



UNICORN SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy applies to all children at Unicorn School, including those in the EYFS (both statutory and non-statutory school age)

RESPONSIBILITY

Staff Member:	Headteacher
Senior Attendance Champion:	Headteacher

Last Reviewed:	September 2025
Approved by Governors:	November 2025
Next Review:	September 2026

Parent Communication and Policy Availability

This policy is published on the school website and issued to all parents upon joining the school and at the start of each academic year. Parent and pupil views are considered in each annual review of the policy.

Introduction

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance including those laid out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance:

[Working Together to Improve Attendance DFE 2024](#)

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between a child's attendance and their attainment at school. We recognise the importance of regular attendance all staff are committed to supporting children and families to achieve high levels of regular attendance.

The school promotes good attendance through regular communication with parents, celebration of high attendance in assemblies/newsletters, and recognition for improved attendance. Positive attendance is framed as an aspect of each pupil's personal development and wellbeing.

Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion for the school is the headteacher, Polly Fraley. They are responsible for the strategic oversight of attendance, ensuring effective analysis of data, coordination of interventions, and liaison with the Governing Body.

Contact: polly.fraley@unicornschoo.org.uk

Unicorn School's attendance expectations and procedures

The Front Door is opened at 8.20am on every school day. Pupils are expected to be in their classrooms by 8.30am.

Morning registration opens at 08:30 and closes at 09:00. Afternoon registration is taken at 1:00 (infants) and 1:30 (juniors) and closes 30 minutes later. Unexplained absences are to be investigated and attendance codes finalised within five working days.

The school day finishes at 3.15pm (EYFS), 3.25pm (Yellow and Green) or 3.35pm (all Juniors)

There is a dedicated e-mail address for parents (including parents of children of non statutory school age) to use to report absences on the day (eg. child ill).

absences@unicornschoo.org.uk

Parents should notify the school of absence via [insert email/telephone] on the first day. For ongoing or escalating attendance concerns, parents may contact the Head, Polly Fraley, polly.fraley@unicornschoo.org.uk for individual support.

As soon as possible, and before 10.00am, the parents of any pupil who is still marked as "Absent (Awaiting Details)" will be contacted by the School to explain the absence. The school will phone all available numbers and use all means possible to ascertain the whereabouts of a child who is absent without explanation.

Safeguarding, attendance and Children Missing Education (CME)

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of the school's safeguarding responsibility. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues including the criminal exploitation of children.

CME are at significant risk of underachieving, having poorer health outcomes, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) later in life. The school has a responsibility to work with the Local Authority to identify any potential CME and work together to support these children and their families.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and Working Together to Improve Attendance (2024) the school:

- seeks to have at least two emergency contacts for each child.
- will inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register, including where the child has been taken out of school by

his/her parents to be home educated, has moved away from the school's location and where the child has been permanently excluded.

- will inform the Local Authority if any children join or leave Unicorn School at non-standard points i.e. joining after reception or leaving before Year 6.
- will inform the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of ten school days.
- Will inform the Local Authority if there is reason to believe a child will miss 15 days of school in the year or more due to ill health

Use of Attendance Data

Attendance data are analysed weekly to identify trends, vulnerable groups, and individuals requiring support. Summary reports are shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body each term to inform school improvement planning.

Persistent and Severe Absence strategy

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Unicorn School is committed to working with parents to ensure that children are able to access education.

Pupils with attendance below 90 percent are classified as persistent absentees; those below 50 percent are severe absentees. The school will arrange a targeted meeting with parents to agree an Attendance Improvement Plan, and may seek advice from external agencies (e.g. Educational Psychologist, Local Authority Attendance Service) where appropriate. Support plans include clear actions, review dates, and reintegration support where needed.

Should a child's attendance fall below 90%, even if those absences have been authorised, the Head will contact parents to open a dialogue over improving that child's attendance. In the cases of ongoing persistent or severe absence, the school will arrange a targeted meeting with parents to agree an Attendance Improvement Plan, and may seek advice from external agencies (e.g. Educational Psychologist, Local Authority Attendance Service) where appropriate. Support plans include clear actions, review dates, and reintegration support where needed.

SEND and Health Needs

Where attendance is affected by medical or SEND circumstances, the school may request supporting medical evidence for long-term or recurrent absence. Reasonable adjustments and support plans will be agreed in partnership with parents and external agencies, in line with Equality Act duties.

Part-time Timetables

A part-time timetable will only be used in exceptional circumstances to meet a pupil's

specific needs, with parental agreement and a clear plan setting out the purpose, expected outcomes, review dates and proposed end date. The arrangement will be reviewed regularly and formally ended as soon as appropriate.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

The DFE guidance outlines a clear framework that schools should follow in seeking to improve attendance: Expect high attendance, Monitor, Listen and Understand, Facilitate support, Formalise support and Enforce.

Working Together to Improve Attendance outlines the National Framework for Penalty Notices. These would be used as a last resort and in consultation with the Local Authority should parents not engage with support.

More information can be found here:

[National Framework for Penalty notices](#)

Procedure for Parents Needing to Obtain Prior Authorisation for an Absence

Parents must seek authorisation in advance from the Head if they plan to take their children out of School during term time. Apart from exceptional circumstances class teachers will not be expected to provide work for any period of absence.

Authorised Absence Categories

Authorised absences may include: medical or dental appointments, illness, religious observance, approved educational activities (competitions, music, drama, sporting events), attendance at interviews or open days, study leave for public examinations, and participation in licensed performances or employment abroad (where approval has been granted by the school and Local Authority).

Please notify your child's teacher in advance of any absence

Medical Appointments

Such absences must be notified in advance to the Class Teacher

Parents are encouraged to arrange medical appointments outside normal school hours. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. If it is necessary for a pupil to attend a medical appointment during school hours then the Class Teacher must be notified in advance. The School will monitor any recurring patterns for a pupil.

Holidays during Term Time

With very few exceptions all absences for holiday in term time will not be authorised. Parents should inform the Headteacher and class teacher with as much notice as possible.

If parents have concerns about their child's attendance they should contact the Head polly.fraley@unicornschoool.org.uk for support and guidance.

APPENDIX

Attendance Codes (DfE August 2024)

Code	Meaning
/ \	Present at school (/ = morning, \ = afternoon)
L	Late arrival before register closes
B	Off-site educational activity arranged by school
D	Dual registration at another school
K	Education provision arranged by local authority
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
C1	Regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Part-time timetable (agreed)
J1	Interview for employment/education
S	Study leave for public examination
X	Non-compulsory age not required to attend
I	Illness
M	Medical/dental appointment
E	Suspended or permanently excluded
Q	No access arrangements
Y1	Transport normally provided not available
Y2	Widespread travel disruption
Y3	Part of school premises closed
Y4	School closed (unplanned)
Y5	Criminal justice detention
Y6	Public health restriction
Y7	Other unavoidable cause
G	Unauthorised holiday
N	Reason not yet established
O	Unauthorised absence (no reason)
U	Late after register closed
Z	Prospective pupil not on register
#	Planned whole school closure
C	Leave of absence for Exceptional Circumstances
T	Parent travelling for Occupational circumstances
R	Religious Observance

Off-site Education Codes

Where a pupil is attending an approved off-site educational activity, the appropriate attendance code (e.g. B, D, K, P, V or W) will be used to record attendance at another approved location rather than absence.

Register Record-keeping

The attendance register is a legal record and must be kept electronically for at least six years. Any amendment will record the original entry, reason for change, date and the person making the alteration.

Youth Offending Team Notification (optional)

[Add] Where a pupil is known to be under the supervision of the Youth Offending Team, the school will inform the allocated worker of any unexplained absence in the interests of safeguarding.