



DANES EDUCATIONAL TRUST

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE POLICY

ELSTREE SCREEN ARTS

RESPONSIBILITIES	
To determine and approve policy and ensure compliance	Danes Educational Trust Board
To implement, deliver and comply	Headteacher and School Board
APPROVAL DATE	10/07/2023
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SLT LEAD	Trust Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead

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STATEMENT OF INTENT FROM DANES EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Danes Educational Trust believes that in order to facilitate high quality teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Learners cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

Danes Educational Trust understands that barriers to attendance are complex and that some learners find it harder than others to attend school. Therefore there is an ongoing priority to cultivate safe and supportive environments in all our schools, as well as strong and trusting relationships with learners and parents.

There is a Trust-wide approach to securing good attendance, and recognising the impact that efforts in other areas (areas such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as learner premium) can have on improving attendance.

Danes Educational Trust are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
- Ensuring equality and fairness of curriculum access for all
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, learners and parents
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our learners
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance
- Working collaboratively across schools in the Trust, as well as other agencies
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify learners or cohorts that require more support

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in Elstree Screen Arts is:

Name: Nikki Ward (Associate Principal)

Contact details: Telephone: 020 8386 6220 Email: nikki.ward@esa.ac

The member of school staff parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:

Name: Diane Holme (Attendance Officer)

Contact details: Telephone: 020 8386 6220 Email: attendance@esa.ac



1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school (S) and Trust (T) policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (including Children Missing in Education) (T)
- Complaints Policy(T)
- Behaviour Policy (S)
- SEND Policy(T)
- Supporting learners with Medical Conditions Policy (S)

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Danes Educational Trust Board, and through relevant delegation, the School Board is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school, which in turn contributes to Danes Educational Trust ethos and policies
- Regularly reviewing attendance data through the termly Headteacher Report
- Through delegation to the Directors of Education (Trust) sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across Trust schools
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Trust's Complaints Policy
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education section of the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy is in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors termly
- Having clear processes in place to address persistent and severe absence- learners who are severely absent may be at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual



Exploitation/grooming etc and this group must be a made a top priority for support and joint working between school, children's social care and other statutory safeguarding partners

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual learners
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures
- Ensuring that every learner has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence
- Ensuring accurate completion of admission and attendance registers

The designated senior lead for attendance and attendance officer are responsible for:

- Leading and promoting attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of attendance data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls letters and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to learners and families
- Informing the Local Authority (LA) of any learner being deleted from the admission and attendance registers
- Ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any learner who fails to attend school regularly via a **10 day Absence from** (available via HCC Grid)

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring learners do so too
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently
- Modelling good attendance behaviour
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual learners to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day
- Emphasising with learners the importance of punctuality and good attendance

Learners are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number
- Updating the school if their details change
- The attendance of their children at school
- Promoting good attendance with their children



3. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained (this is at school discretion and evidence may be required to ascertain clarity over an absence)
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

4. ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

The school has high expectations for learners' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and learners.

Learners will be expected to attend all their lessons and any agreed activities every day they are required to be at school and to arrive punctually to all lessons when at school.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all learners at Elstree Screen Arts are:

- The children can arrive from 7.30am, when the gates open
- The register for AM registration will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9.20am
- The register for the PM registration will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.20pm
- Class teachers will also take registers at the start of each lesson period to ensure that learners are attending all timetabled lessons. These registers will be analysed alongside formal registers in line with the relevant section of this policy



- The end of the school day is at 3.50pm Monday to Thursday and 2.55pm on Friday

How lateness is managed:

- The school day starts at 9am
- Registers are taken at 9am and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time
- Children arriving after 9am are required to come into school via Reception.
- At 9.55am the registers will be closed. In accordance with [Dfe School Attendance Guidance](#), if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site - 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding lateness
- From time to time a member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Head of Key Stage, but you can approach senior leaders or the attendance officer at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. The school expects parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models and to celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Learners will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to their Head of Key Stage.

5. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If a child is absent, parents/carers must contact the school before 9am on the first day of absence.

If a child is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text the parent/carer on the first day of absence if no contact has been made— this is because the school has a duty to ensure the child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation if absences persist and this is deemed appropriate
- Refer the matter to the local authority attendance advisory officer if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90 percent if the child is subject to a child protection plan the procedures set out for an unexplained absence below will be implemented immediately

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a learner is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.



Second day absence

Where a learner is absent for more than three school days in a row, or more than 10 school days in one term, the parent will be expected to provide a signed letter or email with an explanation for the absence(s).

Ten days' absence and beyond

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any child who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff may visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. This is known as a Child Missing in Education. The school will use the [LA 10 Day Absence Reporting Form](#) if this is the case.

Where a learner is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will consult with the LA regarding the potential removal of the learner from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the learner after making reasonable enquiries.

Continued or ongoing absence – Persistent absence (PA)

A learner is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10 percent or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any learner's education and the school will need the full support and cooperation of parents/carers to resolve this. Projected PA children are tracked and monitored carefully through the schools attendance systems. All PA children and their parents/carers will be monitored with appropriate support and intervention put in place aimed to improve attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance Advisory Officer during review meetings and cases may lead to legal action being initiated.

Some children may have acute health conditions which, despite the best efforts of parents and carers, lead to significant ongoing periods of absence. The school will work closely with parents/carers to ensure support systems are developed which enable each child to attend school as often as is physically possible. Children should never be excluded from school or activities on medical grounds unless they are acutely unwell or hospitalised.

If acutely unwell, children will access hospital schools supported by their home school as appropriate. The school will maintain close links with children and their families during any sustained periods of absence to ensure continuity of relationships and provision. Children in recovery can be supported by a flexible return to schooling which is manageable for them.

Families of children with acute physical and medical conditions that lead to pervasive absence will not follow the same systems and procedures laid out in this policy.



6. ATTENDANCE REGISTER

The school uses ARBOR management information system (MIS) to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the AM/PM attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether learners are:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational visit
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence authorised by the school
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- S = Study Leave
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday (unauthorised)
- O = Unauthorised absence (unauthorised)
- U = Arrived after registration closed (whilst present will be classed as unauthorised)
- N = Reason not yet provided (unauthorised)
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- W = Work Experience
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = learner not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant learners who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.



Learners who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register with the C code.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment, this is captured electronically.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for a minimum period of three years.

7. AUTHORISING PARENTAL ABSENCE REQUESTS

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the learner and the impact on the learner's education into account. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason.

Leave of absence

The school will only grant a learner a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the headteacher in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence (unless exceptional circumstances mean the full notice period could not be given, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the learner's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the learner can be away from school. **The school will not grant leave of absence for the purposes of family holidays unless certain exceptional circumstances apply, unfortunately exceptional circumstances do not include the cheaper cost of holidays within term time.**

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a learner's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a learner's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a learner out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.



Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

Performances and activities, including paid work

The school will ensure that all learners engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for learners engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the learner.

The learner will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the learner would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a learner receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
- On days where the learner would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day.

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a learner's attendance would fall below 95 percent unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where a licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the learner'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 religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a learner's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for learners from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

Absence in Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances will include when a learner is unable to attend because:

- Transport provided by the school, LA or parent is not available and the learner's home is not within walking distance
- There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the learner from attending
- The learner is in custody and will be detained for less than four months

The use of the 'Y' code for exceptional circumstances will be collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

8. SEND AND HEALTH-RELATED ABSENCES

The school recognises that learners with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support learners who find attending school difficult.

The school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled learners to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any Educational Health Care (EHC) plans that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a learner's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a learner that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a learner is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a learner is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days
- Provide the LA with information about the learner's needs, capabilities and programme of work
- Help the learner reintegrate at school when they return
- Make sure the learner is kept informed about school events and clubs
- Encourage the learner to stay in contact with other learners during their absence

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any learners with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly



monitored and reviewed until the learner is attending school as normal and there have been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of learners with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan (PSP)
- Carrying out a strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Identifying learners' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Using an internal or external specialist
- Enabling a learner to have a reduced timetable (this is usually a time limited approach)
- Ensuring a learner can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and break-times
- Implementing a system whereby learners can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out
- Temporary late starts or early finishes
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs

9. TRUANCY

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of learners, and understand the importance of continuity in each learner's learning.

All learners are expected to be in their classes, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically. Any learner with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at Reception and sign back in again on their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a learner might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the learner not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the learner, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school



The DSL will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

10. MISSING CHILDREN

Learners will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a learner going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing learner will inform the headteacher or senior leader immediately
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
 - All classrooms
 - All toilets
 - Changing rooms
 - The library
 - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted
- If the learner has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the learner will be notified
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided
- If the parents have had no contact from the learner, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted
- The missing learner's teacher will fill in a record of concern incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the learner going missing, this will be stored on Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS)
- If the missing learner has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed
- When the learner has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the learner to ensure they are safe and well
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the learner has been located

The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that learners understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.



The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be added to CPOMS, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

11. ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by the senior leadership team (SLT), will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance such as part-time timetables
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Sending letters to parents (templates in appendices)
 - Having a regular tutor review
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams
 - Using fixed penalty notices
 - Creating attendance clinics

The school will use attendance data, in line with the '[Monitoring and analysing absence](#)' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the learners whom the intervention is designed to target.

Part-time Timetables

As part of the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers (Ofsted June 2015) local authorities are required to provide detailed data on school age children in their area who are not in receipt of full-time education and schools are similarly expected to maintain data on students of compulsory school age who are on their roll but attending on a part-time timetable.

A part-time timetable is a possible time limited intervention that may be discussed with parent/carer and learner with the aim to return the learner to full-time education as quickly as possible.

The Local authority has published guidance for all schools and UTC's on the use of part-time timetables for learners of compulsory school age (the term after their fifth birthday to the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday)

All schools are required to return information on children who are on part-time tables within five days of the pupil starting or ending a part-time timetable. The school will follow [guidance from HCC when considering a part-time timetable](#).



Positive Attendance Recognition

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- 100% attendance over a half term will be recognised in Achievement assemblies by the Head of Key Stage

School trips and events not part of the educational offer to all children will be considered a privilege. Where attendance drops below 90 percent, these privileges may be taken away. The school will develop strategies for ensuring that learners with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

12. WORKING WITH PARENTS TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with learners and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with learners and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each learner wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a learner where the learner is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education. Parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer will work collaboratively with the learner and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the learner from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for learner absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the learner's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the learner's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.



13. PERSISTENT ABSENCE

There are various groups of learners who may be vulnerable to high absence and persistent absence (PA), such as:

- Children in need
- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Young carers
- Learners who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
- Learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Learners with SEND
- Learners who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

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

- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps
- Meeting with learners 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 regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress
- Assessing whether an EHC plan may be appropriate
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

The school will focus particularly on learners who have rates of absence over 50 percent, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these learners are facing.

Where a learner at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the learner in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also 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.

14. LEGAL INTERVENTION

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

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support 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



Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher will issue a fixed penalty notice in line with [Hertfordshire County Council's penalty notice for truancy code of conduct and procedures](#).

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.

15. MONITORING AND ANALYSING ABSENCE

The attendance officer will monitor and analyse attendance data weekly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole
- Individual year groups
- Individual learners
- Demographic groups, e.g. learners from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds
- Other groups of learners, e.g. learners with SEND, LAC and learners eligible for FSM
- learners at risk of PA

The attendance officer will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data as a minimum on a half-termly basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes
- Particular days of poor attendance
- Historic trends of attendance and absence
- Barriers to attendance

The attendance officer will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of learners and to implement attendance procedures. The attendance officer will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The school board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against Danes Educational Trust, local, regional and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

The board of trustees will ensure staff from different schools within Danes Educational Trust regularly share expertise and collaborate on interventions.



16. TRAINING OF STAFF

Danes Educational Trust and the school recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk learners as part of their induction and refresher training.

The headteacher will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- The fact that absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for learners who need it

The headteacher will provide dedicated and enhanced attendance training to the attendance officer and other staff with specific attendance functions in their role – this will include training regarding interpreting and analysing attendance data and supporting learners to overcome barriers to attendance.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

17. MONITORING

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The Danes Educational Trust attendance target is 96 percent .



APPENDIX 1 Attendance Monitoring Procedures

We have adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that learners' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where learners' attendance falls below the standard:

1. A red, amber, green (RAG) rated spreadsheet will be sent weekly to Heads of Year (HOY) detailing weekly and annual attendance to date
2. Attendance will be discussed with Form Tutors and learners. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by FT should be passed immediately to heads of year (HOY)
3. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any learner absence where the parent/carer has not made contact with the school. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the learner is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the SLT and attendance officer daily
4. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence
5. If a learner's attendance falls to 95 percent,
 - a. The attendance officer or member of SLT speaks to the learner in school to discuss any issues or problems and how the school can help to improve attendance.
 - b. The attendance officer will also send a [first low attendance letter](#) alerting parents that their child's attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard. The letter also has an attached leaflet outlining how parents can work with the school and their child to improve attendance and invites parents to make contact with the school if they would like further information.
6. If a learner's attendance falls below 90 percent, a [second low attendance letter](#) is sent home explaining that the learner's attendance is now being monitored, and the attendance officer arranges a meeting with parents to discuss- attendance is monitored to ensure it does not drop lower.
7. After a period of monitoring, if targets are met and attendance is improving, [a letter is sent home](#) from the SLT to congratulate the learner and their parents on improving attendance. The school will continue to monitor until attendance stabilises at 95%.
8. If absence includes 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence a [Penalty Notice Warning Letter](#) will be sent. This is not a penalty notice, but alerts parents that should the number of unauthorised absence sessions reach 15 or more in the current and/or previous term that they may be issued with a penalty notice from the local authority.



APPENDIX 2 First Low Attendance Letter

Below 95% with no mitigating circumstances provided

(Include Parent Attendance Leaflet)

Dear

Re: (Pupil's Name)

Our records show that your son's/daughter's attendance has fallen to <current attendance>.

We would normally expect his/her attendance to be 95% or above as falling below this level can in the long term affect his/her academic progress. We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

We want to make sure we can support <Pupil name>'s education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence. If there are any mitigating circumstances of which we are unaware or there are any other issues that you would like to discuss or have help with, please contact <name of person>, <title of person>.

Yours sincerely

<Title of Attendance Lead>



APPENDIX 3 Second Low Attendance Letter

Attendance below 90% absence

Dear

Re: (Pupil's Name)

I am writing to express my concern at <name>'s recent <absence/absences> from school.

<Name> has been absent from school for a total of <number> sessions (<number> days) on the following dates:

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

Where appropriate, any dates in red are either unauthorised absences or no reason has been provided.

<Pupil name>'s current attendance is <percentage attendance>.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

I am inviting you to attend a School Attendance Meeting. The time and date have been set for at It is important that you attend this meeting for us to work together in exploring the issues around low attendance. The meeting will be led by <Name of person>, <title of person>.

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact <Name of person> at school so that a mutually convenient time can be arranged.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



APPENDIX 4 Improving Attendance Letter

After a monitoring period, and if targets are met, a letter is sent home from the SLT to congratulate the learner and their parents on improving attendance.

Dear

Re: (Pupil's Name)

I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate <Pupil name> on improving <his / her> attendance since our previous communication. Attendance is now at <insert percentage attendance> and has been steadily improving. I would also like to thank you for your support in achieving this.

The school will continue to monitor attendance as we do with all pupils, however I am hopeful that the recent positive attendance will continue. As always, the school is here to work with parents, and if you require further support with attendance or other aspects of school please do get in touch.

Kind regards

Headteacher



APPENDIX 5 Penalty Notice Warning Letter

(Sent to each parent separately on headed notepaper via first class post & include Information for Parents sheet from ISL)

Dear

Penalty notice warning letter

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

<Pupil's Name> Registered at <School name>

This is a formal warning that you are at risk of being in breach of the regulations stated above. <Pupil's name> has been absent from school and the absence(s) has/have not been authorised. Should the number of unauthorised absence sessions reach 15 or more in the current and/or previous term you will be in breach of the regulations and the Local Authority may issue you with a penalty notice (sessions refer to each half day, so one day of absence is 2 sessions).

Should you be issued with a notice this requires you to pay a penalty of £60 within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Each parent is liable to pay a separate penalty and penalty notices are issued for each child to whom the absence relates.

Payment of the penalty enables you to discharge your liability for the offence for the period in question of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school (Section 444, The Education Act 1996).

Failure to pay the penalty means you are liable to prosecution for the offence, by summons to appear before the local Magistrates Court. On conviction you may be liable for a fine of up to £1,000 per parent. This is a criminal offence which carries a criminal record. The Local Authority will ask for costs of £125 to be awarded against you. If you fail to ensure your child attends regularly and 15 sessions of unauthorised absence is reached a penalty notice will be issued.

You may not receive a further warning before the penalty is imposed. If you believe there are legitimate reasons for your child's absence, please contact me within 5 working days to discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

An information sheet from Hertfordshire County Council is included



Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence – Information from schools/academies for parents

This is a warning letter

You have received this letter from us warning that you are at risk of receiving a penalty notice. **This is not a penalty notice** but is an opportunity to improve your child's attendance.

This letter explains that if the threshold for unauthorised absence is reached a notice will be issued. In cases of unauthorised holidays we will have made it clear that taking an unauthorised holiday will result in a penalty notice being issued.

What is a penalty notice?

Penalty notices for unauthorised absence were introduced by the government as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to support schools to improve attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution and allow parents to discharge their potential liability for an offence of failing to ensure their child's regular¹ attendance at school by payment of a penalty.

When are penalty notices used?

We use penalty notices as part of our whole school approach to improving attendance. Penalty notices may be issued once a pupil has 15 or more sessions (a session is a half day) of unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous school term. The absences may have occurred in a block or a series of odd days and/or unauthorised holiday.

It is a Headteacher's or Principal's decision on whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised based on the information provided by you as the parent.

If we decide to apply for a penalty notice we make this application to the Local Authority and it must comply with Hertfordshire Code of Conduct.

Once issued there is no statutory right of appeal however the Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. **This does not mean that a notice will be withdrawn because you disagree with it.**

What happens if you do not pay?

If the penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute you for the original offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. You need to be aware that this is a criminal offence and upon conviction you may receive a fine of up to £2,500 (each parent) and will have a **criminal record**.

If you wish to discuss this letter or the reasons for your child's unauthorised absence please contact us.



Equality Impact Assessment Form

People responsible for overseeing the EIA
Chris Marks (Director of Education: Primary, Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead)
Name of the policy, procedure or project
Attendance & Absence Policy
What are the main purposes or aims of the policy, procedure or project?
To ensure all schools within the Trust follow statutory guidance with regards to attendance of learners.
Who will be the beneficiaries of the policy, procedure or project?
All stakeholders
Have you consulted on this policy, procedure or project?
Yes, the policy was also reviewed by EIA group, Leadership Forum (all headteachers).

Complete the following table and give reasons/comments for where:

The policy, procedure or project could have a positive impact on any person or group because of one of the following aspects of their identity (this includes equality of opportunity of access)

The policy, procedure or project could have a negative impact on, or disadvantage, a person or group because of one of the following aspects of their identity.



(At this stage, it is important to consider the requirements placed upon a school as per the Equality Act 2010.)

Groups	Positive impact		Negative impact		Comments
	High	Low	High	Low	
Race					
Religion or belief	x				Section on authorised absence for religious observance
Sexual orientation	x				SEND and Health Related absence section would cover this.
Sex					N/a
Disability	x				SEND and Health Related absence section would cover this.
Age					
Gender reassignment	x				SEND and Health Related absence section would cover this.
Pregnancy and maternity	x				SEND and Health Related absence section would cover this.

Marriage and civil partnership					N/a
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Where there is negative impact, what actions could be taken to amend the policy, procedure or project to minimise the negative impact?



If there is no evidence that the policy, procedure or project promotes equality, equal opportunities or improves relationships between people with different protected characteristics, what amendments could be made to achieve this?

How will the policy, procedure or project be implemented including any necessary training?

Policy will be ratified by DET Trustees and then shared with each school and placed on websites.

