

SENTRE ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Abstract

This policy details the processes and procedures to promote excellent attendance and keeping children safe.

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SENtre Absence Management and Attendance Policy

Setting: SENtre – non-school provision for pupils aged 5–10 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Applies to: All pupils on roll at SENtre **and/or** placed at SENtre as alternative provision (AP) while remaining on a *home school* roll (see Scope)

Policy owner: Head of Provision / Proprietor (as applicable)

Safeguarding lead: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Review cycle: At least annually and after any significant DfE/Ofsted updates

1. Purpose

SENtre is committed to securing **excellent attendance** because it underpins learning, wellbeing, inclusion and safeguarding. This policy sets out how SENtre will:

- promote and support regular attendance through a “**support first**” approach
 - record attendance accurately and lawfully
 - respond quickly and proportionately to absence
 - work in partnership with parents/carers, commissioning schools, local authorities and other agencies
 - meet current Department for Education (DfE) requirements and reflect inspection expectations for strong safeguarding and inclusion.
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2. Legislative and guidance framework (key references)

This policy has regard to (and where applicable complies with):

- **DfE: Working together to improve school attendance (statutory guidance, updated Aug 2024).**
- **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024** (attendance registers and coding).
- **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024** (national framework for penalty notices).
- **DfE: Children missing education (statutory guidance, updated Sept 2025).**
- **DfE: Alternative provision (statutory guidance, updated Feb 2025)** (where SENtre is used as AP).
- **DfE: Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) (Sept 2025)** (safeguarding response to absence).
- **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (for use from Nov 2025)** (leadership, inclusion, safeguarding, attendance culture).

(SENtre will also act consistently with Equality Act duties and the SEND Code of Practice by making reasonable adjustments and removing barriers to attendance.)

3. Scope and operating model

SENtre delivers education to pupils in one of these arrangements:

A) Pupils on SENtre's admission register (where applicable)

Where SENtre is the registered setting holding the pupil's admission/attendance register, SENtre is responsible for:

- maintaining the register and using the required codes
- daily absence follow-up and escalation
- sharing attendance data with the local authority where required.

B) Pupils placed at SENtre as Alternative Provision (AP)

Where the pupil remains on a **home school** roll:

- the **home school remains responsible** for overall attendance strategy, legal processes (including penalty notices where used), and statutory reporting
- SENtre will:
 - take a daily register for sessions delivered
 - report attendance/absence to the home school **same day**
 - contribute to support plans, meetings and evidence for escalation (as appropriate).

SENtre will confirm, for every pupil, which arrangement applies and record it in the pupil file.

4. Principles

SENtre's attendance culture is built on:

1. **Belonging and inclusion** – pupils attend best when they feel safe, understood and successful.
2. **Support first** – understand barriers (SEND, health, anxiety, family circumstances, transport) and put help in place early.
3. **High expectations with reasonable adjustments** – we adapt practice while keeping attendance as the norm.
4. **Safeguarding is central** – absence can be a sign of risk; swift action protects children.
5. **Accurate data and transparent communication** – consistent coding, clear decision-making and timely sharing.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Leadership (Head of Provision/Proprietor)

- sets an attendance culture and ensures this policy is implemented
- ensures staff training on register completion, first-day response, and SEND-informed practice
- monitors attendance trends and reports to governance/owners as appropriate.

Attendance Lead (named role within SENtre)

- oversees daily attendance processes and quality assurance of coding
- coordinates staged support and multi-agency working
- ensures timely reporting to home schools/LA as required.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- reviews absence as a safeguarding indicator
- leads risk assessment and referrals where needed
- ensures practice aligns with KCSIE.

Class teams / Tutors

- build strong relationships and proactively remove barriers
- record attendance promptly and accurately
- pass concerns immediately to Attendance Lead/DSL.

Parents/carers

- ensure the pupil attends as scheduled (unless too unwell to do so)
- notify SENtre as early as possible on the first day of absence and provide updates
- engage with support and agreed plans.

Home school / Local authority (where relevant)

- works with SENtre to coordinate support, planning and any statutory steps
- leads any legal interventions (e.g., penalty notices) where the pupil is on the home school roll.

6. Attendance registers, coding and record keeping

- SENtre will take a register **at the start of each scheduled session** (morning/afternoon or as commissioned).
- Attendance must be recorded using the **DfE-required attendance and absence codes** and kept securely.

- Where SENtre is AP, SENtre will still code attendance for *SENtre sessions* and share the codes with the home school daily (or as agreed in the placement agreement).
- Attendance data will be processed under UK GDPR principles; information sharing for safeguarding will be made in line with KCSIE.

Quality assurance: The Attendance Lead will audit registers at least weekly for accuracy, timeliness and appropriate use of codes.

7. Reporting absence

How parents/carers should report absence

Parents/carers should contact SENtre **as early as possible** on the first day of absence and give:

- reason for absence
- expected duration (if known)
- any support needed for return (e.g., medical plan, anxiety support).

Evidence

SENtre will apply a proportionate approach to evidence. For **frequent or patterned illness** or longer absences, SENtre may request:

- medical appointment confirmation or advice note
- relevant professional letters (where appropriate).

Note: We will always consider SEND, health needs, and family circumstances when deciding what is reasonable.

8. First-day response and unexplained absence

SENtre will follow a **same-day** response:

1. **Register completed promptly.**
2. If absence is unexplained, SENtre will attempt contact with parent/carer by telephone/text **as soon as possible**.
3. If no response:
 - a second attempt is made
 - the home school/commissioner is notified (for AP placements)
 - the DSL is informed where absence is unusual, repeated, or a safeguarding concern.

4. If SENtre cannot verify a child's whereabouts and there is concern of risk, SENtre will follow safeguarding procedures (which may include contacting the local authority, police, or children's social care).
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9. Authorising absence

SENtre will make decisions consistently and in line with DfE expectations and legal requirements.

Common authorised circumstances (examples)

- illness (where genuinely preventing attendance)
- medical/dental appointments (encouraged outside session time where possible)
- agreed therapeutic or statutory appointments linked to SEND provision
- exceptional circumstances for leave (only where SENtre/home school is the admitting authority and criteria are met).

Unauthorised absence (examples)

- no reason provided / reason not accepted
- avoidable term-time holiday not agreed as exceptional
- patterns indicating the pupil could attend but is being kept away without valid reason.

SEND-informed practice: SENtre recognises that behaviour, anxiety, sensory needs, sleep difficulties, and medical conditions can create genuine barriers. The default response is to **identify barriers and provide support**, not to escalate punitively.

10. Lateness and reduced timetables

Lateness

- Persistent lateness is treated as an attendance issue and addressed through support and clear expectations.
- Patterns are discussed with parents/carers and, if AP, with the home school.

Part-time / reduced timetables

SENtre expects pupils to attend their **full commissioned timetable** unless a time-limited, carefully planned adjustment is necessary.

Any reduced timetable must:

- be **exceptional, time-limited, and reviewed frequently**

- be documented with:
 - rationale and intended outcomes
 - support plan to increase attendance
 - review dates and named lead
- include safeguarding oversight (DSL) and involve the home school/LA where relevant.

11. Staged support and escalation

SENTre uses a graduated response aligned to “support first”, with increasing intensity where barriers persist.

Stage 1: Universal (all pupils)

- welcoming routines, consistent relationships, predictable structure
- reasonable adjustments (sensory breaks, communication aids, anxiety supports)
- positive attendance messaging and celebration of progress.

Stage 2: Targeted (emerging concerns)

Triggers may include:

- patterns of absence/lateness
- increasing anxiety about attending
- parent/carer difficulties engaging
- attendance below an agreed threshold for the pupil’s context.

Actions:

- Attendance conversation with parent/carer within 5 school days of concern emerging
- quick barrier assessment (health, SEND, transport, routines, bullying concerns, family stress)
- a simple attendance support plan with review date (2–4 weeks)
- liaison with home school/LA as applicable.

Stage 3: Intensive (persistent/severe absence or high risk)

Triggers may include:

- continued decline despite targeted support
- severe or prolonged absence
- safeguarding concerns linked to absence.

Actions:

- multi-agency meeting (as appropriate)
- formalised attendance plan (including SMART outcomes)
- referrals to relevant services (e.g., early help, health, autism team, CAMHS where appropriate)
- attendance contract/structured agreement where suitable (led by home school/LA if pupil is on their roll).

Penalty notices: SENtre does not issue penalty notices unless it is the admitting authority and has the legal power/arrangements to do so. Where the pupil is on a home school roll, SENtre provides timely evidence to support lawful decision-making under the national framework.

12. Safeguarding, children missing education (CME) and “unable to attend”

- SENtre recognises absence can indicate: neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse, mental health risk, family crisis, or unmet SEND needs.
- The DSL will review:
 - repeated unexplained absence
 - sudden changes in pattern
 - absence following a safeguarding disclosure
 - pupils with a social worker / child protection plan (where applicable).

CME procedures

Where SENtre believes a child may be missing education (or whereabouts are unclear), SENtre will act in line with statutory CME guidance, including prompt notification to the home school/local authority as required.

Pupils unable to attend

If a pupil is medically or otherwise genuinely unable to attend, SENtre will:

- work with parents/carers and commissioners to secure appropriate support
- consider how education can be provided safely and suitably (within SENtre’s remit/commission)
- document decisions and review regularly.

13. Working with families and removing barriers (SEND best practice)

SENtre will actively remove barriers by:

- co-producing plans with parents/carers and (where appropriate) the pupil

- using consistent, supportive communication (plain language, predictable routines)
 - coordinating with therapists and professionals
 - using trauma-informed and neuro-affirming approaches
 - ensuring transport issues are escalated quickly to the commissioning body where SENtre is not responsible.
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14. Monitoring, reporting and governance

SENtre will:

- review attendance data weekly at leadership level
 - identify patterns by cohort, day of week, session, and vulnerability/SEND need
 - report to:
 - parents/carers (at least termly; more often where concerns)
 - home schools/commissioners (frequency as contractually agreed; minimum daily for AP placements where required)
 - governance/owners (termly dashboard).
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15. Training

All staff will receive training on:

- accurate register completion and coding
 - first-day response processes
 - SEND-informed attendance strategies
 - safeguarding/DSL escalation routes (KCSIE).
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16. Policy links (associated SENtre policies)

This policy should be read alongside SENtre's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (KCSIE aligned)
 - Behaviour / Positive Relationships Policy
 - SEND / Inclusion Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Administering Medicines Policy
 - Data Protection and Information Sharing Policy
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Appendix A – Attendance Support Plan (minimum content)

- pupil details and placement model (SENtre roll or AP)
- current attendance picture and patterns
- identified barriers (pupil, family, setting, transport, health)
- adjustments and supports agreed (who/what/when)
- phased return plan (if relevant) with review dates
- safeguarding considerations and DSL oversight
- roles: SENtre / parent-carer / home school / LA
- success measures and date to step down or escalate.

Appendix B – Daily AP reporting expectations

For pupils on a home school roll, SEntre will send the home school (securely) by an agreed time each day:

- session attendance mark(s) and code(s)
- reason for absence (if known)
- any safeguarding concerns / welfare notes
- actions taken (calls, messages, meeting arranged).