Spa Education Trust Attendance Policy 2025

1. Aims

Spa Education Trust aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024). We do this by:

> Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils

> Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance

> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

> Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contentsThe Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/madeIt also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Trustees are responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

    o Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority (LA)

    o Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs

- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs

- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance

- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

    o The importance of good attendance

    o That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

    o The school's legal requirements for keeping registers

    o The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

    o The importance of good attendance

    o That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

    o The school's legal requirements for keeping registers

    o The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

3.2 The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

> Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

> Working with the parents/carers of pupils to develop specific support approaches for attendance for all pupils, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils face in-school barriers

> Communicating with the local authority when a pupil has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

> Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels

> Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:

  o Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times

  o Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days

  o Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school

- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having a strong oversight of data analysis

- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

- Reporting on attendance to the Local Governing Body and Trustees once per term

- Where appropriate, hold a Targeted Support Meeting (TSM) once a term

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at Spa School Bermondsey is the Head of School, Georgina Quigley, who can be contacted via telephone 020 7237 3714 or email: HeadBermondsey@spa-education.org.

At Spa School Camberwell, the designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Head of School, Erin McCarthy who can be contacted via telephone 020 33434 5210 or email HeadCamberwell@spa-education.org.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school's attendance officers at each site is the SENCO. They are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head of school

- Ensure that attendance data is accurately collected and submitted to the relevant parties

- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

- Creating and monitoring the impact of attendance plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Report pupils who are severely absence as a safeguarding concern on CPOMS and work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure the pupil and their family are supported by external agencies as appropriate

The SENCOs can be reached through the school office at each site.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for reporting attendance to the office and relevant management staff on a daily basis.

3.6 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents and carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents and carers to the Family Support Worker (FSW) and / or SENCo in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Family Support Worker (FSW)

The FSW is responsible for recording attendance using the correct codes (see Appendix 1).

This is recorded on Integris for both morning and afternoon sessions.

3.8 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence by 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Bermondsey: 020 7237 3714 Email: office@spa-education.org

Camberwell: 020 3434 5210 Email: officecamberwell@spa-education.org

3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

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

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents should notify Spa School Bermondsey on 0207 237 3714 or e mail office@spa-education.org or Spa School Camberwell on 020 3434 5210, or email the school office: officecamberwell@spa-education.org

Parents should not rely on home-to-school transport staff to pass on messages about absence or lateness.

Absence due to physical or mental illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Safeguarding is always paramount and the school may seek advice from MASH about next steps.

4.3 Planned absence

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. We encourage families to share any relevant letters or other sources of information.

Please inform the school in advance either by phoning, emailing or putting a note in your child's home-school diary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Secondary pupils at Spa Bermondsey or Spa Camberwell will be marked as late if they arrive after 9:15, whether travelling independently or with family. Pupils using home-to-school transport will be marked as late if they arrive after 9:30.

For primary pupils at Spa Camberwell, those travelling with family will be marked late if they arrive after 9:45. Pupils travelling by home-to-school transport will be marked late if they arrive after 10:00.

Lateness due to issues with home-to-transport will be addressed directly with Local Authority Transport and parents will be informed so that they are aware.

If an independent traveller is late, i.e. a pupil who travels independently to and from school, a call will be made to the family by 9:30am to ascertain if the pupil is on their way to school. If a pupil does not arrive at school when expected, this may trigger the Missing Child Protocol to be implemented.

If an independent traveller is persistently late, a meeting with families will be arrange to help support the pupil with their punctuality and to ensure they are travelling directly to school. An action plan will be created in conjunction with the family and reviewed regularly.

In the rare case when a family needs to make alterative arrangements to the start or collection time for their child, these will need to be discussed with the Head or Deputy Head of School in the first instance. We recognise how important the beginning and end of day are for all pupils and strongly encourage all families to keep to the timings of the school day.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Families should not rely on home-to-school transport to inform the school of absence. Spa will follow up with all families, regardless of whether a message from transport has been received or not.

We will call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If unexplained absence continues, without contact from parents/carers the school will consider a referral to MASH or Early Help.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Attendance information will be reported to parents as part of parent's evenings as well as the EHC Annual Review.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

 The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. "Exceptional circumstances" are situations where a student's absence from school may be approved due to special reasons. These can include:

- Serious family emergencies (e.g., illness or death of a close family member)
- Key family events (e.g., weddings)

The Head of School will review each case and decide the length of absence based on the situation.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific circumstances, previous term time leave requests and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head of School's discretion. The Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 4.2 and 4.3

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- If the pupil is currently waiting for a change of placement and no alternative provision has been made.

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school

- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)

- Attending provision arranged by the local authority

- Attending work experience

- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Authorisation from the Head of School, in writing, should be sought if a term time absence is to be requested due to the family taking a holiday or travelling overseas for any reason. This request should be made as far in advance as possible with an explanation as to why the trip cannot occur out of term time.

5.2 Legal sanctions

We recognise that our pupils have high levels of needs and that this can affect families. Because of this, we don't expect to ever issue legal sanctions, including penalty notices.

However, in very rare cases, a penalty notice may be issued by the Local Authority.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Spa Education Trust will work with families to ensure all pupils have excellent attendance and punctuality. We will work with families to identify any barriers and will work collaboratively to support the young person and their families.

If you have concerns, in the first instance please speak with the Family Support Worker, SENCo or any member of the Senior Management Team.

We will work closely with families to identify pupils at risk of becoming persistent or severely absent and to implement strategies that support the young person and the family. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis with analysis conducted each week. Pupils at risk will be identified and an attendance meeting will be called by the SENCO. At this meeting barriers to attendance will be identified and support and strategies offered. An attendance target will be set and a follow up meeting, to review progress will be arranged.

We may make referrals to external agencies such as Family Early Help, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services, All Age Disability Team at Southwark or other Local Authority Transport services in consultation with families. An attendance action plan will be written in collaboration with the family as a supportive measure.

Attendance plans will be reviewed each half term and successes celebrated.

If a pupil becomes severely absent, that is has attendance less than 50%, we may make a referral to the Education and Inclusion Team (EIT) or Early Help so that support can be implemented. Families will always be informed of such referrals in advance and will be given a copy of any referral made.

Attendance is reviewed weekly and pupils with falling attendance will be identified so that support and advice can be provided as early as possible.

Pupils who are severely absent will have a safeguarding incident recorded. This will ensure that support for the pupil and their family is monitored by the DSL.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

At Spa, we recognise that some pupils face complex barriers to attendance, such as mental health issues, family difficulties, or long-term health conditions. To support these pupils, we take a collaborative approach.

The school will:

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

Pupil-level absence is reported daily through the DfE's *Data Dashboard* and information on those at risk of becoming persistent or severely absent will be used to prioritize pupils in need of an absence management plan.

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

All pupils at Spa have an EHCP, meaning we provide tailored support for all pupils. We collaborate with parents to address barriers to attendance. Flexibility in timetables and additional support are provided where needed. Pupils receive tailored interventions, including mental health support and significant learning assistance.

7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

When pupils return to school after a lengthy or unavoidable absence, we adopt a personalised approach to ensure they feel supported and reintegrated smoothly. We work closely with families to understand the

reasons for absence and to discuss any additional support needed. If appropriate, we will collaborate with external agencies, such as healthcare professionals or social services, to ensure a coordinated approach.

We may implement a phased return, starting with part-time attendance or a reduced timetable, gradually increasing as the pupil settles back into the school routine. This allows us to monitor their well-being and provide any adjustments needed, whether academic or pastoral. We will also offer regular check-ins with key staff members to ensure the pupil feels comfortable and confident in their return to school.

Throughout the process, the focus will be on making the pupil feel welcomed and supported, addressing any potential barriers to attendance, and promoting their mental and emotional well-being

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, monthly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with governors and trustees.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

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

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

❯ Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis

❯ Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)

❯ Provide regular attendance reports to Assistant Headteachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governors and trustees.

❯ Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

❯ Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent Absence (PA) (10% or more) and Severe Absence (SA) (50% or more) will be closely monitored. Parents will be invited to attendance meetings to discuss the issues and find solutions. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. Persistent and severe absence are safeguarding concerns and pupils with severe absence will have a safeguarding incident recorded on CPOMS.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school and to listen and understand barriers to attendance

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.

- Seek advice from Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or Early Help if attendance does not improve despite support in place.

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9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Steph Lea, Executive Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy as well as our behaviour policy.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent – other authorised reasons

T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made

Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available

Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		

Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Head	Half termly review of reports and analysis
	Half termly Safeguarding review of PA/SA with Head of School
Head of School	Weekly review of View My Your Data (VYED)
	Half term analysis overview for Trust Development meetings
	Monitor and report PA/SA CPOMS Safeguarding records
	Review of impact of attendance plans
	Referrals to Early Intervention Service
	Liaison with local authority
SENCO	Half termly report to HoS
	Weekly review of actions with FSW
	Weekly contact with PA/SA
	Team Around the School
	Attendance plans written and reviewed each half term
	Attendance meetings held and subsequent referrals to Early Help if needed for family support
	Contacting families for unexplained absence and ensuring N marks are cleared weekly
	Maintain PA/SA CPOMS safeguarding records
Family Support Worker	Daily attendance register
	First day absence calls
	Attendance collection for pupils taught off site (e.g. The Complete Works)
	Maintain PA/SA CPOMS safeguarding records