

**Southern
Education
Trust**

Attendance of Pupils

As a trust, our ethos is encompassed in our vision statement

‘Making Lives Better’

and we commit to doing this through:



KINDNESS



COLLABORATION



CREATIVITY

Reviewed by: Trust Board
Adopted: February 2026
Review due: Spring 2027
Review cycle: Annual

SOUTHERN EDUCATION TRUST

Attendance Policy

Aims

Southern Education Trust (SET) fundamentally believes in doing everything we can to make lives better. Education has the potential to improve lives, good teaching and learning is one tool for achieving our goal. Teaching and learning will not be successful if pupils are not present and engaged therefore good attendance is an essential part of success. As a result, our schools are committed to collaborating with families to ensure that students receive an education suited to their needs and maintain the highest possible attendance.

Barriers to attendance are complex, some pupils find it harder to engage in education than others. Our settings will prioritise growing safe and supportive environments and strong and trusting relations with pupils and parents.

Our schools will aspire to effective whole school approaches where everyone supports families to secure good attendance. The best attendance will be achieved when the curriculum matches need, behaviour is focussed on learning, bullying is swiftly dealt with, there is good support for SEND pupils and resources are utilised to get the best possible outcomes.

As a trust we are committed to

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and the resulting benefits
- Ensuring equity and fairness
- Ensuring this policy is understood by stakeholders
- Prioritising attendance interventions and working in collaboration with families and other agencies
- Supporting families to realise section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child shall cause them to receive a full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regularly attending school or otherwise
- Supporting our schools to efficiently monitor and analyse attendance to identify early intervention and where support is required. We want to facilitate effective use of data to improve situations and make lives better
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement between schools and settings

Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Board (LGB) will review attendance data and work with the Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to provide support and challenge around attendance and the school's progress towards attendance goals or targets agreed between the LGB and SLT.

The Headteacher/SLT should provide the LGB with relevant attendance data and a summary of DfE termly reports, including any attendance targets in these reports. The Headteacher should ensure a suitable senior member of staff is appointed to lead the school's work on attendance and monitor the implementation of this policy, as well as success in addressing any attendance issues.

Expectations

Each school or setting should ensure the high expectations for pupil attendance and punctuality are clearly communicated to parents and pupils. It is essential that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of attendance and punctuality and how it will support successful outcomes for them. As a Trust we will do all we can to provide the right education for every pupil, ensuring they can attend their education for the full day and on time. Our schools publish their start and finish times, as well as a timetable for the day. Pupils are expected to be present at the stated times for each lesson.

Registration

Registers will be taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The register will be marked at the start of the morning session. Pupils who attend up to 20 minutes after the start time will be marked as late. This

indicates that they were absent when the register was taken but before it closed. The register closes 30 minutes after the start of the school day. Any pupil not present at that time will be marked as absent.

Afternoon registers will be taken at the start of the afternoon session. Any pupils who are absent but were present during the morning, will be immediately investigated to ensure they are safe and well. The school will use procedures appropriate to the age of the children to do this. Pupils may be given a late mark if they are not present when the register is taken but arrive before the register closes. The register will close 10 minutes after the start of the afternoon session. Any pupil not present at that time will be marked as absent.

Absence procedures

Parents in SET schools are required to notify the school on the first day of an absence. This notification should include the reason for absence, as well as the expected length of absence. Parents should use the school's normal reporting procedures for this notification e.g. telephone, email or app.

Where a parent does not report a reason for absence, school staff should make contact to ask for a reason to be provided. School staff will use either telephone, email or an app to request this information. School staff should contact parents on the first day of absence.

Administrative staff will record the reasons provided on the register and may mark pupils present, absent or ill, as well as on an educational visit.

If the reasons provided raise a safeguarding concern this will be passed to the SLT Attendance Officer and DSL. Administrative staff should refer to the SLT Attendance Officer if a decision is needed about whether an absence is authorised, if any other register coding is used, or if an illness may last 5 or more days.

Trust schools should not request medical evidence, in most circumstances. However, this may be requested where the pupil is persistently absent (attendance below 90%), where the school has previously told the parent that medical evidence is required due to high levels of absence or concerns or because a period of illness is likely to be 5 days or more. The school may also request medical evidence where there is genuine or reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, but this should be agreed by the Attendance Officer. Schools should never request medical certificates from GPs. Suitable evidence may be of a prescription, appointment or other proof of consulting a medical professional.

The school should routinely notify parents when absence is a concern or when a pupil's attendance reaches a trigger point. Attendance below 96% or three periods of absence may trigger an awareness letter (Letter 1). Continued poor attendance, attendance below 93% or 6 periods of absence may trigger a Letter 2 and a meeting with the Attendance Officer. Formal meetings with the Attendance Officer will be arranged for pupils with attendance below 90%.

Attendance meetings should be focussed on strengths, support that may be needed, targets for improvement and liaison with other agencies. The outcomes of these meetings should be monitored and reviewed with families to identify next steps.

If a pupil has a continuous period of absence or does not return from a period of leave, the school will report and work with the Local Authority (LA) to establish the pupil's whereabouts. The school will follow LA reporting procedures for Children Missing Education (CME) as well as those subject to a part-time timetable, with a medical absence over 15 days (cumulative), absent for more than 10 days and those that are suspended or excluded.

Attendance Registers

Schools in Southern Education Trust generally use Arbor to keep registers and ensure they are as accurate as possible. In some circumstances a school may be using another Management Information System (MIS) to maintain their register. The use of these systems allows registers to be analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of the morning and afternoon session. They will record whether pupils are present, absent or attending an approved educational visit. All other codes will require authorisation from the Attendance Officer or a member of the SLT.

The school will use the national attendance codes set out in Regulation 10 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole or partial school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances
- S = Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
- C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 = Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
- E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made
- J1 = Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- K = Attending provision arranged by the LA
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity not a sporting activity or work experience. The activity must take place somewhere other than school and be of an educational nature. This code should only be used when the school has approved the pupil's attendance at the activity and it is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved. The school must record the nature of the activity, examples are transition days at another school, college courses, attending unregistered alternative provision arranged by the school. School retains responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils attending an approved educational activity. The school will need to be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil. The school must ensure it has in place arrangements whereby the provider will notify the school if the pupil is absent from the activity.
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed

- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Traveller absence
- Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements or due to the pupil having to attend a school that does not qualify for travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live.
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a sporting activity. The sporting activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded. The activity must take place somewhere other than school and be of an educational nature. This code should only be used when the school has approved the pupil's attendance at the activity and it is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupils attendance has been approved. If school has a concern about the appropriateness of an activity, they can seek advice form the sports' national governing body. The final decision rests with the school however and they should consider the impact on the pupil's general education. School retain responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils attending an approved educational activity. The school will need to be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil. The school must ensure it has in place arrangements whereby the provider will notify the school if the pupil is absent from the activity.
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- W = Attending work experience
- Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available
- Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption
- Y3 = Absent due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4 = Absent due to the school site being closed
- Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention
- Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law, despite the pupil being well enough to attend
- Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause, the nature of which must be documented by the school.
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education will be marked as absent on the register.

Parental Absence Requests

Parents are expected to request certain types of absence in advance. The decision to grant or refuse an absence sits with the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider the impact on the pupil's education as well as the reasons provided by the parent. The Headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal. The school will only grant an absence in exceptional circumstances. Parents should put their request in writing at least two weeks before the proposed absence. The request should provide the reason for absence as well as the expected duration of the leave. If the leave includes a significant event e.g. a wedding, the detail of the event including the date should be provided as part of the request.

When considering whether to approve an absence a pupil's attendance will be considered as well as the impact on their education. Exceptional circumstances may include the death of a close relative, attending a funeral or a housing crisis which prevents attendance. Family holidays are not ordinarily considered as exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher will also consider proximity to statutory assessments, whether a pupil has unauthorised absences or if absence is below the expected level (96%) when assessing the impact on a pupil.

If a term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. Southern Education Trust schools follow their LA Penalty Notice Code of Conduct and DfE guidelines for attendance. Our schools will not grant retrospective requests for leave of absence and therefore any absences not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Healthcare appointments

Parents are expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible parents should ensure that pupils miss the minimum amount of time possible.

Performances and activities, including paid work

Southern Education Trust schools will consider requests for leave of absence supported by a license issued by an LA or BOPA. Such requests will be treated sympathetically, provided the school is satisfied that participation in the activity will not have a detrimental impact on the child's education.

Religious observance

Parents should request permission for absence for religious observance two weeks in advance. SET schools will accept requests on grounds for religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. This would be defined as a day where pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion. The school may seek advice from the Local Authority or religious body where there is a lack of clarity.

SEND and health related absences

Southern Education Trust recognises that some pupils may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Our schools will put in place robust procedures or support for pupils who find attending school difficult, to ensure their right to an education, despite any challenges they may face.

Where necessary the schools will make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils that facilitate good attendance. Our schools will use Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) or Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) to implement these adaptations as well as working with partner agencies to improve attendance.

Where a school has concerns that a pupil's absence may be related to mental health issues parents will be contacted to discuss the situation and to identify any contributory factors to absence. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil, that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and follow the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy.

SET schools will report longer periods of ill-health or absence to the relevant Local Authority. The school will

- Inform the LA if a pupil is absent for more than 15 days cumulatively (in an academic year)
- Notify the LA if a pupil is absent for a continuous period of 10 days or more
- Report to the LA any pupils subject to a part time timetable

The school will consider offering relevant support or intervention to support good attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues. This support may include:

- Regular review meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments and their success
- Developing a pastoral support plan or individual healthcare plan (IHP)
- Using strengths or difficulties questionnaires to inform the right support arrangements
- Liaison with other agencies and consideration of an Early Help assessment
- Using internal or external specialists
- Short term reduced timetables to address needs
- Offering adaptations such as quiet spaces for lunch or breaks
- Implementing an exit pass system so that pupils can have a time out or respite if needed
- Temporary late start or early finish arrangements
- Phased returns after a long absence
- Small group work or one to one support
- Tailored support to meet the needs of the pupil

The school will seek medical evidence for recording absences in a minority of cases. Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, the school will seek medical evidence and support to better understand the need for the pupil.

Leave during lunch times

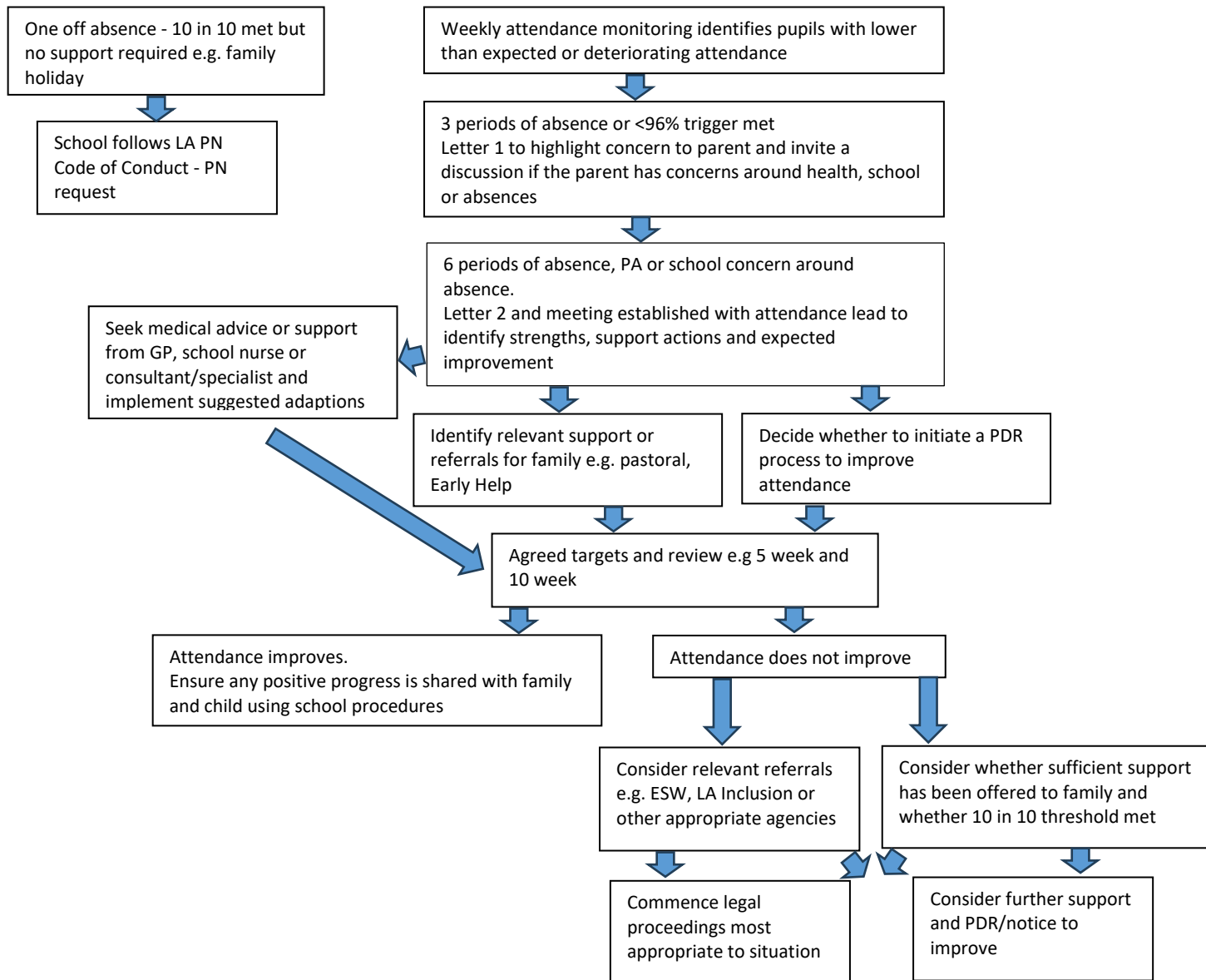
Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises at lunch time with permission from the Headteacher. It is at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil is allowed to leave the premises.

Parents must submit a written request explaining why their child needs to leave the premises. If there are concerns, the Headteacher will meet with the parent to discuss expectations for departure, return and behaviour. The Headteacher will then provide a written decision approving or denying the request.

Any approval will be reviewed termly and may be withdrawn at any time, if there are attendance, behaviour or other concerns.

Attendance monitoring, analysis and interventions

Southern Education Trust schools use the following flowchart to design individual school systems for monitoring and improving attendance.



To ensure effective procedures for managing absence the school's work will be led by the attendance officer, supported by other members of SLT. Procedures will include letters and meetings with parents, reviews and support from class based staff, engagement with LA attendance teams as well as attendance clinics, pastoral support and the use of Penalty Notices and Legal Interventions. Schools may also use attendance rewards but will do so in a way that encourages all pupils to attend well as well as those who make significant improvements to attendance.

The attendance officer and SLT will establish a range of evidence based interventions to address barriers to attendance. The school will ensure that escalation strategies are robust and monitored to ensure they are effective. Where they do not make a difference, the case will quickly be escalated further. Procedures will include letters to parents, review meetings with staff and parents, engagement with LA teams as well as legal interventions and attendance clinics.

Underpinning the work schools do will be the desire to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance will ensure everyone understands what is expected of them. If absence becomes problematic the school will work collaboratively with the pupil and parents to address barriers that prevent regular attendance. The school will always try to use support and collaboration before any punitive measures are taken.

Persistent absence is attendance below 90% and severe absence is below 50%. Pupils in these groups will not be getting the full educational experience they are entitled to and there is need to intervene to improve their chances of success in education. In line with our value of “Making Lives Better” we will seek to address this as all children are entitled to an education which prepares them well for the next step in their life.

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Leading weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

Where a pupil is severely absent it is essential that the school works with the LA and any other partners to engage all relevant services to address the barriers to attendance the pupil is facing. If there are safeguarding concerns alongside the absence the school will work with social services to support the pupil. The school will bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Legal Intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect the attendance officer will consider:

- Whether support is relevant: It not, for example a holiday in term time, a penalty notice should be issued.
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour, or if further support or other legal intervention is more appropriate.
- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the LA Attendance team
- Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

If a penalty notice is considered the best available tool, the headteacher will issue a notice to improve as a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued.

Where a pupil reaches the national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, the school will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. Each case will be considered individually to determine whether a penalty notice or another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

A fixed penalty notice will be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), the LA office, or the police. Any penalty notice will be issued in line with the LA's code of conduct and the DfE's '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance. Penalty notices will be charged at £160, if paid within 28 days reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Parents will only get up to two fines for the same child in a three-year period. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil will be charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

Parents who are prosecuted and attend court because their child has not been attending school may be fined up to £2,500.

Where interventions have not been successful, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in advising, helping and directing the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. LAs will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward.

Once an ESO is secured, a supervisor from the LA will decide any actions or requirements. These may include:

- Requiring the parents to attend support meetings.
- Requiring the parents to attend a parenting programme.
- Requiring the parents to access support services.
- Requiring an assessment by an educational psychologist.
- Review meetings involving all parties to be held every 3 months.

Failing to comply with an ESO will result in a fine and decisions will be made about whether further action is required.

The attendance officer will monitor attendance regularly to ensure intervention is targeted at the right needs and to address habitual absence at the first signs. Southern Education Trust schools use their MIS, FFT and DfE data to quickly and easily identify trends of concern at individual, group and school level. Schools can draw on the school improvement lead if they need support in establishing or refining attendance monitoring procedures. The Trust Board will receive whole school attendance data as well as the attendance of vulnerable groups. The Local Governing Board will receive more regular and broken down attendance data as well as reporting on the success of interventions to address attendance issues.

The school will benchmark its attendance data against local, regional and national data as well as similar schools. It will share effective practice in improving attendance with Trust schools in the attendance network. Developing whole school systems will be facilitated by the attendance leads network.

Staff Training

All SET schools will ensure that staff are trained in the importance of good attendance and evidence based methods for intervention and developing belonging. It is important that classroom staff understand the vital role they play

in improving attendance as they are the people who will have connections and the ability to create a sense of belonging for pupils. Staff should be trained in the warning signs to look for in identifying those at risk of poor attendance as well as ongoing training to improve attendance and pupil engagement in school.

Deletion of names from the register

The school will ensure that it only deletes names from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance Regulations. A pupil's name will never be removed for any other reason and the school is aware that doing so could constitute off-rolling.

The school will make returns to the LA when pupils' names are deleted from the admission register. This will be with the exception of pupils whose name has been deleted from the register at or after the end of the last term of the school year when they are in the most senior year group, unless the LA has requested this information.

Equality Impact

The Trust does all it can to ensure that its policies do not discriminate against pupils or others, either directly or indirectly, in line with any Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.