

# Spires Federation

## Policy

OPENING  
DOORS



OPENING  
MINDS

## Attendance Policy

Date : September 2024

Review Date: September 2026

## 1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting excellent attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Understanding how regular attendance is key to insuring high achievement as there is a clear link between regular attendance and educational progress
- supporting parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters;
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law;
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance;
- Add any additional ways in which you promote and incentivise school attendance.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress;
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance 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:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 • The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 3

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

## 3. School procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at 8.50am, the start of each school day and at 1.00pm ,at the start of the afternoon session. It will mark whether each pupil is:

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

### 3.2 Categorization of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

#### Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off School unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Family holidays/days out/events during Term time
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Any absence which has not been explained by the parent by 9.20am

### **Authorised Absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the School. Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

### **Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health, ideally before the start of the school day. Parents to notify the school and leave a message on the dedicated answer machine stating the reason for absence. Also, include if intending to seek medical advice from the Doctor/Hospital. This must be done on every day of the pupil's absence unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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 will be notified of this

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents can access a 'Pupil request for absence form' from the school office.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed (before 8.55am) will be marked as 'Late' (Code L).

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed (after 9.20am) will be marked as 'Late after register closed' (Code U – Unauthorised Absence)

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

The school will telephone the parent after 9.20am to request a reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence but will categorise it as unauthorised. The school reserves the right to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; the decision to use "exceptional circumstances" will rest solely with the Headteacher. If the School is unable to make contact then, wherever possible, a message will be left. The school will also contact all of the 'Emergency Contacts' that the parents provided on their child's admission form.

If no contact can be made the school may also seek further advice from other professional services.

### **3.6 Reporting to parents**

The school will provide parents with termly attendance data for their child and an annual summary with their End of Year annual report. On this letter it will include a guide to the 'traffic light

percentage system that we follow, as well as specific data about the child's attendance so far this academic year.

- We celebrate regular attendance both termly and annually in newsletters, with certificates and in Shine Collective worship.
- We celebrate attendance each week in our Shine Assemblies and award the winning class of the week with the Attendance Trophy.

### **3.7 Frequent Absence**

The school understands that at some point most children will be off school due to illness. When looking at attendance patterns the school needs to ascertain if absenteeism is disguising other difficulties including a reluctance to attend school. It is in the best interest for the child, for home and school to work in partnership, in order to quickly and effectively resolve any issues leading to non-attendance.

The school monitors attendance on a daily basis as if a child's attendance falls below 90% it is classed as Persistent Absence and we will (unless there are exceptional circumstances) ask parents to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting in school.

This meeting gives an opportunity for school and home to discuss the reasons for the poor attendance and to look at strategies to help overcome this. It is important for school and home to work together to address the barriers and this meeting provides clear direction and next steps.

Following this meeting the child's attendance will be monitored over the next 4 weeks and a further Attendance Panel Meeting will take place to review the progress or next steps. Once the attendance has risen to a satisfactory level these meetings then cease.

If attendance remains a concern, opportunities will be given to support the family through the Early Help Assessment Process. Parents need to be mindful of Section 4.3 regarding Legal Sanctions that can be enforced.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (that are not routine) – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils 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 pupil is attending educational provision
- Flexi-schooling requests – this is again at the discretion of the Headteacher and will only be approved if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child.
- As with all children, the decision on whether to authorise term-time holidays for the children of employees where holiday time is restricted (E.g. Services Personnel) sits solely with the head teacher. Additional evidence may be required when requesting absence during term-time and each case will be considered individually.

#### **4.2 Warning Letters**

All parents with Parental Responsibility will now be issued with a warning letter at the start of each academic year. As all holiday (unless deemed to be ‘exceptional circumstances’) will be unauthorised this removes the need for individual warning letters to be sent at each holiday request.

#### **4.3 Legal sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. This can be for:

- holiday has been taken during term time (over 4½ days over a six week period)
- Where a child is absent from school due to unauthorised absence of 15% or above over a six week period. This will include lateness after the close of registration when code U is used.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay

## **Per Parent, Per Child**

Penalty Notice Fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent.  
For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

## **5 consecutive days of Term Time leave**

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more consecutive days. Inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was intent to be absent for Term Time Leave.

## **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period**

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period. A session is either an AM or PM session.

## **First Offence**

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be:

**£160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days**  
**Reduced to £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days**

## **Second Offence**

(within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

**£160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days**

## **Third Offence and any Further Offences (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. **Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.**

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to "failure to safeguard a child's education".

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the Lincolnshire County Council's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

This may take into account:

- A 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 pupil 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 the parent/s.

## **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

### **5.1 Raising the profile of attendance**

We continuously aim to raise the profile of attendance with parents and the wider community through the use of home-school agreements, parents' evening, school newsletters and termly attendance letters.

When welcoming and inducting new parents we raise the importance of punctuality and attendance and introduce them to their responsibilities.

### **5.2 Involve parents**

We communicate with parents about positive achievements through weekly Shine assemblies, termly letters and meetings with parents. We also ensure parents are able to discuss their concerns and difficulties with managing their child's attendance with staff.

### **5.3 Rewards and incentives**

Letters to parents praising their support with excellent and good attendance are sent home termly. In addition, children receive certificates, House Points, stickers and prize pencils to congratulate them. The attendance award is presented to the class with the week's highest attendance in the weekly Shine assembly.

### **5.4 Positively reintegrating absentees**

When a pupil has been late or absent it is important to positively welcome them into the class on their return. By offering extended support and ensuring absent pupils have work adapted to help them catch up will help minimise problems on their return to school.

### **5.5 Understanding Barriers to attendance**

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

See Appendix 2 for summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

### **6.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for monitoring 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.

### **6.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **6.3 The Attendance Champion**

The Attendance Champion:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Where possible will lead Attendance Panel Meetings
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **6.4 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.
- Monitoring a child's attendance and being aware of any patterns and/or concerns.
- Attending Attendance Panel meetings.

### **6.5 Office staff**

- Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.
- Monitor patterns or concerns in attendance and report their concerns to the Headteacher.
- Prepare six termly Attendance reports for Governors.

## **7. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed Annually by the Federation Attendance Lead. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

## **8. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **Appendix 1: attendance codes**

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

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>/</b>	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
<b>\</b>	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
<b>L</b>	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>B</b>	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
<b>D</b>	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>J</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>P</b>	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
<b>V</b>	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil 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 pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil 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 pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined
		the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

## Appendix 2: DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. From 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary\\_table\\_of\\_responsibilities\\_for\\_school\\_attendance\\_applies\\_from\\_19\\_August\\_2024\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf)

### All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).	Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.	Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.	Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.	Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.	Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.	Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.	Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.	Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.
	Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.		
	Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.		