

Unity Academy
Attendance Policy
(2026-2027)



Reviewed July 2026. Next review July 2027.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Expectations

3.0 Definitions

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 School roles and responsibilities

4.2 Family roles and responsibilities

4.3 Pupil roles and responsibilities

5.0 Targets, attendance and punctuality

5.1 Attendance targets and punctuality

5.2 Lateness to school

6.0 Impact of poor attendance

7.0 Illness

7.1 Procedure for parents and carers

7.2 Procedure for illness in school

8.0 Medical and dental appointments

9.0 Leave of absence during term time

10.0 Home visits

10.1 Difficulty getting pupils into school

11.0 Religious leave of absence

12.0 Attendance monitoring procedures

12.1 School intervention

12.2 Legal action

12.3 Penalty notices

1.0 Introduction

Unity Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance are crucial. As a school, we will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils and will identify and address any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance as soon as possible.

It is the policy of the school to celebrate achievement, and attendance is the most critical factor to pupils' outcomes and success in school. Unity Academy will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all of our pupils, and raise the profile of good attendance across school through weekly conversations. Attendance is celebrated during form time, in assemblies, awarding of badges and through invites to special events. The school will work with parents to establish effective communication to improve attendance where necessary, including implementing targeted intervention to return a pupil to sustained full attendance as soon as possible. In the event that no improvement is seen, the school reserves the right to escalate intervention to external support or services. Attendance at Unity Academy is monitored daily by the attendance team, overseen by the assistant headteacher for behaviour and attendance. Our whole school attendance aim is 96% for each academic year.

2.0 Expectations

Pupils should be present, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. It is the duty of the school to classify the absence as authorised or unauthorised, not the parents or carers. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required. Parents/carers are expected to report an absence through one of two processes:

- Calling the school on the morning of the absence and speaking to a member of the attendance team
- Emailing the school attendance team on the morning of the absence. This may be followed up with a phone call from a member of the attendance team.

3.0 Definitions

1. 'Authorised' absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for unavoidable reasons such as genuine illness where medical evidence is provided.
2. 'Unauthorised' absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. These include:
 - Truancy before or during the school day
 - Absences which have never been reported by parents or carers or properly explained
 - Children who arrive at school after the register has closed (9.10am)
 - Extended term time absence such as holidays
 - Parents or carers keeping children off school unnecessarily

Leave of any kind can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and any absences cannot be authorised retrospectively. The school does not operate a blanket policy in granting certain events or instances as automatically authorised. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether an absence is authorised.

If there are problems that affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with home and pupils to resolve these problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly, focussed, approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 school roles and responsibilities.

The school will:

- Ensure that attendance is everyone's business.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law.

- Complete electronic or paper registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
- Complete electronic registers at the beginning of each lesson.
- Communicate to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence.
- Follow up on any non-attendance with no contact on the first day of absence with a phone call and / or home visit.
- Display attendance rates around the school and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils.
- Promote the role of the form tutor/class teacher in monitoring and rewarding good attendance for pupils in their form.
- Challenge attendance that is less than good and set targets for attendance as outlined in the attendance action plan.
- Intervene when poor attendance / punctuality becomes a problem and before it becomes a habit.
- Deal sympathetically with any problem a pupil may have which is causing attendance / punctuality to decline and always stay in regular contact with parents / carers.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Work actively with children and families to emphasise the benefits of high attendance; instilling and reinforcing good attendance habits.
- Consult with all members of the school community and the Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by Senior Leaders and the school Council.
- Communicate a clear and transparent process around the management of attendance to families, following the school's staged attendance response plan.
- Report to the school Council each term.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- Have in place procedures that will allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of others.
- Not grant extended leave during term time and will automatically refer to the local authority to fine.

4.2 Family roles and responsibilities

The families will:

- Encourage their child to attend the school daily, be punctual and inform the school immediately if their child is absent.
- Inform the school of any hospital appointment in advance unavoidably scheduled during school time via the 'Request for Medical Leave of Absence' form which is available for download on the school website.
- Inform the school of any problems which might affect their child's attendance.
- Cooperate with the school if their child's attendance / punctuality is unsatisfactory.
- Make requests for special leave of absence for their child during term time by completing in advance an 'Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances' form which is available for download on the school website.

4.3 Pupil roles and responsibilities

The pupils will:

- Always attend the school unless prevented by a specific illness or unavoidable circumstances.
- Always arrive at the school on time and in time for the morning line-up.
- Always arrive to lessons on time.

5.0 Targets, attendance and punctuality

5.1 Attendance and punctuality targets

The target for all pupils is to achieve 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. The minimum expectation for all pupils is attendance over the academic year of 96%.

Attendance during one academic year	Equivalent days	Equivalent sessions	Equivalent weeks	Equivalent lessons
97%	6 days	12 sessions	1 week	36 lessons
95%	9 days	18 sessions	2 weeks	54 lessons
90%	19 days	38 sessions	4 weeks	114 lessons
85%	29 days	58 sessions	6 weeks	174 lessons
80%	38 days	76 sessions	8 weeks	228 lessons
75%	48 days	96 sessions	10 weeks	288 lessons
70%	57 days	114 sessions	11.5 weeks	342 lessons

5.2 Lateness to school

All pupils are encouraged to arrive at school no later than 8.35am to ensure they are on school grounds in time for morning line-up. Morning line-up is at 8:40am. For the academic year 2026-2027, period 1 will start at 8:50am, meaning any pupils who are late to school will be missing vital learning from subjects such as English and maths. Previously this has been form time.

- Pupils arriving after 8:40am will need to enter school via the pupil support entrance on Warbreck Hill Road
- Pupils arriving between 8:41am and 9:10am will be marked as late.
- Pupils arriving after 9:10am without a good reason counts as one whole session of unauthorised absence and will be recorded as a U mark (i.e., half a day's absence).
- All pupils arriving late to school will receive an after-school detention.
- If pupils already have an after-school detention for behaviour consequences, the detention may be carried over to the following day.
- Refusal to attend detention will be sanctioned in line with the school behaviour policy.

We understand that sometimes there are genuine reasons as to why pupils may be late to school. If this is the case, we encourage you to contact the school so we are made aware of these.

6.0 Impact of poor attendance

If your child misses school on a regular basis, they are damaging their future life choices. Every school day counts. When a child misses school regularly, it has a serious impact on their education and can limit their future opportunities. National research shows a clear link between poor attendance and lower academic achievement. Just 19 days of absence over the course of a school year can, on average, result in a drop of one full grade at GCSE across all subjects.

Consistently missing school means pupils fall behind in their learning, find it harder to keep up with the curriculum, and often struggle with gaps in knowledge. These gaps can affect confidence, motivation, and exam performance.

Key facts:

- Pupils with attendance below 90% are classed as persistently absent, and nationally, this group performs significantly worse at GCSE compared to their peers.
- Good attendance is strongly linked to better GCSE results, which in turn open doors to college, apprenticeships, and future careers.

- Missing just a day or two each fortnight may not seem like much, but it adds up to a month of missed learning over the school year.
- Regular attendance is not just about academic success, it's also about building routines, resilience, and relationships that prepare young people for life beyond school.

7.0 Illness

We understand that pupils may be ill on occasions and that they may not be well enough to attend school.

7.1 Procedure for parents and carers

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- Contact home by telephone or text message
- Send out the attendance officer to complete home visits where appropriate
- After five days of absence the assistant headteacher in charge of attendance will incorporate the pupil in the weekly discussion with the pupil welfare officer
- After a maximum of 10 days' absence, the assistant headteacher will ask the pupil welfare office or the police to call at the pupil's home. The aim of this being to identify and resolve the difficulties that are preventing the pupil from attending school or to safeguard the pupil. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.

7.2 Procedure for illness in school

Sometimes a pupil attends school but becomes unwell during the day. The pupil must alert a member of staff who will direct them to the appropriate staff member to deal with their concern. A member of the pastoral or attendance team will contact home if a child is unwell in school.

In line with FCAT policy, we will not be sending pupils home unattended if they are unwell. If a pupil is deemed unwell, they will need to be collected by an adult whose contact details are on our school system. If a pupil is too ill to be in school, it is important that there is an adult at home to care for them. School will not allow unwell pupils to leave the school site unsupervised to make their own way home.

8.0 Medical and dental appointments

Medical and dental appointments should, where at all possible, be made outside of school hours. Urgent medical and dental appointments will only be authorised with confirmation of appointment card/letter. If the absence is authorised, families must ensure they collect the pupil from school as we will not be allowing pupils out of school unaccompanied unless there is prior agreement between the family and school. Families must almost ensure that the pupil is aware of the appointment time and is ready to make their way to reception at this time. It is not always feasible for pupils to be collected by a member of staff and escorted to reception e.g., during unstructured time.

9.0 Leave of absence during term time

Leave of absence during term time is not permitted. Any extended absence from the school will be counted as unauthorised and will normally lead to a fixed penalty notice from the local authority in line with the national framework for penalty notices. Local authorities may choose to prosecute in instances of repeated or prolonged leave of absence.

10.0 Home visits

Home visits are taken by the school for a number of reasons and not purely for safeguarding reasons. A visit will commence following 2 consecutive days of absence. If a pupil is ill, a home visit may be undertaken to check in with the family as well as offer avenues of support for those pupils who may be experiencing barriers to attending school. Collaboration with families to limit school absence is the best way to address any concerns and it is important to notice that these actions are undertaken without judgement with the overall aim of meeting the best interests of the pupil.

10.1 Difficulty getting pupils into school

Parents and carers should contact the pupils head of year or the attendance team by email. The head of year and attendance team are the people in school who will usually know pupils the best and will be able to suggest strategies if the problem persists. There may be strategies school can utilise as short-term measures to support a pupil back into school.

11.0 Religious leave of absence

For a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belongs to, pupils will be granted one day for each occasion of religious observance with a maximum of three days over one academic year. As a rule, 'a day set apart for religious observance' is a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. These absences, if granted, will be recorded as authorised using the 'R' code. These are the codes as stipulated by the Department for Education and whilst absence is authorised, it does count against the child's attendance. This is the DfE national policy.

12.0 Attendance Monitoring Procedures

12.1 School intervention: Attendance will be monitored daily and patterns of absence will be investigated promptly. Families will be contacted if attendance falls below expectations. Early Help support may be offered, and where attendance continues to be a concern, referrals to the Local Authority may be made.

Universal 96% +	Welcoming and positive school environment Whole school attendance policy Rewards for good attendance and improved attendance Consistent communication in assembly Consistent communication in tutor time Communication with parents and carers regarding their child's attendance In school reward events for attendance Robust monitoring of attendance and information sharing via the attendance team
Stage 1 92-95%	Stage 1 letter to parents/carers Phone call to parents/carers from attendance team/ form tutors Conversation with students Sign-post & support access to external agencies Home visits Short term attendance targets Liaise with (pastoral/SEND/behaviour) to address any barriers to attendance Wake up calls
Stage 2 91-93%	Stage 2 letter to parents/carers Phone call to parents/carers from attendance team/ Head of Key Stage Weekly monitoring by the attendance team to improve attendance Student referred to panel at attendance meetings Liaise with (pastoral/SEND/behaviour) to address any barriers to attendance Home visits Potential fixed penalty notice Parental meeting to discuss barriers to attendance and plan to move forward
Stage 3 90%	Stage 3 letter to inform parents/carers that attendance is not improving and summarise support already offered Referred for PWO involvement Further sign-post and support to access external services Fixed penalty notice Regular home visits Student discussed again at panel attendance meetings Parental meeting to discuss barriers to attendance and lack of improvement
Stage 4 <90%	Stage 4 letter to parents/carers to inform of next steps PWO involvement Intensive attendance support plan Panel meeting (SLT, pastoral, SEND, external agencies) Weekly SLT check in with home

12.2 Legal Action

In line with the Education Act 1996, the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 (as amended), and the Department for Education's School Attendance Guidance (2022), the school works in partnership with the local authority to take legal action where a pupil's unauthorised absence meets the threshold set out in national guidance. When a pupil accrues 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within any rolling 10-school-week period, the school must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. Penalty notices are issued by the local authority and carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine is not paid, the case may be referred for prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A maximum of two penalty notices per parent, per child, can be issued within a three-year period. Further offences may result in direct prosecution.

While legal action is a last resort, it forms part of a wider approach to securing attendance, and will only be taken when support has been offered but concerns persist.

12.3 Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices will be considered for:

- Persistent unauthorised late arrival (arriving after register closes >3 times per half term)
- Persistent unauthorised absence
- Unauthorised leave of absence, including holidays in term time

Trigger Points & Rules:

- Triggered by 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a term OR 14 sessions (7 days) over two successive terms (can span academic years).
- Parents may be issued up to 3 Penalty Notices in a single year.
- Penalty Notices can be issued if excluded pupils are found in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion.