



“Our vision is to work together to provide the best schools and outcomes for our children”

Overarching Statement for Attendance – Our Strategy

This overarching statement sets out our strategy and approach to managing attendance. Pickwick Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all children get the best start in life – ensuring they attend school regularly is an important part of this commitment.

We have developed a Trust-wide Attendance Policy which accompanies this overarching statement, and ensures a consistent approach is in place across our schools.

Rationale:

Regular attendance is an important part of children achieving academically, socially and emotionally. All children should aim to attend 100% of the time as frequently missing lessons in school increases the likelihood of falling behind in learning, makes it more difficult to progressively build on skills and knowledge, diminishes self-confidence and can affect educational outcomes. Irregular attendance at school can lead to children experiencing poor emotional health and wellbeing, and can lead to social isolation. Even a 95% attendance rate means that the child has missed nine days of learning opportunities in a year.

In 2018/19, DfE research found a link between poor attendance and lower educational outcomes, and the Ministry of Justice published a report showing an association between regular absence from school and youth offenders.

Irregular school attendance is a national issue and is high on the government’s agenda. In 2020/21, absence was reported as 4.6% overall, with persistent absentees up from previous years at 12.1% (1). In the 2022/23 academic year absence rates did not improve and nationally averaged 7.5% (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>) with persistent absentee rates also increasing.

Attendance at school has become more challenging for all. The disruption to learning created by the closure of schools and settings during the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented – it is important that we work together to overcome the challenges created by the pandemic and make sure all children are supported to return to school and catch up on learning.

Working together to improve attendance – our strategy:

The Government’s new attendance guidance, released in May 2022 – ‘Working together to improve school attendance’(2) has provided clarity on expectations and actions required, and has been used to shape our attendance strategy and policy. This guidance will become statutory from September 2023.

Successfully treating the root cause of absence and removing the barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. As a Trust, we will work together to:

EXPECT: Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school

MONITOR: Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND: When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT: Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT: Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE: Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Managing attendance – our approach:

- A whole Trust culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- A clear and consistent Trust-wide attendance policy which is understood by staff, pupils and parents
- Complete attendance registers accurately and follow up absence as part of day-to-day processes
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and use intervention strategies to reduce absence
- Build and maintain strong relationships with families, and listen to understand barriers to attendance, supporting families to remove them
- Work together with other schools, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Raising the profile of attendance:

- Attendance is a key priority on the Trust Development Plan, each school's development plans and staff appraisals
- Absence and persistent absence will be a focus for CEO and Executive Head review visits and Heads meetings focussing on ethos and behaviour, and reported to Local Governance Committees and the Trust Board

- Attendance of disadvantaged learners is a key feature of each school's Pupil Premium reviews and strategy
- All schools have a named attendance lead champion on their Senior Leadership Team; The Trust has a named attendance lead champion in its executive team
- Each Local Governance Committee and the Trust Board have a link Governor/Trustee who champions attendance and reports to the Boards at least annually

(1) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>

(2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

(3) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>

Date of next review: September 2024