	Vanguard Learning Trust *The Vanguard Learning Trust is a group of local primary and secondary schools in Hillingdon. We strive to be a Trust that serves its local community and is pioneering in its approach to broadening our students' lives. We believe in effective teaching which allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom and that intellectual curiosity is at the core of every learning experience. Whilst schools in the Trust have their own ethos and values, they share the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential and life is a journey of discovery.*

Attendance policy
Part A: Trust-wide

Summer 2026

Contents

Part A: Trust-wide **3**

Section 1: Overview 3

1.1 Aims 3

1.2 Legislation and guidance 3

1.3 Links with other policies 3

1.4 Policy monitoring arrangements 3

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities 4

2.2 Trustees and the local governing bodies 4

2.3 The headteacher 5

2.4 The Trust attendance lead 5

2.5 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school 5

2.6 School attendance team 6

2.7 Staff responsible for completing registers 6

2.8 Office staff 6

2.9 Parents/carers 6

2.10 Students 7

Section 3: Recording attendance 7

3.1 Attendance register 7

3.1.1 Amendments to the attendance register 7

3.1.2 Other information 7

3.2 Unplanned absence 8

Section 4: Authorised and unauthorised absence 9

Section 5: Monitoring attendance 10

5.1 The Trust's approach 10

5.2 Strategies for promoting attendance 10

Appendix 1: Attendance codes 14

Part A: Trust-wide

Section 1: Overview

1.1 Aims

This policy demonstrates Vanguard Learning Trust's commitment to securing excellent attendance across all schools. The Trust's approach is rooted in statutory guidance, evidence-informed practice and shared learning from local and national contexts. The Trust recognises that regular school attendance is fundamental to safeguarding, educational achievement, wellbeing, positive relationships and future life opportunities.
Trust schools will:

- set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all pupils;
- promote the benefits of regular attendance for academic progress, wellbeing, belonging, social development and future opportunities;
- recognise that poor attendance may be an indicator of safeguarding concerns, unmet needs or barriers to learning;
- identify, understand and remove barriers to attendance as early as possible;
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence, through early, proportionate and targeted intervention;
- ensure all pupils can access their full entitlement to education;
- act promptly when patterns of absence or lateness emerge, recognising that regular attendance is essential to ensure pupils can access a coherent, well-sequenced curriculum over time;
- work in partnership with families in a way that is respectful, supportive, empathetic and solution-focused;
- provide timely, targeted and inclusive interventions for pupils most at risk of poor attendance;
- support punctuality across the school day, reinforcing the importance of arriving at school and to lessons on time; and
- promote a culture in which attendance is understood as everyone's responsibility and every child's right.

The Trust is committed to building inclusive school communities where pupils feel safe, valued, connected and supported to attend and thrive.

1.2 Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance in *'Working together to improve school attendance'*, which applies from 19 August 2024 (click here), as well as *'School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures'* (click here). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996 (click here)
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002 (click here)
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (click here)
- The Education (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, along with the 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments (click here)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (click here)

The policy also reflects:

- School census guidance (click here)
- *'Keeping children safe in education'* (click here)
- *'Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools*' (click here)

1.3 Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

1.4 Policy monitoring arrangements

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed through the Trust's wider quality assurance and school improvement processes. The policy will be reviewed in response to updated guidance from the Department

for Education or local authority, and at a minimum annually by the designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school. Following review, Part A of the policy will be approved by the board of trustees and Part B of the policy will be reviewed by the school's local governing body. In addition to Trust-wide quality assurance activity, school leaders will regularly review how attendance systems, processes and culture reflect:

- high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- positive school culture, belonging and inclusion;
- effective family engagement strategies;
- accurate attendance recording and effective use of management information systems;
- early identification and removal of barriers to attendance;
- effective support for vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and
- current Ofsted expectations relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and inclusion.

The Trust will quality assure attendance systems, culture and practice across all schools through its wider school improvement and safeguarding processes.

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Attendance is everyone's business

Promoting good attendance is a shared responsibility across the Trust. Creating a culture in which pupils attend regularly, arrive on time and feel a sense of belonging requires a consistent whole-school approach and strong partnership working with families and external agencies. All staff have a role to play in promoting positive attendance. Staff should recognise that absence is often a symptom of wider need or vulnerability and should respond in a way that is supportive, consistent and professionally curious. The Trust seeks to ensure that this culture is consistently understood, modelled and reinforced by all staff.

2.2 Trustees and the local governing bodies

The trustees and local governing body (LGB) of each school are responsible for:

- setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality across the school community;
- promoting a culture in which good attendance is valued, recognised and understood as fundamental to safeguarding and educational success;
- ensuring the school fulfils its statutory duties in relation to attendance, including:
    - recording attendance accurately;
    - maintaining appropriate attendance registers;
    - sharing required attendance information with the Department for Education and local authority; and
    - working effectively with relevant partners to remove barriers to attendance;
- ensuring attendance is appropriately prioritised within safeguarding, SEND, inclusion and pupil premium arrangements;
- ensuring the school has effective systems in place for identifying, monitoring and improving attendance;
- ensuring sufficient resources and staffing are allocated to attendance improvement work;
- making sure school leaders analyse attendance data regularly and use this to identify patterns, trends and groups requiring additional support;
- holding school leaders to account for the effectiveness of attendance systems, interventions and outcomes;
- ensuring attendance support is inclusive, proportionate and responsive to pupils' individual needs;
- monitoring the attendance of vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and pupils known to social care;
- ensuring attendance procedures are clearly communicated to parents/carers and are written in accessible, parent-friendly language;
- supporting the sharing of effective attendance practice across the Trust through attendance forums and school improvement activity;
- ensuring staff receive regular attendance training appropriate to their roles; and
- reviewing attendance data, trends and improvement priorities on a regular basis.

Governors and trustees should seek assurance not only regarding attendance outcomes, but also regarding the quality, consistency and impact of attendance practice and culture across the school.

2.3 The headteacher

The headteacher of each school is responsible for:

- ensuring the effective implementation of this policy;
- establishing and maintaining a culture in which good attendance is expected, promoted and celebrated;
- ensuring attendance is prioritised as part of the school's safeguarding, inclusion and pastoral responsibilities;
- ensuring all staff understand their role in promoting attendance;
- monitoring attendance data regularly and reporting this to governors and trustees;
- ensuring attendance concerns are identified and addressed promptly;
- overseeing the effectiveness of attendance interventions and support strategies;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate professional development relating to attendance, safeguarding, family engagement and barriers to attendance;
- working with parents/carers and external agencies to remove barriers preventing regular attendance;
- ensuring pupils with SEND, medical needs or mental health needs receive appropriate support to maximise attendance;
- communicating high expectations regarding attendance and punctuality clearly and consistently to pupils and parents/carers;
- ensuring the school works effectively with the local authority and other relevant agencies where attendance concerns arise;
- authorising fixed penalty notices or other legal interventions, where appropriate and in accordance with local authority procedures; and
- ensuring statutory attendance data and information is shared appropriately with the local authority and Department for Education.

The headteacher will ensure attendance practice is underpinned by a supportive, relational and inclusive approach whilst maintaining clear expectations and accountability.

2.4 The Trust attendance lead

The Trust attendance lead is responsible for:

- developing and maintaining the Trust-wide attendance policy and related guidance;
- ensuring Trust attendance procedures reflect current legislation, statutory guidance and best practice;
- working with relevant school staff to monitor attendance trends, patterns and risks across the Trust;
- supporting schools to improve attendance through advice, challenge, quality assurance and targeted support;
- supporting schools in identifying groups and cohorts at increased risk of poor attendance, including pupils with intersecting vulnerabilities;
- facilitating Trust-wide attendance networks, forums and professional development;
- supporting schools with complex attendance cases and strategic attendance planning;
- promoting evidence-informed and relational attendance practice across the Trust;
- sharing effective practice and resources between schools; and
- working collaboratively with school leaders and external partners to improve attendance outcomes.

The Trust attendance lead is Adam Walthaus and can be contacted via emailing awalthaus@vlt.org.uk

2.5 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school

Each school will identify a designated senior leader responsible for attendance (sometimes referred to as the attendance champion or designated attendance lead). This leader is responsible for:

- leading and championing attendance improvement across the school;
- promoting a consistent culture of high expectations, belonging and inclusion;
- ensuring attendance systems and procedures are implemented consistently;
- monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly;
- identifying pupils and groups requiring additional attendance support;
- ensuring early intervention takes place where attendance concerns emerge;

- overseeing attendance interventions and evaluating their impact;
- working collaboratively with pupils, families and external agencies to improve attendance;
- ensuring attendance communication with families is respectful, clear and solution-focused;
- coordinating reintegration and attendance support plans where required;
- ensuring appropriate referrals are made to safeguarding, SEND or external services where attendance concerns indicate wider need;
- supporting staff to apply attendance processes consistently; and
- providing regular attendance updates to senior leaders, governors and the Trust.

The name and contact details of the designated senior leader responsible for attendance can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.6 School attendance team

The attendance team in each school is responsible for:

- monitoring daily attendance and punctuality;
- identifying and following up absence concerns promptly;
- analysing attendance data and identifying emerging patterns;
- maintaining accurate attendance records;
- communicating with families regarding attendance concerns;
- arranging and contributing to attendance meetings and support plans;
- working closely with pastoral, safeguarding and SEND teams to support pupils with barriers to attendance;
- supporting reintegration following periods of absence;
- escalating attendance concerns in line with school procedures; and
- supporting the implementation of attendance improvement strategies.

The names and contact details of relevant attendance staff can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.7 Staff responsible for completing registers

Staff responsible for completing attendance registers are responsible for:

- completing attendance registers accurately and on time;
- recording attendance using the correct national attendance codes;
- following school procedures where attendance concerns arise;
- reporting safeguarding concerns linked to absence or punctuality promptly; and
- ensuring any amendments to attendance records are made in accordance with statutory requirements.

Further details regarding registration procedures can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.8 Office staff

Designated office staff are responsible for:

- receiving and recording absence notifications from parents/carers;
- ensuring unexplained absence is followed up in line with school procedures;
- maintaining accurate attendance records;
- communicating attendance information to relevant staff; and
- supporting effective communication between home and school regarding attendance matters.

2.9 Parents/carers

For the purpose of this policy, the term ‘parent/carer’ refers to:

- all natural parents, whether married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and/or
- any person who has day-to-day responsibility for the care of a child or young person.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time;
- notify the school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless otherwise agreed by the school;
- provide clear reasons for absence and an expected date of return;
- work collaboratively with the school to address attendance concerns;
- attend meetings and engage with support offered to improve attendance where appropriate;

- avoid arranging holidays or unnecessary appointments during term time;
- provide the school with up-to-date emergency contact details; and
- seek support at an early stage if barriers to attendance arise.

Parents/carers play a vital role in promoting positive attendance and helping children establish good attendance habits for life.

2.10 Students

Students are expected to:

- attend school regularly and on time;
- attend all timetabled lessons and registration periods;
- engage positively with support offered to improve attendance;
- communicate with staff where they are experiencing difficulties affecting attendance, where appropriate; and
- contribute positively to a culture in which good attendance is valued.

In sixth form settings, pupils may additionally be expected to follow specific absence reporting procedures outlined in Part B of this policy.

Section 3: Recording attendance

3.1 Attendance register

Each school will maintain an attendance register and record the attendance of all pupils at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session, in accordance with statutory requirements. Attendance registers will record whether pupils are:

- present;
- attending an approved educational activity;
- absent; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Schools will use the national attendance and absence codes in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (click here) and current Department for Education guidance. Attendance registers are legal documents and must be completed accurately, consistently and in a timely manner.

3.1.1 Amendments to the attendance register

Any amendment made 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; and
- the name and role of the person making the amendment.

All amendments will be made in accordance with statutory requirements and school procedures. **Appendix 1** outlines the attendance and absence codes used by the Department for Education.

3.1.2 Other information

The school will also record:

- for students of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not;
- the nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity;
- the nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances; and
- relevant attendance information required for safeguarding or statutory reporting purposes.

Schools are required to share attendance data securely with the Department for Education and local authorities in line with statutory expectations. Schools will retain attendance registers and related records for a minimum of 6 years in accordance with statutory requirements and data retention guidance. Timings of the school day and registration arrangements can be found in **Part B**.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents/carers must notify the school of the reason for their child's absence on the first day of absence as soon as reasonably practicable and in line with the procedures outlined in **Part B** of this policy. Unless otherwise agreed by the school, parents/carers should continue to notify the school on each subsequent day of absence. Where a pupil is absent due to illness, the school will normally authorise the absence unless there is a genuine concern regarding the authenticity of the illness. Where appropriate, the school may request medical evidence to support the absence. This may include:

- an appointment card;
- prescription information;
- prescribed medication;
- a doctor's note; or
- other suitable evidence.

Schools will not routinely request medical evidence unnecessarily and will consider the individual circumstances of each case. Where the school is not satisfied that the reason for absence is genuine, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. Parents/carers will normally be informed where this is the case. Where absence due to illness becomes frequent or patterns emerge, the school will consider whether additional support, assessment of need or safeguarding action is required.

3.3 Planned absence

Medical and dental appointments should, wherever possible, be arranged outside the school day. Where this is not possible, parents/carers should notify the school in advance and pupils should only be absent for the minimum amount of time necessary. Requests for leave of absence during term time must be made in advance and in accordance with the procedures outlined in **Part B** of this policy. The headteacher will determine whether a request for leave of absence should be authorised in line with statutory guidance and the circumstances outlined in Section 4 of this policy.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

Promoting punctuality is an important part of improving attendance and establishing positive routines for learning. A pupil who arrives late before the register closes will be recorded as late using the appropriate attendance code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be recorded as absent for the session using the appropriate attendance code. Schools will monitor patterns of lateness and work with pupils and families where punctuality concerns emerge. Persistent lateness may result in further intervention or support. Further details regarding punctuality procedures and responses can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

3.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where a pupil expected to attend school does not attend, or stops attending without explanation, the school will follow up the absence promptly and proportionately. This may include:

- contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence to establish the reason for absence;
- making reasonable attempts to contact all emergency contacts provided;
- identifying whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised;
- recording the correct attendance code as soon as the reason for absence is established;
- continuing to follow up unexplained absence where necessary;
- considering safeguarding concerns where a pupil cannot be located or where absence is unusual;
- making referrals to relevant services or agencies where appropriate;
- offering support to remove barriers to attendance; and/or
- considering formal intervention where support has not been successful or engaged with.

Where a pupil is missing from education or there are concerns regarding their safety or welfare, schools will follow their safeguarding and children missing education procedures and may involve the local authority, police or children's social care where appropriate. Attendance concerns will be considered alongside wider safeguarding, wellbeing and contextual information.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Schools will regularly communicate with parents/carers regarding attendance and punctuality. This may include:

- attendance percentages;
- information regarding patterns of absence or lateness;

- communication regarding attendance concerns;
- invitations to attendance meetings; and
- recognition of positive attendance or improvements in attendance.

Schools will seek to ensure attendance communication is clear, supportive, accessible and solution-focused. Further details regarding attendance reporting arrangements can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

Section 4: Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only authorise absence from school in line with statutory regulations and Department for Education guidance, including the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'. Leave of absence during term time will only be granted where there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are expected to be rare, specific to the individual case, and not a norm. The headteacher may authorise absence for:

- participation in a regulated performance or regulated employment;
- attendance at an interview;
- study leave in relation to public examinations (where appropriate);
- a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable agreed as part of a support plan; and
- exceptional circumstances, as determined by the headteacher.

4.2 Granting a leave of absence

Leave of absence is granted at the discretion of the headteacher, taking into account the individual circumstances of each request, the pupil's attendance history and any wider safeguarding or welfare considerations. Each school will define and apply the meaning of 'exceptional circumstances' in a consistent way, as outlined in **Part B** of this policy. In line with statutory guidance, it is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday. Where a request is refused and absence is subsequently taken, this will normally be recorded as unauthorised. The school may request evidence to support any application for leave of absence where appropriate. Requests should be made in advance using the school's agreed procedures, details of which are set out in **Part B** of this policy. Where a pupil is over compulsory school age (for example in sixth form), requests for leave of absence may be made by the pupil or by a parent/carer with whom they normally live, in line with school procedures.

4.3 Other valid reasons for authorised absence

Absence may be authorised for the following reasons, in line with statutory guidance:

- illness (including physical and mental health-related illness);
- medical or dental appointments that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours;
- religious observance where the day is set apart by the relevant religious body;
- travel for occupational purposes, including for families who are recognised as travelling for work (for example, showmen, travellers or other occupational travellers), where agreed with the school;
- unavoidable circumstances that prevent attendance, including but not limited to:
    - disruption to travel caused by emergency or severe weather;
    - school site closure;
    - lack of access arrangements where the local authority is responsible; or
    - other circumstances beyond the control of the pupil or family.

Schools will consider each case individually and will apply authorisation decisions consistently, fairly and in line with statutory expectations.

4.4 Sanctions

The Trust is committed to ensuring that attendance concerns are addressed through a graduated response, which prioritises early help, support and engagement with families. Formal sanctions will only be considered where support has been offered and either not engaged with or not effective. Attendance processes are not intended to be punitive in isolation. Meetings, letters and interventions are part of a wider support pathway designed to improve attendance. Decisions regarding escalation will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances of the pupil and family.

4.4.1 Notices to improve

Where the national threshold for persistent absence or unauthorised absence has been met and support is deemed appropriate, but engagement with support has not been sustained, the school will normally issue a Notice to Improve where support has not been engaged with and attendance remains a concern. A Notice to Improve will be issued in accordance with the relevant local authority code of conduct and will include:

- details of the pupil's attendance and any relevant absence patterns;
- information on statutory parental responsibility for attendance;
- details of support already offered or provided;
- further support available to address attendance barriers;
- a clear improvement period, typically between 3 and 6 weeks;
- the expected level of improvement required; and
- a warning that failure to improve attendance within the agreed timeframe may result in further legal intervention, including a penalty notice.

4.4.2 Penalty notices

Penalty notices may be issued by the headteacher (or authorised staff), the local authority or the police in line with local authority codes of conduct. Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will ensure that:

- the national threshold for consideration has been met (typically 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period);
- appropriate support has been offered or considered;
- a Notice to Improve has been considered where appropriate; and
- issuing a penalty notice is the most appropriate and proportionate response in the individual case.

Penalty notices will be issued in line with local authority procedures and current statutory guidance. Where issued, penalty notices are payable to the local authority. Current national framework levels are:

- First penalty notice: £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid within 28 days;
- Second penalty notice (same pupil within 3 years): £160 if paid within 28 days;
- Third penalty notice within a 3-year period: no further penalty notice will be issued; alternative legal action will be considered.

Penalty notices may also be issued in relation to unauthorised absence during exclusion periods where a pupil is present in a public place during restricted days, in line with statutory regulations. All decisions regarding penalty notices will be made in line with the principles of fairness, proportionality and equality, including consideration of duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Section 5: Monitoring attendance

5.1 The Trust's approach

The Trust adopts a graduated model of attendance support and intervention, aligned with a three-tier approach of universal, targeted and intensive support. This reflects national best practice and the expectation that attendance improvement should be rooted in early identification, proportionate response and sustained partnership with families.

- **Universal support** focuses on creating a strong culture of belonging, high expectations, positive relationships, clear routines and consistent messaging about attendance. Attendance is promoted as part of the school's wider ethos and personal development offer.
- **Targeted support** is provided for pupils whose attendance begins to fall or who are at risk of persistent absence. This includes early identification, family engagement, mentoring, attendance plans, and personalised support strategies.
- **Intensive support** is implemented for pupils experiencing persistent or severe absence. This may involve multi-agency working, individualised reintegration planning, formal attendance contracts and the use of statutory interventions where appropriate.

This graduated approach ensures that support is responsive, proportionate and focused on removing barriers to attendance as early as possible.

5.2 Strategies for promoting attendance

Each school will implement a range of strategies to promote and improve attendance. These will be tailored to context and set out in **Part B** of this policy. Strategies may include:

- clear and consistent communication of attendance expectations to pupils and families;
- celebration and recognition of good and improved attendance;

- early identification of attendance concerns using daily and weekly data;
- structured family engagement, including attendance meetings and support discussions;
- mentoring, pastoral support or key adult check-ins for pupils at risk of poor attendance;
- targeted interventions for specific cohorts or year groups;
- use of attendance contracts or agreements where appropriate;
- coordinated support with SEND, safeguarding and pastoral teams;
- use of external agencies and local authority support where required; and
- removal of in-school barriers to attendance where identified.

Schools will ensure that attendance communication is consistent, relational in tone and focused on support and partnership.

5.3 Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

Schools will provide appropriate support for pupils who are absent or returning following a period of absence. This includes pupils with medical needs, mental health difficulties, SEND, or other complex barriers to attendance. Support may include:

- phased or supported reintegration back into school;
- temporary adjustments to timetables where appropriate;
- additional pastoral or key adult support;
- coordination with external agencies and health services;
- reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND;
- strategies to rebuild confidence, belonging and routine; and
- targeted academic or emotional support to reduce the impact of missed learning.

Where a pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan and attendance becomes a concern, or where barriers to attendance are linked to their needs, the school will consider whether the local authority should be informed and involved in reviewing support arrangements. The focus will always be on enabling sustained attendance in a safe, supportive and inclusive way.

5.4 Using data to monitor attendance

Schools will use attendance data systematically to identify patterns, trends and areas for improvement at whole-school, cohort, year group and individual pupil level. Attendance data will be monitored:

- daily (operational safeguarding and follow-up);
- weekly (pattern identification and early intervention);
- half-termly and termly (strategic analysis and evaluation); and
- annually (trend analysis and strategic planning).

Schools will ensure attendance data is:

- accurate and consistently recorded within the management information system;
- used to identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- used to identify vulnerable groups and cohort trends, as well as students with intersectional risks;
- shared appropriately with senior leaders, safeguarding leads, SENDCos and governors; and
- used to inform intervention planning and resource allocation.

Schools will also benchmark attendance against local, regional and national data to identify relative performance and areas for improvement. Further information about how the school monitors attendance and absence data (including punctuality data), and systematically and regularly analyses it can be found in **Part B**.

5.5 Analysing attendance data

Schools will analyse attendance data to:

- identify emerging patterns of absence, including lateness and partial attendance;
- identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- recognise cohort-level trends (for example year groups, disadvantaged pupils or pupils with SEND);
- understand contextual and historical patterns of attendance; and
- identify barriers to attendance that may require further investigation or support.

Analysis will be used to inform targeted action rather than reporting alone. Where concerns are identified, schools will ensure that attendance data is triangulated with safeguarding, pastoral and academic information where appropriate.

5.6 Using data to improve attendance

Attendance data will be used to drive timely and effective intervention. Schools will:

- implement targeted actions in response to identified attendance concerns;
- ensure pupils and families receive appropriate support based on need;
- provide regular attendance information to staff to support conversations with pupils and families;
- report attendance concerns to relevant leaders, including safeguarding, SEND and pastoral teams where appropriate;
- evaluate the impact of interventions and adjust approaches where necessary; and
- share relevant information with external partners and agencies where appropriate and lawful.

Data will be used to support early intervention rather than solely to monitor compliance. Impact of interventions will be evaluated not only through attendance percentages but also through engagement, reintegration and sustained improvement over time.

5.7 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%. Severe absence is defined as attendance below 50%. Reducing persistent and severe absence is a key priority for the Trust and will be addressed through early, sustained and coordinated action. Schools will:

- identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence as early as possible;
- investigate underlying barriers to attendance, including safeguarding, SEND, medical, emotional or contextual factors;
- ensure timely and appropriate support is put in place;
- engage parents/carers in structured and supportive discussions;
- provide targeted interventions aimed at improving attendance and re-engagement;
- use a consistent but relational approach to follow-up and monitoring;
- work collaboratively with external agencies where required; and
- consider statutory interventions where support has not been effective or engaged with.

All responses will be proportionate, individualised and focused on improving attendance through support wherever possible. Schools will ensure that persistent and severe absence is treated as both an educational and safeguarding concern, with appropriate escalation where necessary. Further details of the school's approach towards targeting unauthorised absence, for example via meetings, letters and closer monitoring can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

Version history

First issue/revision date	Approved by	Summary of changes if not first issue
May 2026	BoT	Strengthened alignment with DfE statutory guidance ('Working together to improve school attendance'), including early intervention and multi-agency working. Strengthened links to Ofsted EIF expectations across behaviour, attitudes, safeguarding, leadership and personal development. Reframed attendance as a safeguarding, inclusion and curriculum access priority throughout. Significant revision of Section 2 (roles and responsibilities) to clarify accountability, relational practice and Trust-wide expectations. Improved consistency of terminology and expectations across all roles, particularly attendance leadership and family engagement. Refined Sections 3.2 and 4.3 to strengthen clarity on illness, authorisation and safeguarding-sensitive escalation. Enhanced focus on early intervention, relational practice and family engagement (Sections 3.5, 5.2, 5.6). Improved proportionality and clarity in Section 4.4

		(Notices to Improve and penalty notices). Strengthened graduated response model in Section 5.1 with clearer practice alignment. Enhanced expectations for attendance data use, monitoring and benchmarking (Sections 5.4–5.6). Updated Appendix 1 codes for clarity, safeguarding context and statutory alignment.
July 2025	BoT	Minor language adjustments to reflect guidance. Section 2.2: Information regarding the headteacher's responsibility to share information from the attendance register with the local authority. Section 4.4.2: Information about penalty notices issued where parents/carers allow their child to be present in a public place. Section 5.1: Information regarding a tiered approach to attendance intervention. Section 5.3: Clarity that where a student has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that are related to the student's needs, the school will inform the local authority.
July 2024	BoT	N/A - new policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance. Attendance codes must be used consistently and in line with statutory guidance. Incorrect coding may affect safeguarding decisions, census returns and school accountability measures.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Student 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	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Student is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Student 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	Student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable (temporary)	Student is on a temporary, agreed reduced timetable as part of a support plan and remains formally on roll
C	Exceptional circumstances	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances as defined by the school in line with statutory guidance
Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Traveller families known to be travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (physical or mental health)	Student is unable to attend due to illness.

E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Student is excluded or suspended and no alternative provision is in place.
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Student is unable to attend because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Student 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	Student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Student 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 student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Student 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	Student'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	Student 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. Code N should only be used temporarily and updated once the reason for absence is known.
O	Unauthorised absence	Student is absent without authorisation and no acceptable reason has been provided or accepted by the school
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not on admission register	Student 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

	Vanguard Learning Trust *As a group of local primary and secondary schools, Vanguard Learning Trust's mission is to serve its local community by providing outstanding, inclusive education. The Trust has a collective purpose and responsibility to provide effective teaching, through a curriculum based on equality of opportunity and entitlement that allows students to shine both in and out of the classroom. Each school in the Trust has its own ethos, which also complements the Trust's vision and values, with the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential.*

Attendance policy

Part B: Vyners School

Summer 2026

Contents

Part B: Vyners School **3**

1. Expectations 3
2. Roles and responsibilities 3
3: Communication 5
4: Procedures 5
5: Identifying trends and patterns 7
6: Celebrating good attendance 8
7: Students who may need additional support 8
8: Mental health 9
9: Feedback 10
10: Further support 10
Appendix A: Examples of home/school communication regarding attendance 11
Appendix B: Template letters to parents/carers 12
Appendix C: Attendance ladder that is used to illustrate levels of good attendance 22

Part B: Vyners School

1. Expectations

It is the view of Vyners School that attendance is that it is everybody's responsibility. Every student is a valued member of the school and their presence is crucial for the collective success and well-being of the community overall. Aligned with the recommendations from an ImpactEd report entitled *'Understanding Attendance*' from January 2024 (click here), the school is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where every student feels valued and that they belong. The school aims to foster strong, positive relationships between students, and between students and school staff, to help build a supportive and connected community. Additionally, the school strives to communicate the importance and benefits of good attendance at every opportunity, helping students understand how their learning experiences contribute to their personal and academic growth.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Although attendance is everybody's responsibility, some members of the school community have a specific role in supporting attendance or providing oversight of the school's endeavours. These roles are outlined below.

2.1 The board of trustees

As outlined in **Part A**, the board of trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures across the Trust on at least a termly basis, which includes Vyners School. The board also holds the headteacher of the school to account for the implementation of this policy.

2.2 The local governing body (LGB)

The LGB of Vyners School is responsible for regularly reviewing attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. Further information about the LGB's role in reviewing attendance data can be found in **Part A**.

2.3 The headteacher

The school's headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy at the school and monitoring school-level absence data, which is then reported to the governors. Additionally, the headteacher supports staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students as well as trends and patterns across groups of students. The headteacher works closely with the local authority to consider a range of legal interventions to improve attendance, including the issuing of penalty notices as a last resort.

2.4 The senior leader for attendance (the 'attendance champion')

Vyners School's attendance champion is Mrs Bashford-Hynes, who can be contacted via email: ehynes@vynersschool.org.uk. The attendance champion plays a crucial role in promoting and managing student attendance across the school. Their responsibilities include working with the attendance officer to monitor attendance by regularly tracking and analysing attendance data to identify patterns, trends and areas of concern. Their role also involves maintaining accurate records and ensuring that attendance registers are up to date. They support students and families by addressing barriers to regular attendance, offering support and advice and arranging meetings. The attendance champion is key in fostering a culture where good attendance is valued and recognised, contributing to the overall well-being and academic success of students.

2.5 The attendance officer

The school's attendance officer is Miss Neary. The attendance officer liaises closely with class teachers to ensure that registers are completed accurately and are available for scrutiny. They are responsible for liaising with the local authority's school attendance support team of persistent absences and collaborating with them to support improvement. The officer monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual student level. They notify parents/carers of student absences when parents have not informed the school; this is done through a text or email to parents/carers once morning registers are taken to

highlight absent students. The attendance officer reports attendance concerns to the headteacher, assistant headteacher or designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and advises the headteacher when to issue legal interventions, such as fixed-penalty notices. They also report on students with persistent absences to year leaders and the senior leadership team (SLT), send out student absence letters on behalf of the headteacher, and provide general management information on student attendance as required by SLT or the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH). Additionally, the attendance officer accurately and promptly enters any manual registers onto the school management information system, which includes attendance information for students offsite. They oversee the signing in and out process by students and inform appropriate pastoral staff of any concerns. They ensure that latecomers are correctly recorded in the attendance registers and liaise with the pastoral team to arrange the collection and dispatch of work for students absent due to long-term illness.

2.6 Leadership
Year leaders and the SLT of Vyners School are responsible for monitoring attendance data both across the year group and at an individual student level. They pay particular attention to the attendance of students categorised in vulnerable groups. Additionally, they report any attendance concerns to the attendance officer and SLT. Collaborating with the attendance officer, teachers, family-liaison officers and the school attendance support team, they work to address and reduce persistent absenteeism. To further support these efforts, year leaders and SLT arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues and record any actions taken.

2.7 Tutors and class teachers
Tutors and class teachers are responsible for accurately recording attendance within lessons on a daily basis, using the correct codes and saving this information. They are also responsible for monitoring, flagging concerns and being a point of contact between home and school to discuss attendance concerns.

2.8 Parents/carers
By law, all students of compulsory school age (normally 5 to 16 years old) must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure this happens, either by registering their child at a school or by making other arrangements to provide them with a suitable, full-time education. Once a child is registered at a school, parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring they attend; this means students should not have sessions of unauthorised absence.

2.8.1 How parents/carers can support good attendance
To support their child's school attendance, parents/carers should take several actions. First, they should establish good attendance habits by acting as role models and showing students that good attendance and punctuality are important. It is crucial that they ensure that their child has a good rate of attendance, ideally 97% or higher. Creating a good routine for mornings at home so that students can arrive punctually and be properly equipped will also help mornings start calmly. Establishing a good bedtime routine is essential so that children can sleep well, get enough rest and make mornings less of a struggle. Reading all school communications helps parents stay informed about what's going on at school and can encourage conversations with their children. Attending all school open evenings and functions is another important step. Wherever possible, medical appointments should be made outside of the school day. Parents should only grant days at home for genuine illness and contact the school via the Vyners School absence line as soon as possible to explain why their child is absent and when they are expected to return. Parents/carers should not take holidays during school time.

2.9 Students
Students at Vyners School are expected to attend school every day and be punctual. This means arriving at school on time, ready to begin the day's activities. Regular attendance is crucial for ensuring that students do not miss out on important learning opportunities. In addition to being on time for school, students must also ensure they attend every lesson promptly. This punctuality applies to each class throughout the school day, reinforcing the importance of being present and ready to engage in learning activities from the beginning of each session. Unless absolutely necessary, students should remain in every lesson for its entire

duration. This policy is designed to maximise learning time and minimise disruptions, helping students fully benefit from the instructional time provided.

3: Communication

Effective communication is paramount in ensuring high attendance rates at school, as it fosters a collaborative environment between the school and families. Vyners School's attendance officer plays a critical role in monitoring and promoting good attendance, acting as the primary liaison between the school and the parents or carers. They are supported by the family liaison officers and the attendance champion, a senior lead dedicated to attendance issues, ensuring that robust systems and strategies are in place. The school utilises a variety of communication methods, including regular updates to parents and carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. These updates can be disseminated through emails, letters and parent-teacher meetings, helping to keep families informed and engaged. Vyners School maintains a 'buzz' of attendance through a well-planned calendar of events and communications that highlight the importance of regular attendance. To support these efforts, the school's designated attendance champion and attendance officer will work closely with pastoral staff, including year leaders, class teachers and welfare staff, all of whom are instrumental in supporting various attendance initiatives. The pastoral team can be contacted for further assistance in addressing attendance concerns and providing additional support to students and their families. The use of individual attendance plans (IAPs) aims to remove barriers to school attendance for individual students and their families. By employing a comprehensive approach that includes clear communication and dedicated support roles, Vyners School aims to minimise student absences and promote a culture of regular attendance.

4: Procedures

Procedures are crucial for the monitoring of attendance because they ensure consistency, accuracy and accountability. They provide a standardised approach for recording and tracking student presence, enabling timely identification of absences. This facilitates early intervention for at-risk students, promotes a safe learning environment and supports legal compliance regarding compulsory education. Clear procedures also streamline communication between stakeholders ensuring everyone is informed about attendance-related issues. Additionally, accurate attendance records are vital for funding, resource allocation, and analysing patterns to improve overall school performance and student engagement.

4.1 Arriving at school and lateness

Students are expected to arrive promptly for school by the times outlined below.

Table 1: Start times for Vyners School

	Students should be on-site	**Registers taken in tutorial**	**School finishing time**
Years 7, 8 and 9	8:25am	8:30am	2.55pm
Years 10, 11, 12 and 13	8.25am	8.30am	3.00pm

4.1.1 Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive at Vyners School on time each day. Sometimes unexpected lateness occurs which cannot be helped. The perimeter gates close promptly at 8.30am, after which time students are late to school. Students who arrive after the official start time indicated in Table 1 must sign in at reception before making their way to 006. Students who arrive at tutorial late will receive a 20 minute, same day, after-school detention.

If a child arrives before 9am, they will be marked in the register as 'authorised late: late before registration closes.' If a child arrives after 9am, they will be marked as an 'unauthorised absence: late after the register closes.' An unauthorised late will affect a child's overall rate of attendance. Arriving late means that students miss the crucial input for their day, which puts them at a disadvantage to their peers. Students who are persistently late will be placed on late report and meetings with parents/carers will be arranged.

4.2 Absences

Each school day consists of two sessions, a morning (referred to as AM) and an afternoon (referred to as PM). Therefore, if a child is absent from school for one whole day, this will equate to two sessions of absence. There are two types of absence: authorised and unauthorised. The school is responsible for deciding whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised therefore the information you give us determines the outcome of the absence. As a school, any authorised absences ultimately will be the decision of the headteacher and the school has the right to request any evidence of any absence. Any absences that have not been reported will be marked as unauthorised.

4.2.1 Notifying the school

Parents must inform the school if their child is ill and will be absent from school. A detailed reason for absence must be received by 8:25am on each day of absence. A child simply being 'unwell' is not a reason to be absent from school. Parents will be notified if their child has not been registered. Although medical appointments and illness constitute an authorised absence, they will still affect a child's percentage attendance, therefore the school requires parents/carers to provide documentation for these absences. Following guidance from Public Health England, the school operates a strict period of 48 hours from the last spell of sickness/diarrhoea before a child is allowed to return to school to which parents/carers must adhere. For advice and information on whether children are well enough for school, parents/carers are advised to visit the related page on the NHS website (click here).

4.2.2 Contact details

Vyners School must have a minimum of two up-to-date contact numbers for every child. This is so that the school can contact parents/carers when children are absent or in the case of an emergency.

4.3 Working with the local authority

Vyners School recognises that collaboration between schools and local authorities is crucial for improving attendance. Joint efforts ensure that barriers to attendance are identified and addressed, providing holistic support to students and families. This partnership fosters a community-focused approach, enhancing engagement, resources and interventions, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes and reduced absenteeism.

4.3.1 Issuing of penalty notices

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties continue, the school may refer the child to the attendance team at the local authority. The team will also try to resolve the situation but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, the team can use sanctions such as the issuing of a penalty notice as a last resort. This is currently £80 per parent rising to £160 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days, a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid penalty notice, which could lead to a prosecution in the Magistrates Court. More information can be found in the Department for Education's statutory guidance: *'Working together to improve school attendance'* (click here). Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact the local authority attendance team themselves to ask for help or information. The attendance team is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858. Attendance advice may be sought at any time by the school and it may be necessary to fast track a referral to them.

4.3.2 Child missing from education

Where a student has not returned to school for ten consecutive school days after a leave of absence or is absent from school for reasons statistically recorded as unauthorised absence for twenty consecutive school days they are classified as a child missing from education (CME). A referral to the local authority's CME team will be made for further advice and support.

4.4 Exceptional leave during term time

The school will not authorise any leave during term time. Parents/carers who feel it necessary to take their child out of school for an extended period of time due to unavoidable and extreme/exceptional circumstances must make a formal request by completing the *'Request for leave of absence during term time'* document (**Appendix B**). This should be submitted to the headteacher at least two weeks before the intended period of absence. Any supporting documents should be submitted with the request form, such as flight details or exam letters. There is no right of appeal in regards to any decision made concerning requests for exceptional leave during term time. If the child will be late returning from a period of leave, the school requires parents/carers to produce documentation to evidence this. Where holidays are taken which have not been authorised, the school will inform the local authority attendance team, who may issue a penalty notice of £80 per parent per child if it is paid within 21 days. If it is not paid within 21 days, it advances to £160 per parent per child. If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide to pursue further legal action. More information can be found on the Department of Education's website (click here). Where there is reason to believe that a prolonged absence is the result of a holiday, the school will pursue it as it would if it was informed about the holiday in advance. Suspicion of prolonged absence due to a holiday in term time is enough to pursue a holiday penalty notice through the local authority.

4.5 Extreme/exceptional circumstances

Extreme or exceptional circumstances generally include situations that are rare, significant or unavoidable. The following scenarios illustrate what is meant by this term:

1. Bereavement: the death of a close family member.
2. Serious illness: when a child or close family member has a serious/critical illness that requires the child to be absent.
3. Family crisis: emergency situations involving members of the child's family that require immediate attention.
4. Religious observances: religious festivals or ceremonies.
5. Examinations: external examinations or assessments.
6. Legal requirements: attending a court hearing, being involved in a custody dispute or other legal obligations.
7. Unexpected travel disruptions: unforeseen travel disruptions that make it impossible for the child to attend school (eg. natural disasters).

These exceptional circumstances typically do not include:

- Holidays during term time.
- Family events like birthdays or weddings.
- Minor ailments (colds, headaches).

The school may ask for evidence of extreme/exceptional circumstances to enable the absence to be authorised.

5: Identifying trends and patterns

It is important to note that consistent attendance is essential for a student's academic and social development. Vyners School will work with parents/carers and other professionals as needed to support students in attending school regularly and meeting their full potential. The school uses the following procedures for monitoring daily attendance and informing parents:

- daily attendance reminder messages are sent via text or email to all parents/carers who have not notified the school of their child's absence;
- letters sent home when attendance reaches concerning levels;
- parents/carers will be notified if their child's attendance becomes cause for concern and they will be invited in to meet with a member of the pastoral team to complete an IAP;
- school staff may undertake home visits if absences are not reported, to check that the child is safe and well; and
- if there is still no improvement, or parents do not respond to the school's letters, or if parents/carers fail to show up for arranged meetings, then the school will refer the family to the local authority's attendance team.

5.1 Monitoring attendance

The school's attendance monitoring procedure is designed to support students in attending school regularly and making the most of their educational opportunities. To ensure that attendance concerns are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner, the following actions will be taken (letters referenced can be found in **Appendix B**):

- where students are absent for more than 2 days the pastoral team will make a 'check in' phone call home;
- when attendance falls below 95% and/or students have multiple broken weeks Letter 1 will be sent home;
- if attendance does not improve after a review period (3-6 weeks) Letter 2 will be sent home and the Year Leader will contact parents/carers;
- when attendance falls below 90% Letter 3 will be issued a member of SLT will meet the parents/carers alongside the year leader; and the pastoral team will arrange a meeting with the student to complete an IAP;
- when attendance falls below 85% Letter 4 will be issued and a referral may be made to the local authority attendance team; and
- when a child has missed a total of 15 days of school due to illness a referral will be made to the local authority attendance team.

6: Celebrating good attendance

Vyners School recognises the importance of celebrating and incentivising good attendance to encourage students to maintain consistent and punctual attendance. As such, the school utilises a variety of strategies to reward students who demonstrate excellent and/or improved attendance. The school rewards good attendance in the following ways:

- the tutorial with the highest attendance each week is published in the newsletter and on screens around school;
- students with 100% attendance are celebrated and issued a certificate during the year group celebration assembly each half term; and
- certificates are awarded annually to students who achieve an annual attendance of above 95%.

By celebrating both outstanding attendance and meaningful improvements, the school aims to create a positive and motivating atmosphere that highlights the value of regular school attendance and supports students in their journey towards academic success.

6.1 Celebrating improved attendance

Vyners School recognises that celebrating and rewarding students for improving their attendance can be a great way to motivate them and reinforce positive behaviour. The methods of celebration taken by the school include acknowledging students during school assemblies, displaying their photos on a celebration board and communicating home. The school also rewards improving attendance through providing attendance certificates for achieving specific milestones and half termly awards for significantly improved attendance. Additionally, incentive programmes, such as queue jump passes, can be given to by students who have significantly improved their attendance.

7: Students who may need additional support

Vyners School is committed to providing tailored support to students facing various challenges that affect their attendance. The school recognises that certain groups of students may require additional assistance to overcome these barriers and ensure their regular participation in school. This may be on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.

7.1 Students with complex barriers to attendance

For students with complex barriers to attendance, Vyners School takes a comprehensive approach by closely collaborating with families and external agencies to address the root causes of absenteeism. The school conducts thorough assessments to identify specific challenges these students face, whether they stem from home, social or economic factors or a combination thereof. Working with families, the school develops

individualised support plans that may include short term flexible timetables, pastoral support or access to community resources via a referral to local 'family help' services. The school also strives to remove barriers by providing a welcoming and inclusive environment, offering personalised learning plans and ensuring that these students have access to necessary support services such as counselling and mentoring where appropriate.

7.2 Students absent due to mental or physical ill health, or SEND

Students who are absent due to mental or physical ill health, or their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive targeted support to help them maintain their educational progress. The school's SEND co-ordinator (SENCo) can liaise with a wide variety of specialists including counsellors and healthcare professionals, who work together to create and implement individualised education plans (IEPs) or health care plans. The school will maintain regular communication with these students and their families, providing necessary adjustments. The goal is to ensure that these students receive a continuous and supportive education, tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.

7.3 Students returning after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

When students return to Vyners School after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, the school implements a structured reintegration process to help them transition smoothly back into the school environment. This process includes an initial meeting with the student and their family to discuss any concerns and create a personalised reintegration plan. Key strategies may include a phased return to school, catch-up sessions and/or additional academic support to bridge any learning gaps. The school may also provide emotional and social support to help these students readjust and reconnect with their peers and teachers. By offering comprehensive reintegration support, the school aims to ensure that students feel welcomed, supported and ready to re-engage with their education.

8: Mental health

Vyners School recognises the critical importance of mental health and its impact on student attendance. In accordance with the Department for Education guidance *'Working together to improve school attendance'*, the school has established clear responsibilities and proactive measures to monitor, promote and support mental health within the community. To effectively support mental health, the school regularly monitors the well-being of students through various means, including surveys, wellbeing check-ins along with observations by teachers and staff. The school evaluates the effectiveness of mental health initiatives by gathering feedback from students, parents/carers and staff and by reviewing attendance data to identify patterns that may indicate underlying mental health issues. This ongoing assessment allows the school to adapt and refine its approach to ensure that the school's support for mental health is meeting the needs of all students.

8.1 Emotional resilience

Building emotional resilience is a key component of the school's long-term strategy and it is thoroughly integrated into the curriculum and provision of pastoral support. The school delivers a personal, health and social education (PSHE) programme that includes social and emotional learning activities, mindfulness exercises and resilience training. These programmes are designed to equip students with the skills they need to manage stress, build positive relationships and navigate challenges effectively. Additionally, the school's pastoral care team provides personalised support and mentoring to students who may need extra help in developing their emotional resilience.

8.2 A holistic approach

Vyners School takes a holistic approach to promoting and supporting mental health and well-being, fostering a strong ethos and culture of care. This approach includes creating a safe and inclusive environment where every student feels a sense of belonging, valued and supported. The school prioritises open communication, encouraging students to voice their concerns and seek help when needed. The school also collaborates with external mental health professionals and organisations to provide additional resources and support for students and their families. By integrating mental health awareness and support

into all aspects of school life, the school aims to create a nurturing and resilient community that prioritises emotional well-being.

9: Feedback
Vyners School values the input of the whole community in helping to shape and refine the attendance policy. The school collects feedback through regular surveys distributed to students, parents/carers and staff, as well as during parent-teacher meetings and student voice sessions. This feedback is carefully reviewed and considered in policy evaluations to ensure it remains effective and responsive to the needs of the school community.

10: Further support
To provide comprehensive support for students, Vyners School actively engages with 'early help' services and other external agencies. These collaborations enable the school to access a wide range of resources and expertise in order to address the various challenges that may affect students and their attendance. Effective partnerships with local health services, social care and mental health organisations (such as CAMHS) ensures that students and families receive the necessary support and interventions promptly and effectively. For additional support, the school recommends the following helplines and websites:

- **Childline**: A free, confidential service for young people seeking help and support (website: https://www.childline.org.uk, phone: 0800 1111)
- **YoungMinds**: A mental health charity offering advice and support to young people and parents (website https://www.youngminds.org.uk, parent helpline: 0808 802 5544).
- **NSPCC**: Provides support and information for children and families (website: https://www.nspcc.org.uk, helpline: 0808 800 5000).
- **Samaritans**: Offers emotional support for anyone in distress (website: https://www.samaritans.org, phone or text: 116 123).

By continuously gathering feedback and leveraging external support, the school strives to create an effective and supportive attendance policy that promotes the well-being and success of all students.

Appendices:
Appendix A: Examples of home/school communication regarding attendance
Appendix B: Template letters to parents/carers

Version history

First issue/revision date	Approved by	Summary of changes if not first issue
Summer 2026		Name changes to reflect change in staffing Minor text amendments throughout document
Summer 2025	LGB	The reference to Edulink has been removed throughout the document as it is no longer used. Minor text amendments have been made throughout the document. Section 4.3.2 Child missing from education has been updated.
July 2024	LBG	New policy

Appendix A: Examples of home/school communication regarding attendance

No reason for absence (daily):

{Student First Name} is absent from school. Please provide a reason for their absence via Arbor or email attendance@vynersschool.org.uk

Appendix B: Template letters to parents/carers

Letter 1 - DfE recommended letter about the importance of attendance

Dear parent/carer,

{Name} has been absent for {#} days of school, which is equal to {#} lessons missed so far this school year. This has resulted in a cumulative attendance of [% figure]

We know that sometimes our students cannot come to school because they are really unwell, which is the right thing to do for them and other students. Medical advice is clear, however, that children with mild illness will often be well enough to attend, for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance '*Is my child too ill for school?*' (click here) is designed to support parents in their decision making about mild illness.

We also know that students fall behind their friends and classmates when they miss school. At Vyners School we want the amount of missed education to be reduced as much as possible. We believe that our community is stronger together, with all of our students in school, on time, every day. We are building life skills, life-long friendships and preparing your child for future success.

We also know that you can have a significant impact on {Name} absences this academic year and we would really appreciate your help and support ensuring that {Name} comes to school every day so that they can get the best possible outcomes. We want to work with you to achieve this. [Year Leader Name] will be meeting with [Name] to create an Individual Attendance Plan (IAP), a copy of which will be sent home. If you wish to be present for this discussion, please contact [Year Leader name] as soon as possible.

We will be in touch again to request a meeting with you if we have ongoing concerns about your child's attendance.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Letter 2 – Concerns about a student's attendance

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Absences from school

[Name] has missed [insert number of days missed and over what time period]. This has resulted in a cumulative attendance of [% figure]. Since the IAP has been put in place there has not been an improvement in attendance.

We know that every family's circumstances are different and want to work with you to provide the best education for your child. We are aware of [insert known reasons for absence].

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including further looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence.

[Year Leader name] will be in contact with you shortly to arrange a meeting with you to discuss the reasons for absences, how we can support [name] to reduce these absences, as well as how we can work together to help [name] catch up on any missed schoolwork.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
School senior lead for attendance

Letter 3 – Invite parents/carers in to discuss attendance

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Invitation for a meeting to discuss attendance

Despite working with [name] to attempt to remove any barriers to attending school, their attendance has continued to decrease. We would like to invite you to come in to meet with [SLT link name] about [name]'s attendance at school. We would like to find out whether there is anything further we can do to support them in coming to school

[SLT link name] will be in contact shortly to arrange a suitable time to discuss the above, as well as how we can work together to help [name] catch up on any missed school work.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Letter 4 - Invitation to attendance panel meeting

Dear [parent/carer's name]

Re: Attendance Panel Meeting for [Child's Name]

We are writing to inform you that there continue to be concerns regarding [Name]'s school attendance. As a school, we are committed to ensuring that every student receives the best possible education and regular attendance is crucial to achieving this goal.

Over the past [insert time period], [Child's Name] has been absent for [insert number] days. These absences have accumulated to a point where it is affecting their academic progress and social development. We understand that there may be valid reasons for these absences and we wish to discuss how we can support [Child's Name] in improving their attendance.

To address these concerns, we would like to invite you to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting. The details of the meeting are as follows:

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

During this meeting, we will review [Child's Name]'s attendance record, discuss any underlying issues contributing to their absences, and work together to develop a plan to improve their attendance. Your input and co-operation are vital in helping us to support [Child's Name] effectively.

Please confirm your attendance by contacting [attendance officer name] by [insert RSVP date]. If you are unable to attend on the scheduled date, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can arrange an alternative time that is convenient for you.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to support [Child's Name]'s education. Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Concerns about a student's unauthorised absence

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Unauthorised absence from school

We have noticed that [name] has recently taken an unauthorised [absence/absences] from school. [Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] days on the following dates:

- [date]
- [date]
- [date]

It is important that [name] attends regularly so that they can get the best out of their education. We know that every family's circumstances are different and want to work with you to provide the best education for your child. Please let us know if there is anything going on at home or at school which might be making it difficult for [name] to attend regularly.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact [attendance officer] as soon as you can so that we can arrange a meeting to discuss any reasons for these absences, as well as how we can work together to help [name] catch up on any missed schoolwork.

Please note that the Department for Education (click here) states that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days). You can find more information about penalty notices in Part A of our trust's attendance policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Request for leave of absence during term time

Parents do not have the right to take their children out of school during term time. By law parents/carers must request permission from the headteacher for your child to miss school for any reason.

This form must be completed for any form of planned absence (with the exception of medical and dental appointments) and it should be submitted for authorisation at least 10 school days before the proposed absence. Copies of details relating to the request such as flight details or exam correspondence, should be included in the request.

A request must be made for each individual child.

A request for leave of absence during term time for non-urgent medical and dental appointments does not require the completion of this form. However, these appointments should be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the school must be informed in writing, explaining the reason for absence and giving as much notice as possible.

- -

For the attention of the Headteacher

I/We request of the Headteacher that leave of absence be granted to:

Child's name:	
Tutorial:	
From:	
To:	
Reason for leave request:	
If the leave is for a holiday, please state why the holiday needs to be taken during term time:	
Parent/Carer Name:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Please email the completed form to the Attendance Officer at attendance@vynersschool.org.uk

Accepting a request for a leave of absence

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Your request for a leave of absence

Thank you for your request to take [name] out of school between [date] and [date].

Having considered the exceptional circumstances set out in your application, I am able to agree to your request.

I have not come to this decision lightly. At Vyners School, we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

We consider each request for a leave of absence on its merits and the family's specific circumstances.

Please be aware that the fact that I have agreed to this request does not mean I will necessarily be able to agree to any similar request from you, or other parents/carers, in the future.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

Declining a request for a leave of absence

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Your request for a leave of absence

Thank you for your request to take [name] out of school between [date] and [date].
In this case I am afraid I cannot consent to your request.

At Vyners School, we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

I have not made this decision lightly. A request for an absence is considered on its specific circumstances, and I have taken many factors into consideration.

As each request is different, this decision cannot be compared with decisions made by the school in the past, and it will not affect any decisions made in the future.

I am sorry to have to disappoint you on this occasion.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

After an unauthorised holiday

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Holiday absence

I am writing about your action in taking [name] out of school for a family holiday between [date] and [date]. We are treating this as an unauthorised absence because [explain the evidence you have].

At Vyners School we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

We have the power to grant leaves of absence under exceptional circumstances and a holiday is not generally considered to come under those circumstances. As outlined in the Trust's attendance policy, we expect parents/carers to consult the school before making any plans that will involve their child's absence from lessons or other commitments. Absences like these could have a detrimental effect on their education.

Insert the following if the child's absence has reached the threshold for a penalty notice and you have decided it's appropriate to issue one (see paragraph 181 of Working together to improve school attendance for questions to consider when making this decision):

[Name] has now had 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days). In line with our attendance policy and the local authority's code of practice, you will be issued with a penalty notice. When you receive the notice, you must pay:

- £80, if it's paid within 21 days
- £160, if it's paid after 21 days but within 28 days

If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide to pursue further legal action. More information can be found on the Department of Education's website (click here).

Insert the following if the threshold for a penalty notice has not been reached:
Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days). You can find more information about penalty notices in the trust's Attendance Policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website and are available from the school office.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

Congratulations for improving attendance rate

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Well done [name]!

I am writing to you to let you know that [name] should be very proud of improving their attendance rate. Since [date], their attendance rate has improved from [percentage] to [percentage]; this is equal to [number] days of education no longer being missed.

Well done to [name] and to you at home for your support.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Appendix C: Attendance ladder that is used to illustrate levels of good attendance

