

## Part of the Branches Education Group



# ATTENDANCE POLICY



|                  |                   |                  |          |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| Approved By      | Rebecca Warhurst  | Head Teacher     | Aug 2026 |
| Amendments Made  |                   |                  |          |
| Linked Policies  | Admissions Policy |                  |          |
| Signed           | <i>R Warhurst</i> | Head Teacher     | Aug 2026 |
|                  | <i>L De-Hayes</i> | Governance Chair | Aug 2026 |
| Date Next Review | Aug 2027          |                  |          |

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Regular school attendance is fundamental to achieving positive educational outcomes, promoting wellbeing and improving future life chances. Attendance is also an important safeguarding consideration, enabling staff to maintain oversight of pupils' welfare and to identify concerns at the earliest opportunity. The specialist provision provided at Silver Birch School can only have maximum impact when pupils attend consistently and engage fully in their education.

Silver Birch School is committed to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality for all pupils. We recognise that attendance is everyone's responsibility and that improving attendance requires a collaborative approach involving pupils, parents and carers, school staff, governors, local authorities and other relevant agencies.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026) and Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools (DfE, September 2025). It should be read alongside the School's Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, SEND Policy and any other relevant policies relating to pupil welfare and attendance.

### **1.1 Rationale**

Silver Birch School provides specialist education for pupils with a range of complex needs, challenges and barriers to learning. Many pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education, including multiple school placements, periods of non-attendance and difficulties engaging with educational settings.

We recognise that regular attendance is a key factor in supporting academic achievement, emotional wellbeing, personal development and successful outcomes in adulthood. For many of our pupils, attending school consistently is also an important protective factor that supports safeguarding, stability and positive relationships with trusted adults.

Safeguarding is always our highest priority, and our attendance procedures reflect this commitment. We understand that poor attendance may indicate underlying difficulties, unmet needs or safeguarding concerns that require early intervention and support. We are committed to identifying barriers to attendance as early as possible and working collaboratively with pupils, parents, carers and external agencies to overcome them.

All staff recognise the important role they play in promoting good attendance and building positive relationships with pupils and families. Through a supportive and child-centred approach, we aim to ensure that every pupil feels safe, valued and able to engage successfully in school life.

## **2.0 Purpose**

### **2.1 Our Aim**

Our aim is to maximise attendance for every pupil and to create a culture where excellent attendance and punctuality are valued, promoted and supported throughout the school community.

We will achieve this by:

- ensuring all staff, leaders and those responsible for governance understand their role in promoting and improving attendance;
- maintaining a whole-school culture in which regular attendance is expected, valued and recognised;

- providing a clear framework that outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff, pupils, parents and carers in securing good attendance;
- ensuring pupils, parents and carers understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and the impact that absence can have on educational progress, wellbeing and future outcomes;
- identifying attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity and implementing timely, targeted and proportionate support;
- recognising, celebrating and rewarding good attendance, improved attendance and positive engagement;
- working in partnership with pupils, parents, carers and external agencies to understand and address barriers to attendance;
- promoting effective multi-agency working with Early Help, Children's Social Care, health professionals, local authorities and other services where appropriate;
- monitoring, analysing and evaluating attendance and punctuality data to identify trends, patterns and areas for improvement;
- using attendance data to inform strategic planning, intervention and school improvement priorities;
- ensuring that pupils who are persistently absent, severely absent or at risk of becoming children missing education receive appropriate support and intervention; and
- maintaining attendance procedures that support the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils.

## **2.2 Statutory Guidance and Safeguarding**

Since August 2024, the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* has required schools to adopt a whole-school approach to attendance and to recognise the close relationship between attendance, wellbeing and safeguarding. Schools are expected to identify and address attendance concerns promptly and work collaboratively with families and partner agencies to remove barriers to attendance.

Silver Birch School recognises that poor attendance may be an indicator of wider needs or safeguarding concerns. Persistent, severe or unexplained absence can be associated with risks including neglect, exploitation, mental health difficulties, family challenges and children missing education. Attendance concerns will therefore be considered as part of the School's wider safeguarding responsibilities.

Where attendance concerns arise, the School will:

- identify and investigate patterns of absence at the earliest opportunity;
- work proactively with pupils, parents and carers to understand and address barriers to attendance;
- provide timely support and intervention to improve attendance;

- work with the Local Authority, Children's Social Care and other relevant agencies where appropriate;
- record, monitor and review attendance concerns as part of the School's safeguarding arrangements; and
- ensure that pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent, severely absent or children missing education receive appropriate support and intervention.

### **Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) plays a key role in ensuring attendance concerns are considered within the School's safeguarding arrangements.

The DSL will:

- work closely with the Attendance Lead and senior leaders to monitor attendance trends and identify pupils who may be at risk;
- review attendance information alongside safeguarding, behaviour, pastoral and welfare information;
- ensure concerns are escalated appropriately where absence may be linked to neglect, exploitation, abuse, mental health needs or other safeguarding concerns;
- contribute to or initiate referrals to Children's Social Care and other agencies where appropriate;
- ensure attendance concerns are recorded within safeguarding records and considered as part of multi-agency working; and
- support the development of a whole-school culture that promotes attendance, wellbeing and safeguarding.

Attendance will not be viewed solely as an educational issue. At Silver Birch School, attendance forms an integral part of our safeguarding practice and our commitment to promoting the welfare, safety and success of every pupil.

## **3.0 Attendance Procedures**

### **3.1 Punctuality**

Pupils are expected to attend school punctually each day and arrive ready to participate fully in learning.

Many of our pupils are transported to school through arrangements funded by their Local Authority. Where transport is provided, pupils should be ready in sufficient time for collection. Parents and carers remain responsible for ensuring that their child attends school and is ready for transport at the agreed time. The School is unable to arrange alternative transport where a scheduled service is missed.

Breakfast is available each morning and provides a positive start to the school day, offering pupils the opportunity to socialise, develop routines and engage with staff before lessons begin.

Pupils should arrive no later than 8.55 a.m.

Morning registration takes place at 9.00 a.m. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken will be recorded as late using the appropriate attendance code.

The morning register will remain open until 9.30 a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code in accordance with Department for Education requirements.

### **3.2 Attendance Registers**

The attendance register is a legal document and must be completed accurately and consistently in accordance with statutory requirements.

Registers will be taken at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions each school day. All attendance and absence will be recorded using the national attendance and absence codes prescribed by the Department for Education.

The School will ensure that:

- registers are completed accurately and on time;
- attendance information is recorded using the appropriate statutory attendance code;
- any amendments to attendance records clearly identify the original entry, the reason for the amendment, the date the amendment was made and the name of the individual making the change;
- attendance records are stored securely and retained in accordance with statutory requirements; and
- attendance data is shared with the Local Authority, Department for Education and other authorised agencies where required.

Attendance records will be retained securely for a minimum of six years in accordance with regulatory requirements.

### **3.3 Role of Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives an appropriate full-time education and attends school regularly. Regular attendance is essential for pupils to achieve their educational potential, develop positive relationships and access the specialist support available to them.

Silver Birch School expects all pupils to attend school every day and aims for attendance levels as close to 100% as possible, unless there is a valid and unavoidable reason for absence.

There are 190 school days in each academic year. Any absence can have a significant impact on a pupil's educational progress, emotional wellbeing, social development and overall outcomes. For many of our pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor that supports safeguarding and engagement with trusted adults.

The School works in partnership with parents and carers to promote good attendance and punctuality. We are committed to developing positive and supportive relationships with families and

encourage open and honest communication where attendance difficulties arise so that barriers can be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Information regarding attendance expectations, procedures and responsibilities is shared with parents and carers during the admission process and remains available throughout the pupil's placement.

### **3.4 Reporting Absence**

Parents and carers must notify the School as soon as possible on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed with the School.

Where possible, absence should be reported before 9.00 a.m.

If no reason for absence has been received, the School will make reasonable efforts to contact parents or carers to establish the pupil's whereabouts and ensure they are safe.

All unexplained absences will be followed up promptly as part of the School's attendance and safeguarding procedures. Where a valid reason for absence cannot be established, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised in accordance with Department for Education guidance.

Where concerns remain regarding a pupil's welfare or whereabouts, the School may:

- make additional attempts to contact parents or carers;
- contact other emergency contacts known to the School;
- undertake a welfare visit where appropriate;
- seek support from the Local Authority; or
- follow child protection or children missing education procedures where necessary.

The purpose of any welfare visit is to:

- establish the reason for the absence;
- ensure the child is safe and well;
- identify any support required; and
- facilitate the pupil's return to school as soon as possible.

Medical, dental and other routine appointments should be arranged outside school hours wherever possible. Where appointments must take place during the school day, pupils will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment where reasonably practicable.

Attendance information will be recorded using the statutory attendance and absence codes and shared with the Local Authority and Department for Education as required.

### **3.5 Types of Absence**

Attendance Registration and Classification of Absence

Attendance registers are completed twice daily, once during the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

For each session, a pupil's attendance will be recorded using the appropriate Department for Education attendance code. Absence will be categorised as either authorised or unauthorised in accordance with statutory guidance.

Parents and carers are expected to provide timely information regarding any absence to enable the School to accurately record attendance.

### **Authorised Absence**

An authorised absence is an absence for which the School has accepted a valid reason. Examples may include:

- genuine illness;
- medical, dental or clinical appointments that cannot be arranged outside school hours;
- religious observance;
- approved educational activities;
- exceptional circumstances authorised by the Headteacher.

The School may request additional information or evidence where appropriate before deciding whether an absence should be authorised.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

An unauthorised absence is an absence for which no acceptable reason has been provided or where permission has not been granted by the School.

Examples of unauthorised absence include, but are not limited to:

- absence without explanation;
- keeping a child off school unnecessarily;
- truancy during the school day;
- shopping trips;
- birthdays or celebrations;
- hair or beauty appointments;
- day trips;
- waiting for deliveries or visitors;
- oversleeping or disrupted routines;
- holidays taken during term time without authorisation.

### **Leave of Absence**

The School will only grant leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances.

All requests for leave of absence must be submitted in writing to the Headteacher in advance of the proposed absence. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the specific circumstances and relevant statutory guidance.

Family holidays and recreational trips will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances and are unlikely to be authorised.

### **Persistent Absence**

A pupil is considered persistently absent when their attendance falls to 90% or below. Persistent absence may indicate emerging barriers to attendance and can have a significant impact on educational progress and wellbeing.

Where a pupil's attendance is approaching or falls below the persistent absence threshold, the School will:

- notify parents or carers;
- identify any barriers to attendance;
- provide targeted support and intervention;
- monitor attendance closely; and
- work with external agencies where appropriate.

### **Severe Absence**

A pupil is considered severely absent when they attend school for less than 50% of available sessions. Pupils who are severely absent are at significantly greater risk of poor educational outcomes and safeguarding concerns and will receive the highest level of attendance support and monitoring.

This is one area I'd definitely add because current DfE guidance places significant emphasis on identifying and supporting pupils whose attendance falls below 50%

| Descriptor                     | Attendance % | Impact on Pupil Outcomes                                                 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Excellent attendance           | 99-100       | Gives pupils the best opportunity to achieve their full potential.       |
| Good attendance                | 96-98        | Supports strong progress, learning and engagement                        |
| Attendance requires monitoring | 91-95        | Attendance may begin to impact learning and should be monitored.         |
| Persistent Absence             | 90 or below  | Significant risk of reduced attainment, wellbeing and engagement         |
| Severe Absence                 | Below 50     | Serious safeguarding and educational concern requiring intensive support |

## **3.6 Attendance Support Plans**

Silver Birch School monitors attendance and punctuality on a daily basis and reviews attendance data regularly to identify patterns, trends and emerging concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Where attendance, punctuality or engagement gives cause for concern, school leaders will work with the pupil, parents or carers and relevant professionals to understand the barriers affecting attendance and identify appropriate support.

When additional intervention is required, the School will develop an Attendance Support Plan in partnership with the pupil and their family. The plan will be tailored to the individual needs of the pupil and will:

- identify barriers to attendance and punctuality;
- outline agreed actions and support strategies;
- set realistic and achievable attendance targets;
- identify the responsibilities of the pupil, parents or carers and the School;
- establish review dates and monitoring arrangements; and
- identify any external agencies or professionals who may contribute to supporting improved attendance.

Attendance Support Plans will be reviewed regularly and amended as required to ensure they remain effective and responsive to the pupil's needs.

*See Appendix 2 – Attendance Support Plan*

### **3.7 Promoting and Recognising Good Attendance**

Silver Birch School promotes a positive culture of attendance through encouragement, recognition and celebration of both good attendance and sustained improvement.

The School recognises that many pupils face significant barriers to attendance and therefore values individual progress as well as high levels of attendance. Reward systems will be applied fairly and sensitively to ensure that pupils with genuine medical conditions, disabilities or exceptional circumstances are not disadvantaged.

Recognition may include:

- weekly certificates and merit points for pupils achieving excellent attendance;
- weekly prize draws for pupils meeting attendance criteria;
- celebration of attendance achievements through tutorial sessions, assemblies and other appropriate school activities;
- half-termly recognition for pupils who have achieved excellent attendance or made significant improvements in attendance;
- annual awards for pupils who achieve outstanding attendance throughout the academic year;
- recognition of pupils who maintain excellent attendance over consecutive years; and
- tutor group or class attendance awards where appropriate.

Pupils who are subject to an Attendance Support Plan may also have bespoke incentives and reward systems linked to their individual attendance targets and personal goals.

The School's approach to rewards and recognition will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains meaningful, inclusive and effective in encouraging positive attendance behaviours.

### 3.7 School Absence Procedures

| Procedure                                                                  | Role                            | Responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First and each day of absence                                              | Parent/ Carer                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Reception by 9a.m. to notify school, give reason for absence, and expected date of return to school.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| First and each day of absence                                              | Administrator                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If parent/ carer has not contacted school, call them by 10 a.m. to question reason for absence.</li> <li>Request parent/ carer to call the following day if pupil remains absent, and that a home visit might be conducted by staff.</li> <li>Log the reason for absence on the MIS.</li> </ul> |
| Third day of absence<br><i>or sooner where there are specific concerns</i> | Head Teacher                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify staff to conduct a home visit to share attendance information and identify plan for returning to school.</li> <li>Visits may take place earlier if unable to contact a family or if the family is receiving external support.</li> </ul>                                               |
| Daily                                                                      | Administrator                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check attendance for pupils who are dual registered/ attend elsewhere such as mainstream.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Daily                                                                      | Head Teacher                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify if reasons given for absence will be unauthorised, and any action needed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Daily                                                                      | Designated Safeguarding Lead    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform social care of any unauthorised absences for pupils known to them.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Weekly – Fridays                                                           | Administrator                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify pupils with 100% attendance/most improved</li> <li>Update the noticeboards as relevant.</li> <li>Share above information with senior leaders ahead of weekly assembly.</li> </ul>                                                                                                      |
| Weekly                                                                     | Head Teacher                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrate attendance and punctuality in assembly as relevant.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Weekly – Mondays                                                           | Senior Leader                   | Provide the Head Teacher with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>headline attendance data for whole school,</li> <li>update on children looked after (CLA)</li> <li>progress of Persistent Absentees and those on Attendance Support Plans.</li> </ul>                                                                            |
| Half-termly                                                                | Senior Leader - Attendance      | Work with the Administrator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produce certificates and celebrate improvements/ good attendance.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                            | Head Teacher/ School Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure attendance is standing item on the agenda of every School Governance Meeting.</li> <li>Report on trends, concerns and actions identified as part of routine data analysis.</li> <li>Governance Chair to review attendance data, providing support and challenge.</li> </ul>              |
| Pre-Admission of new pupils                                                | Administrator                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather attendance data from previous school settings.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

### **3.8 Children Missing Education (CME)**

Silver Birch School recognises that children missing education are at significant risk of underachievement, harm, exploitation and reduced life chances. The School will work proactively with parents, carers, the Local Authority and other partner agencies to identify and support pupils who may be at risk of becoming children missing education.

The School will:

- comply with all statutory requirements relating to Children Missing Education (CME);
- not remove a pupil from the admissions register unless one of the prescribed grounds set out in the relevant pupil registration regulations applies;
- notify the Local Authority whenever a pupil is to be removed from the admissions register and provide all information required by legislation;
- notify the Local Authority where a pupil fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without authorisation for a prolonged period where required by statutory guidance;
- require parents or carers to notify the School in writing if they intend to educate their child otherwise than at school;
- work collaboratively with the Local Authority where concerns arise regarding a child's whereabouts, safety or continued access to suitable education;
- ensure that attendance concerns, repeated absence and unexplained absence are considered as part of the School's safeguarding arrangements; and
- take appropriate action where a pupil may be at risk of becoming a child missing education.

These arrangements support the School's commitment to safeguarding children and ensuring that every pupil receives their entitlement to education.

### **4.1 Monitoring and Reporting Attendance**

Silver Birch School adopts a proactive and data-informed approach to monitoring attendance.

Attendance information is reviewed daily, and concerns are identified and acted upon promptly to ensure that barriers to attendance are addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The School Administrator provides senior leaders with daily attendance information, including details of pupil absence and reasons provided by parents or carers.

Attendance is a standing agenda item at Leadership Team meetings and may include consideration of:

- whole-school attendance trends;
- attendance of vulnerable groups and pupils with additional needs;
- persistent absence and severe absence;
- pupils subject to attendance interventions or Attendance Support Plans;
- safeguarding concerns linked to attendance;
- children at risk of becoming children missing education; and
- the impact and effectiveness of attendance interventions.

Attendance information will be shared regularly with the Proprietor and those responsible for governance to enable effective oversight and challenge. Governors and proprietors will receive attendance information that supports them in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.

Where required, attendance information will also be shared with the Local Authority, Department for Education, Ofsted and other relevant agencies.

In addition:

- attendance data will be submitted and shared in accordance with Department for Education requirements;
- attendance reports will be used to identify trends, emerging patterns and areas requiring further support;
- attendance support and intervention strategies will be reviewed regularly for effectiveness;
- persistent and severe absence will be monitored closely;
- attendance concerns may form part of safeguarding assessments and interventions; and
- the School will work collaboratively with families and partner agencies to improve attendance outcomes.
- Where attendance concerns persist despite support and intervention, the School will work with the Local Authority to consider the use of appropriate attendance enforcement measures in line with statutory guidance and local protocols.

## 5.0 References

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance, Department for Education, July 2026.
- Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance, Department for Education, July 2026.
- Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools, Department for Education, September 2025.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education Act 1996.
- Education Act 2002.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (as amended).
- Arranging Education for Children Who Cannot Attend School Because of Health Needs.
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions.
- Is My Child Too Ill for School?, NHS.
- Providing Remote Education: Non-Statutory Guidance for Schools (latest version).

## 6.0 APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 - Department for Education Attendance and Absence Codes

Silver Birch School will record attendance using the national attendance and absence codes prescribed by the Department for Education and set out in the latest version of *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* and associated attendance regulations.

School staff responsible for maintaining attendance registers will ensure they use the most up-to-date statutory attendance and absence codes and recording requirements issued by the Department for Education

## 6.2 Appendix 2 – Attendance Support Plan

### ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PLAN

Pupil Name:

Year Group:

Date Plan Written:

Overall % Attendance this academic year:      %

#### History and Background Information

|                                                                    |   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Attendance last academic year                                      | % |
| Reasons for absence, support and impact of strategies implemented: |   |
|                                                                    |   |
| Attendance history at previous school settings                     | % |
| Reasons for absence and support strategies implemented:            |   |
|                                                                    |   |

#### Views of Pupil

#### Views of Parents/ Carers

Names of Parents/ Carers providing information:

| <b>Actions to Improve Attendance</b><br><i>What will be done?</i> | <b>Responsibility</b><br><i>Who will do this?</i> | <b>Timeframe</b><br><i>Date it will be achieved by?</i> | <b>Review</b><br><i>What was the impact?</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
|                                                                   |                                                   |                                                         |                                              |
|                                                                   |                                                   |                                                         |                                              |
|                                                                   |                                                   |                                                         |                                              |

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Pupil)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent/ Carer)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Senior Leader)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_