Inclusion policy and Identification pathway to ensure that individual needs are identified and effectively met
- assess whether attendance difficulties relate to unmet need;
- involve the SENCo appropriately;
- Review and revise EHCPs and support plans as appropriate
- involve the trust SEND Lead Officer
- work collaboratively with parents and outside agencies.
- always act in ways that are consistent with the trust's trauma-informed relational approach

Mental Health and EBSA

Schools recognise that emotionally based school avoidance and mental health difficulties can significantly affect attendance.

Schools will:

- consider reasonable adjustments
- follow the trust SEND/Inclusion policy and Identification pathway to ensure that individual needs are identified and effectively met
- avoid punitive approaches where anxiety-based barriers are evident;
- provide graduated support;
- consider pastoral, therapeutic or external support;
- involve the trust SEND Lead Officer
- maintain strong communication with families.
- always act in ways that are consistent with the trust's trauma-informed relational approach

Medical Needs

Schools will:

- consider reasonable adjustments
- Where appropriate, follow the trust SEND/Inclusion policy and Identification pathway to ensure that individual needs are identified and effectively met
- work collaboratively with health professionals;
- support reintegration following illness;
- consider phased returns only where appropriate and time-limited;
- ensure pupils continue accessing education;
- where required, follow the trust's *Managing Pupils Medical Conditions in School Policy, and Trust Allergy Safety Policy*

Part-time timetables will only be used exceptionally, for the shortest possible time, and in accordance with statutory and Plymouth CAST guidance.

15. Persistent and Severe Absence

Although Plymouth CAST schools are moving operationally towards earlier intervention through Broken Weeks, schools will continue to monitor statutory attendance thresholds.

Persistent Absence

A pupil is persistently absent where attendance falls below 90%.

Severe Absence

A pupil is severely absent where attendance falls below 50%.

Pupils in these categories require:

- intensified support;
- multi-agency involvement;
- safeguarding oversight;
- regular review.

Schools will work closely with local authorities and external agencies where absence becomes persistent or severe.

16. Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectation (ABIE)

Schools must be cognisant and mindful of their ABIE.

Average whole school attendance must be monitored against ABIE.

This must be reported to the LCB.

Every school is expected to meet or exceed its ABIE.

School Improvement Officers will provide challenge and support for schools where the attendance is not in line with ABIE

17. Attendance Legal Intervention

Plymouth CAST schools seek to work supportively and collaboratively with families.

However, where attendance does not improve and support is not engaged with or successful, schools and local authorities may:

- issue Notices to Improve;
- seek Penalty Notices;
- use attendance contracts;
- seek Education Supervision Orders;
- prosecute under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Term-time holidays will not normally be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices may be requested in accordance with:

- national DfE framework;
- local authority code of conduct.

Legal intervention will always be proportionate and considered carefully.

18. Monitoring Arrangements

Schools will:

- monitor attendance daily and weekly;
- review broken week patterns weekly;
- review vulnerable cohorts regularly;
- analyse attendance trends termly.

Trust leaders will:

- review school attendance performance;
- challenge and support schools;
- identify Trust-wide trends and priorities.

The Trust Board and Education and Standards Committee will receive regular attendance reports.

First Day Call System

Parents should inform the school in advance of any planned pupil absence.

Parents should contact the school as soon as possible to report any unplanned absence

To safeguard pupils, the school has implemented a *First Day Call System*.

First Day Call Attendance Procedure

To ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils, our school operates a **First Day Call** procedure for unexplainable absences. Please follow the steps below if your child is unable to attend school.

Parent Responsibility

- **Contact Before 9:00 AM:** Parents/carers must notify the school office by **9:00 AM** on **every day** of their child's absence, providing a reason for the absence and an expected return date.

School Absence Follow-Up Process

1. **Before 9:00 AM — Absence Notification**
    - Parents report absence via school phone line, office email or text system.
2. **9:30 AM — Automated Text Message**
    - If a child is absent without prior notification by 9:00 AM, a text message will be sent to the primary contact requesting an urgent reason for absence.
3. **11:00 AM — Phone Call & Email Follow-up**
    - If no response to the text message is received by **10:00 AM**, school staff will make a direct phone call and send an email to parents/guardians to confirm the child's whereabouts and safety.

19. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy;
- Exclusions and Suspensions Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
- Children Missing Education Procedures.

20. School Specific Attendance Strategy

- **Soft Starts:** Reduces morning anxiety and friction by offering a flexible 15–20 minute arrival window, quiet low-stimulation spaces (drawing, Lego, breakfast club), and de-pressured entrances.
- **Meet & Greet:** Establishes warm, relational contact within 60 seconds of arrival via gate presence, class door greetings, dedicated key adults for vulnerable pupils, and arrival micro-jobs.
- **Targeted Collection:** Resolves home-based morning crises through rapid doorstep visits (by 9:30 AM), walking escorts, and agreement-backed emergency pickup support for persistent absentees.

- **Integrated Pastoral Work:** Keeps pupils engaged after arrival through ELSA mentoring, phased re-integration plans, quiet time-out passes, and collaborative Early Help support with families.
- **Tiered Tracking:** Classifies support into 4 distinct tiers (Universal, Targeted, Persistent, Severe) to monitor attendance metrics, punctuality, and anxiety levels.

21. Key Contacts

Role	Name	Telephone	Email
Headteacher	Mrs O'Donoghue	01202 741932	stjosephspoole@plymouthcast.com
Attendance Champion	Mrs O'Donoghue / Miss O'Brien	01202 741932	
Attendance Officer/ Family Support Worker	Mr McQuaid	01202 741932	
Designated Lead for Disadvantaged Pupils:	Mrs Wilson	01202 741932	
Designated Lead for Looked After Children:	Mr Gardner	01202 741932	
Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Mrs O'Donoghue	01202 741932	
SENCO:	Miss Taylor	01202 741932	
Local Authority Attendance Officer:	Michelle Kelly		

22. Appendices

Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance and Absence Codes

School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Plymouth CAST schools will use attendance codes in accordance with statutory Department for Education guidance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Registers must be completed accurately and promptly for every session.

Present at School

Code	Meaning	Description
/	Present (AM)	Pupil present at morning registration

****	Present (PM)	Pupil present at afternoon registration
L	Late before register closes	Pupil arrives late but before the register closes

Attending a Place Other Than School

Code	Meaning	Description
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil attending alternative provision arranged by the LA
V	Educational visit or trip	Pupil attending an educational visit or trip
P	Sporting activity	Approved supervised sporting activity
W	Work experience	Approved work experience placement
B	Off-site educational activity	Approved supervised educational activity off-site
D	Dual registered	Attending another educational establishment where dual registered
J1	Interview	Attendance at an interview for employment, college or another educational establishment
C1	Regulated performance or employment abroad	Licensed performance or approved employment abroad
M	Medical or dental appointment	Attending an authorised medical or dental appointment

Leave of Absence – Authorised

Code	Meaning	Description
C2	Part-time timetable	Temporary part-time timetable agreed by school
C	Exceptional circumstances	Leave of absence granted for exceptional circumstances
R	Religious observance	Day set aside for religious observance

Other Authorised Absence

Code	Meaning	Description
I	Illness	Physical or mental health illness
E	Suspended or excluded	Suspension or exclusion with no alternative provision available
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Mobile child travelling with parent for work purposes

Unable to Attend Due to Unavoidable Cause

Code	Meaning	Description
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Local authority has failed to make transport/access arrangements
Y1	Transport not available	Usual transport unavailable
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Travel disruption due to local/national emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil cannot practically attend open part of school
Y4	Whole school unexpectedly closed	Whole school closed unexpectedly
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil detained by criminal justice system
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Attendance prohibited under public health guidance/law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	Other unavoidable exceptional circumstance

Unauthorised Absence

Code	Meaning	Description
G	Holiday not authorised	Holiday in term time not authorised by school
N	Reason not yet established	Reason for absence not yet provided
O	Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence or unacceptable explanation
U	Late after register closes	Arrived after register closed

Administrative Codes

Code	Meaning	Description
Z	Prospective pupil	Pupil not yet on roll
#	Planned whole-school closure	Planned closure including school holidays
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to attend

Plymouth CAST Expectations

All schools will:

- use attendance codes accurately and consistently;
- ensure registers are completed within statutory timescales;
- review coding regularly;
- ensure attendance coding reflects safeguarding considerations where appropriate;
- challenge patterns of absence robustly and proportionately;
- maintain clear communication with parents/carers regarding attendance coding expectations.

Incorrect use of attendance codes may place schools in breach of statutory guidance and compromise safeguarding oversight.

Key Attendance Principles

- Registers are legal documents.
- Attendance is a safeguarding priority.
- Every session counts.
- Patterns matter as well as percentages.
- Early intervention is essential.

Appendix 2 – Broken Weeks Thresholds

Trigger	Response
1 broken week	Monitor
2 broken weeks in half term	Tier 1
3+ broken weeks in half term	Tier 2 PSP
Continued pattern	Tier 3

Appendix 3 – Tier 1 Letter

Early Concern – Broken Weeks

Private and Confidential

Mr & Mrs
[House]
[Street]
[Town]
[Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer],

Re: [Child's Name]

We know that children and young people fall behind when they miss school, even for short periods. Being in school every day supports learning, friendships, wellbeing and future success.

We have noticed that [Child's Name] has recently had a number of weeks broken by absence. While we understand that some absence is unavoidable, patterns of broken weeks can begin to impact progress and may become more difficult to address over time.

At Plymouth CAST, we believe that **every week counts** and that early support is important.

We would like to work with you to ensure that [Child's Name] attends school every day wherever possible.

Medical advice is clear that children with mild illness (for example coughs, colds or minor ailments) are often well enough to attend school. The NHS guidance *"Is my child too ill for school?"* may be helpful when making decisions about attendance.

If there are any barriers affecting attendance, please contact us so that we can work together to provide support.

If we do not hear from you, we will assume there are currently no additional barriers affecting attendance. However, we will continue to monitor attendance closely and may contact you again if concerns continue.

We remain committed to supporting [Child's Name] to attend school regularly and succeed.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
[Role]

Appendix 4 – Tier 2 PSP Invitation Letter

Targeted Support – Broken Weeks Escalation

Private and Confidential

Mr & Mrs
[House]
[Street]
[Town]
[Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer],

Re: [Child's Name]

We recently contacted you regarding concerns about [Child's Name]'s attendance and the number of weeks broken by absence.

Since then, we have identified further broken weeks and remain concerned that this pattern may begin to affect educational progress, wellbeing and wider school experience.

We recognise that you know your child best, and we would like to work collaboratively with you to understand any barriers and agree the right support.

We would therefore like to invite you to a **Pupil Support Plan (PSP) Meeting**:

Date	Time	Location
[Insert]	[Insert]	[Insert]

At this meeting we will:

- review attendance patterns, including broken weeks;
- discuss any barriers affecting attendance;
- identify support strategies;
- agree next steps and attendance targets;
- discuss any wider support services that may be helpful.

Our aim is to work positively and supportively with you to improve attendance before concerns escalate further.

If you are unable to attend, please contact the school so that alternative arrangements can be made.

If we do not hear from you, the meeting may proceed in your absence, and outcomes will be shared with you afterwards.

We remain committed to supporting [Child's Name] to attend school regularly and achieve success.

Yours sincerely,
[Name]
[Role]

Appendix 5 – Tier 2 Medical Evidence Letter

Ongoing Pattern of Broken Weeks Due to Illness
Version A – Parent Attended PSP Meeting

Private and Confidential

Mr & Mrs
[House]
[Street]
[Town]
[Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer],

Re: [Child's Name]

Thank you for attending the recent Pupil Support Plan (PSP) meeting.

As discussed, regular school attendance is essential for your child's educational progress, wellbeing and wider development. We understand that [Child's Name] has experienced periods of illness, and we appreciate the challenges this may present for your family.

However, we remain concerned about the ongoing pattern of broken weeks due to illness absence.

In accordance with the Plymouth CAST Attendance Policy, we now require medical evidence or supporting information in order to authorise any further illness-related absences.

This evidence should relate specifically to:

- the dates of absence; and/or
- any diagnosed or suspected medical condition affecting attendance.

Providing this information will help us work collaboratively with you and any relevant professionals to ensure that appropriate support is in place for [Child's Name].

Acceptable evidence may include:

- appointment cards;
- prescription evidence;
- NHS messages or correspondence;
- GP or consultant information;
- prescribed medication packaging.

Where absences become frequent or relate to an ongoing condition, schools may require more detailed medical information.

Please note that the school is unable to cover the cost of medical letters or reports.

If appropriate medical evidence is not provided, future absences may be recorded as unauthorised in line with DfE attendance guidance and Plymouth CAST policy.

We remain committed to supporting [Child's Name] and working positively with you to improve attendance and remove barriers wherever possible.

However, if attendance does not improve, further intervention may become necessary, including escalation to Tier 3 attendance procedures.

If you require further advice or support, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
[Role]

Version B – Parent Did Not Attend PSP Meeting

Private and Confidential

Mr & Mrs
[House]
[Street]
[Town]
[Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer],

Re: [Child's Name]

We were disappointed that you were unable to attend the recent Pupil Support Plan (PSP) meeting regarding attendance concerns for [Child's Name].

Regular pupil attendance at school is essential for educational progress, wellbeing and wider development. We understand from previous explanations that [Child's Name] has experienced illness absence, and we appreciate that this may present challenges for your family.

However, we remain concerned about the ongoing pattern of broken weeks due to illness-related absence.

In accordance with the Plymouth CAST Attendance Policy, we now require medical evidence or supporting information in order to authorise future illness-related absences.

This evidence should relate specifically to:

- the dates of absence; and/or
- any diagnosed or suspected medical condition affecting attendance.

Providing this information will help us work collaboratively with you and health professionals to ensure that appropriate support is in place for [Child's Name].

Acceptable evidence may include:

- appointment cards;
- prescription evidence;
- NHS messages or correspondence;
- GP or consultant information;
- prescribed medication packaging.

Where absences become frequent or relate to an ongoing condition, schools may require more detailed medical information.

Please note that the school is unable to cover the cost of medical letters or reports.

If appropriate medical evidence is not provided, future absences may be recorded as unauthorised in line with DfE attendance guidance and Plymouth CAST policy.

We remain committed to supporting [Child's Name] and working positively with you to improve attendance and remove barriers wherever possible.

However, if attendance does not improve, further intervention may become necessary, including escalation to Tier 3 attendance procedures.

Please contact the school if you would like to discuss this further or rearrange the PSP meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
[Role]

Appendix 6 – Tier 3 Formal Warning Letter

Escalation – Attendance Concern

Private and Confidential

Mr & Mrs
[House]
[Street]
[Town]
[Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer],

Re: [Child's Name]

First Warning Letter – Attendance Concern

Following previous support and intervention, we remain concerned that [Child's Name]'s attendance has not improved sufficiently and continues to show multiple weeks broken by absence.

Current attendance information is as follows:

- **Current Attendance:** [%]
- **Broken Weeks since [Date]:** [Number]
- **Unauthorised Sessions:** [Number]

This letter therefore serves as a formal attendance warning.

We would like to meet with you to:

- review ongoing concerns;
- discuss barriers affecting attendance;
- agree a final support plan;
- explain potential next steps and legal responsibilities.

Meeting Details:

Date	Time	Location
[Insert]	[Insert]	[Insert]

We remain committed to working positively with you and supporting [Child's Name] to access their full entitlement to education.

However, please be aware that where attendance does not improve and support is not engaged with or successful, schools and local authorities may need to consider further action in line with:

- the Plymouth CAST Attendance Policy;
- DfE statutory guidance;
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Potential next steps may include:

- referral to the Education Welfare Officer;
- attendance contract procedures;
- Notice to Improve;
- Penalty Notice consideration;
- prosecution proceedings.

Our preference is always to work collaboratively and supportively with families to improve attendance before legal intervention becomes necessary.

Please contact the school if you are unable to attend this meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
[Role]

Appendix 7 – Pupil Support Plan (PSP) Template

Attendance Policy Tier 2

Pupil Support Plan	
Name of school	
Date of meeting:	
Attendees:	
Pupil Name:	
Pupil D.O.B:	
Year Group:	
Attendance %	
Broken Weeks (Nº.)	
List of agencies currently involved with supporting child/family:	
SEN Code of practice Stage/Primary need:	
CP/CIN/Early Help:	
Looked After Child	
Young Carer	
Medical/Health need	
Child's strengths and interests:	
Summary of Issues	
Child views: likes/dislikes about school, any barriers to attendance, hopes for future etc	

Parent views: **of any barriers to attendance, hopes for future etc for their child**	
If the child could change three things about school to improve their day, what would they be?	**1.** **2.** **3.**
School view:	
Other agency view (if available)	

School support currently in place
•

Agreed Actions for school	**Timescales and responsible person**
•	

Agreed Actions for parent	**Timescales**
•	

Attendance Target		**Achieve by date**		
Broken Weeks Target		**Achieve by date**		

Communication Consent
Parents preferred method of communication: • Postal Letter • Email Please confirm address /email address

Review date	
Parent signature	

Senior Leader signature			
Pupil Support Plan Review 1			
Date of meeting:			
Attendees:			
Attendance %		**Comment**	
Broken Weeks (Nº.)		**Comment**	
Review of previous actions:			
Any new / additional issues:			
Child reflections			
Parent reflections			
Agreed Actions for school			**Timescales and responsible person**
•			
Agreed Actions for parent			**Timescales**
•			
Review date:			
Parent signature			
Senior Leader signature			

Pupil Support Plan Review 2			
Date of meeting:			
Attendees:			
Attendance %		**Comment**	
Broken Weeks (Nº.)		**Comment**	
Review of previous actions:			
Any new / additional issues:			
Child reflections			
Parent reflections			
Agreed Actions for school			**Timescales and responsible person**
•			
Agreed Actions for parent			**Timescales**
•			
Review date:			
Parent signature			
Senior Leader signature			
If case is not showing improvement, please discuss with your SIO and the Local Authority EWO prior to Review 3			

Pupil Support Plan Review 3.			
Date of meeting:			
Attendees:			
Attendance %		**Comment**	
Broken Weeks (Nº.)		**Comment**	
Review of previous actions:			
Any new / additional issues:			
Child Reflections			
Parent Reflections			
Agreed Actions for school		**Timescales and responsible person**	
•			
Agreed Actions for parent		**Timescales**	
•			
Parent signature			
Senior Leader signature			

Appendix 8 - Application for Exceptional Circumstances Leave

NOTICE TO PARENTS/CARERS

At Plymouth CAST, we believe that **every day in school matters**.

Good attendance supports children's:

- learning and progress;
- friendships and belonging;
- emotional wellbeing;
- confidence and routines;
- future success and life chances.

We recognise that family life can sometimes present important events, challenges or exceptional situations. We are committed to working respectfully, compassionately and consistently with families when requests for leave during term time are made.

However, parents/carers should be aware that the law does **not** give an automatic right to take a child out of school during term time for holidays or other absence.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Headteachers may only authorise leave of absence during term time where there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Each request is considered individually, taking account of:

- the specific circumstances;
- the child's attendance history;
- the child's wellbeing and educational needs;
- the impact on learning;
- safeguarding considerations;
- the evidence provided.

Any absence from school disrupts learning and may affect educational progress. Even short absences can lead to missed learning, reduced continuity and difficulty reconnecting with routines and relationships.

If leave is **not authorised** and a child is absent from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

This may result in the school requesting that the Local Authority consider legal intervention, including Penalty Notices, in line with national guidance and local authority procedures.

We strongly encourage families to discuss requests with school before making bookings or arrangements.

Our aim is always to work in partnership with families, balancing compassion, fairness, safeguarding and every child's right to full-time education.

APPLICATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES LEAVE

Please complete this form and return it to the school office at least **15 school days** before the requested absence wherever possible.

Pupil Details

Pupil Name	
Date of Birth	
Year Group	
School	
Class/Form	

Parent/Carer Details

Parent/Carer Name	
Relationship to Child	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Do you have Parental Responsibility (PR)	
Please provide details of anyone else with PR including whether they support this application	

Requested Leave Details

First Day of Absence	
Date Returning to School	
Total Number of School Days Missed	

If leaving home before the first day of absence, please provide departure date:

Reason for Request

Please explain why you believe this request should be considered exceptional.

You may wish to include:

- important family circumstances;
- compassionate reasons;
- significant events;
- unavoidable circumstances;
- wellbeing considerations;
- supporting context the school should understand.

Please provide as much information as possible.

Impact on Learning

Please explain:

- how your child will be supported to maintain learning during the absence;
- any discussions already held with school;
- any relevant wellbeing or safeguarding considerations.

Supporting Evidence

Please indicate whether supporting evidence is attached.

Examples may include:

- medical evidence;
- employer letters;
- professional correspondence;
- appointment confirmation;
- other relevant documentation.

Supporting Evidence Attached	Yes ☐	No ☐

Attendance Information

Please note that the school will consider:

- current attendance percentage;
- number of broken weeks;
- previous leave requests;
- punctuality;
- any safeguarding or attendance concerns.

Preferred Communication Method

☐ Email

Preferred email address:

☐ Telephone

Preferred number:

☐ Letter

Important Information

If leave is not authorised and your child is absent from school, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

In such circumstances, the school may request that the Local Authority consider issuing a Penalty Notice in line with national regulations.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child.

Current national Penalty Notice arrangements include:

- £80 if paid within 21 days;
- increasing to £160 if paid within 28 days.

Further unauthorised term-time absence within a three-year period may result in increased sanctions or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The school will always seek to work supportively and proportionately with families. However, we also have a legal and safeguarding duty to protect every child's entitlement to education.

Declaration

I confirm that:

- the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge;
- I understand there is no automatic entitlement to leave during term time;
- I understand the school will consider this request in line with legislation, DfE guidance and Plymouth CAST policy;
- I understand that unauthorised absence may result in legal intervention.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

School Use Only

Current Attendance %	
Number of Broken Weeks	
Attendance Concern Level	
Previous Leave Requests	
Safeguarding Concerns	
Recommendation	

Decision

☐ Authorised

☐ Not Authorised

Reason:

Headteacher Signature: _____

Date: _____