



# **SANDWELL ACADEMY**



## **Attendance Policy**

**July 2023**

## Document Details

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Attendance Policy
<b>Policy Reference:</b>	Sandwell Academy / Student
<b>Description:</b>	This document sets out how the Academy manages attendance.
<b>Status:</b>	Statutory
<b>Category:</b>	Academy
<b>Contact:</b>	Name: Mrs J Chapman Title: Deputy Head Email : <a href="mailto:jchapman@sandwellacademy.com">jchapman@sandwellacademy.com</a>
<b>Version:</b>	2.2 – September 2023
<b>Other relevant SA policies:</b>	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Behaviour Policy
<b>Adopted by the Governing Board on:</b>	July 2023
<b>Date for Review:</b>	July 2024

## Change Record

Version	Date	Description
2.1	July 2022	Updates KCSIE 22
2.2	September 2023	Contact for policy Persistent and severe absence definitions Overview of ' <i>explanations for absence</i> ' section of student planner Strategies for promoting attendance Medical/dental appointments – 48 hours' notice

## Contents

Document Details.....	1
Change Record .....	1
Introduction .....	3
1. Aims of the Policy.....	3
2. Legislation and Guidance .....	3
3. Roles and responsibilities.....	4
4. Recording Attendance .....	6
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence.....	10
6. Strategies for promoting attendance .....	12
7. Attendance Monitoring.....	13
8. Monitoring arrangements.....	15
9. Links with other policies .....	15
10. Staff Members Responsible for Attendance Matters .....	15
11. GDPR and DPA Complaints .....	15
Appendix 1: attendance codes .....	17

## Introduction

Sandwell Academy has high aspirations and your child can play their part in making these a reality. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to aim for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day. The Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

## 1. Aims of the Policy

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

Attendance is the responsibility of all staff in the Academy.

### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### 3.2 The head teacher

The head teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### 3.3 The designated Deputy Head responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The designated Deputy Head responsible for attendance is Mrs. Chapman and can be contacted via 0121 525 1700 or [jchapman@sandwellacademy.com](mailto:jchapman@sandwellacademy.com)

### 3.4 The Attendance Manager

The school attendance manager is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head teacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the head teacher/Deputy Head with responsibility for Attendance when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Manager is Miss Zanib and can be contacted via 0121 525 1700 or

[hzanib@sandwellacademy.com](mailto:hzanib@sandwellacademy.com)

### 3.5 Class Teachers/Personal Tutors

Class teachers/personal tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the attendance manager via BROMCOM.

### 3.6 School admin staff

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the head of year/pastoral lead/ PT's in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### 3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day/timetabled session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Complete the '*explanations for absence*' section of their child's planner which should be presented to the PT on the first day of their return. The PT will inform the Attendance team that this has been provided.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Ensure that, the Academy are made aware of appointments with 48 hours' notice when they take place during the school hours. A copy of the medical appointment will need to be provided to the school office for the leave of absence to be approved.

### 3.8 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session, including PT, on time
- Register for every Session 3 they attend after school

## 4. Recording Attendance

### 4.1 Start and Close of the Day

The school day starts at **8:15am** and teaching begins at 8.30am. We expect your child to be in class at 8:20am for uniform and equipment checks. Registers will close as teaching begins at 8.30am.

At **9:00am**, the registers will be closed in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, if your child arrives after that time and cannot give a valid reason, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence on their attendance record. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

### 4.2 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of session 1a of each school day and during the PT time.

It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- 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

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

See [appendix 1](#) for the DfE attendance codes.

### 4.3 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.15am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school attendance manager.

The school can be notified by one of the following methods:

**Phone call: 0121 525 1700**

**Text message: 07520633445**

**Email: [absence@sandwellacademy.com](mailto:absence@sandwellacademy.com)**

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Parents must complete the '*explanations for absence*' section of their child's planner which should be presented to the PT on the first day of their return. The PT will inform the Attendance team that this has been provided.

### 4.4 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school 48 hours' in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

A copy of the medical/dental appointment will need to be provided to the school office (either paper copy or emailed to attendance manager) for the leave of absence to be approved. If proof of attendance is not provided the Academy reserves the right to leave a child's attendance as unauthorised.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.



#### 4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and time with their class teacher receiving vital information for the lesson ahead. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child, inconvenient for the teacher and distracting for other students. This can also encourage absence.

##### How we manage lateness:

- A student who arrives late (after 8.20am) will be signed in at the late gate by the attendance officer
- If a student received **three** late events during a school week they will be issued with a Stage 1 Conduct Review, as outlined in the Academy's Behaviour Policy.

#### 4.6 Truancy

Evidence shows that students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results. Furthermore, students who performed better at the end of secondary school missed fewer days than those who did not perform as well. As a school, we will tackle students who are not only missing out on valuable learning time, but whose actions are disrupting the learning of others. It is both a safeguarding and behaviour concern when students are in school and not properly accounted for.

On the rare occasions where a student is absent from Sandwell Academy without the knowledge of their parent/carer, the following procedure will be followed:

- The student's absence on this occasion will not be authorised
- The student and parent/carer will be asked to attend a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to discuss the reasoning behind the student's decision to truant from the Academy

Immediate action will be taken when we suspect a student of internal truancy from lesson/PT. Students found on the corridors without a corridor pass/movement slip will be challenged about why they are not in lesson/PT. The following procedure will be followed:

- The member of staff on duty will walk the student back to their lesson/PT to ascertain if they have permission to be out of class.
- If the student is confirmed as truanting this will be logged on MCAS.
- Parents will be notified of the truancy event by text message
- The student will receive a Stage 1 Conduct Review the next day.

Persistent truancy will be treated seriously and further actions will be taken should a positive change not be seen. This may include:

- Further sanctions in line with the Academy Behaviour Policy
- Support strategies implemented where necessary
- Close monitoring of the student's attendance for the remainder of the term
- Future absence without a valid reason will not be authorised

Persistent unauthorised absence can be used to instigate court proceedings under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996

Parents and carers are welcome to raise any concerns they may have regarding their child's persistent reluctance to attend school with the student's Personal Tutor or the Attendance Officer.

#### **4.7 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Send a text message to the student's parent/carer via our electronic monitoring system on the morning of the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Follow this with a telephone call where necessary. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit, contact siblings schools or contact the police.
- Attempt to make contact after more than two days of absence to check on progress – this will usually be done by your child's Personal Tutor;
- Invite you in to the Academy discuss the situation with your child's Personal Tutors and/or the Academy Attendance Manager.
- If absences continue, the school will consider involving the Sandwell Council's School Attendance Support Officer.

#### **4.8 Reporting to parents/carers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about various issues, including absence, so we need to have the correct contact details for you at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up to date contact details, including mobile telephone numbers and email addresses. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year. We require as a minimum details of two contacts per student

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via:

- My Child At School (MCAS)
- Termly module reports
- Personal Tutor conversations
- Half termly attendance letters from the Attendance Manager

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

If you choose to take your child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted then it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us. This includes:

- When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods, GCSE, A-Level or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance. Exceptional circumstances **do not include** family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after unwell family members, babysitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping.

If you consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then this should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least **four** weeks the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the Academy Website or requested from the Attendance Manager. All forms will need to be returned to the Deputy Head with Responsibility for Attendance via Reception.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Please note, the headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by refraining from taking holidays during term time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. **There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.**

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include but are not limited to:

- the death of a close relative and/or attendance at a funeral
- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the Attendance Manager may refer the child to the Deputy Head with responsibility for Attendance and to the Head Teacher where necessary. We will try to resolve the situation by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Head can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions.

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

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

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Under the Education Act 1996, ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of school staff. At the Academy we believe that providing regular recognition for good and improved attendance sends a clear message that being in school every day is a priority.

The following strategies will be used to engage **students**:

- Welcoming and positive culture – this includes ensuring lessons are engaging and that students want to attend, teachers are approachable, friendly and encouraging and an effective behaviour policy is implemented whole school.
- Raised profile of attendance:
  - Assistant Head of Year as attendance champion in each year group
  - Internal truancy protocol
  - Half termly attendance statistics shared with PTs including PTs with highest and lowest attendance alongside thresholds
  - Posters around Academy to promote punctuality and attendance
  - Introduce a 'buddy system' where a student who has good punctuality/attendance is buddied up with a student whose punctuality/attendance is less than satisfactory, to try to encourage improved attendance.
- 100% club:
  - house points awarded to students for weekly 100% attendance
  - house points awarded to PTs with highest attendance statistics half termly
  - each time a student achieves weekly 100% attendance their name is placed into 'attendance cup' – prize drawn once per half term
  - postcards and pudding prizes for improved attendance and 100% attendance over a half term or term
  - Rewards through class competitions, certificates and outings / events.
- Delivering 'attendance mentoring sessions' that focus on the impact of low attendance on friendships and achievement
- Targeted intervention and support for student identified as persistent or severe absentees.
- Positively welcoming students back into lessons following a period when they have been late or absent.

Parental partnership and support will be sought through:

- MCAS which reports a student's attendance figures
- PT contact when your child is absent for two or more consecutive days
- PT meeting where attendance is 90% or below;
- Regular updates on attendance in our termly mailings;
- Regular module reports to outline how your child is performing in school, their attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their attainments;

We acknowledge that poor emotional wellbeing or feelings of anxiety can act as a barrier to school attendance, and as an Academy, we are committed to supporting students to feel safe and secure in school. To reduce Emotion-Based School Avoidance (EBSA), we do the following:

- Having clear systems of referral for students struggling with emotional wellbeing
- Place2Be and other forms of counselling
- Mental health workshops and interventions
- Referrals to appropriate external services, such as Inclusion Support and Single Point of Access (SPA)
- Staff who are specifically trained in EBSA support

It is vital that working to improve school attendance is proactive rather than reactive, and as such, students who begin to form a pattern of absence will work with a member of the Welfare to complete an Emotion-Based School Avoidance assessment to try and identify the factors pushing students away from school, and the factors pulling them in. Following this, relevant support will be put in place.

## 7. Attendance Monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

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

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### 7.2 Analysing attendance

The Academy has set targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum target of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

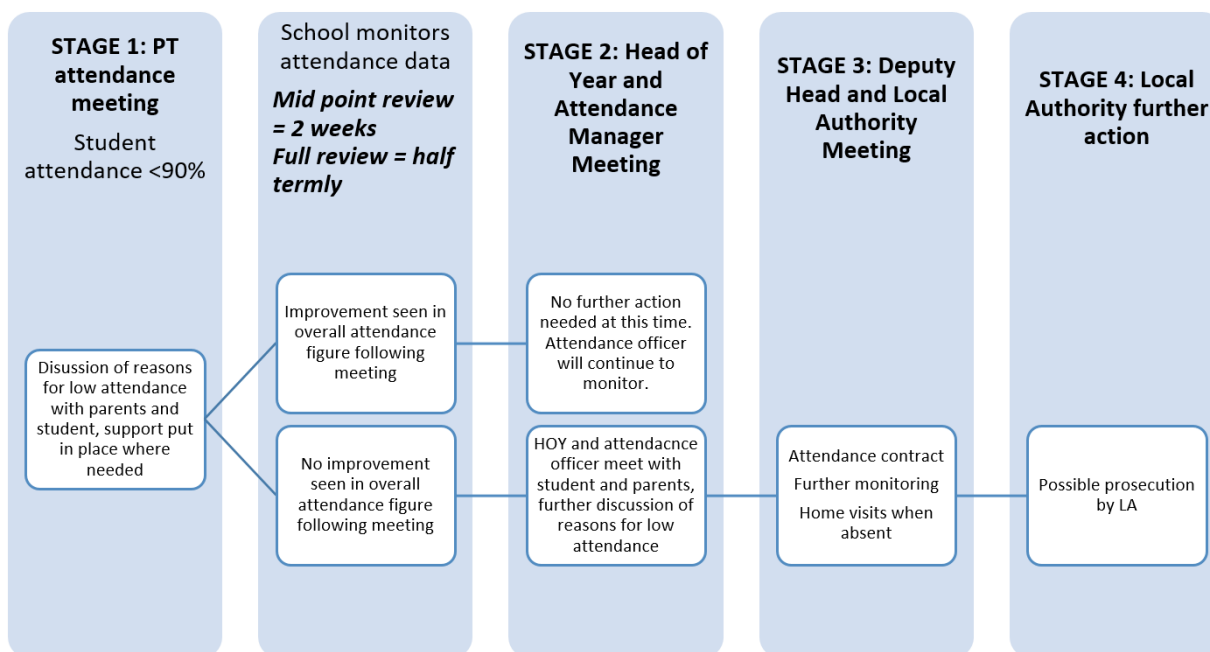
- Provide regular attendance bulletins to class teachers/personal tutors and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more schooling across the academic year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we require parents' fullest support and co-operation in order to tackle this.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school. Meetings will follow the escalation process outlined below:



- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Make all PA cases known to the Head Teacher.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 12 months by the Deputy Head with responsibility for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## 10. Staff Members Responsible for Attendance Matters

The following staff can be contacted with regards to attendance matters:

Staff	Responsibility
Mrs. J Chapman	Deputy Head with responsibility for Attendance
Miss H Zanib	Attendance Manager
Miss S Kossar	Attendance Officer
Miss A Parker	Year 7
Miss L Hubble	Year 8
Mrs. H Sharif	Year 9
Mr R Smith	Year 10
Mr Denker	Year 11
Mrs. S Gill	Sixth Form

## 11. GDPR and DPA Complaints

All Staff must be aware of the complaints process. All complaints should be directed to the Data Protection Compliance Manager / Data Protection Officer. If any member of staff is aware that a person wishes to complain they should direct the person to the school website and complaints policy and form.

Data Protection Compliance Manager / Data Protection Officer is responsible for dealing with all complaints in line with this procedure.

The school complaints policy sets out the complaints process. This will be the basis for dealing with Data Protection Complaints and appeals. A written outcome will be provided.



If the school does not comply with a Subject Access Request within one month (subject to any extension), or refuses all or part of the request, written reasons will be provided, setting out the principles for the refusal. The data subject(s) will be notified of the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner, whose details will be in the response.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

### General

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
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

### Absence Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised Absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or

		replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

### Other

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day