



Denefield School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date	25 September 2024
Date of next review	September 2025
Review cycle	Annual
Policy control sheet updated	Yes
Type of policy	Statutory
Policy owner	Headteacher
Location of policy	Website

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Aim

Good attendance is a vital part of learning. At Denefield School we believe that attendance and attainment are strongly linked and that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders, including parents, carers, students, support staff, teachers, tutors, senior leaders and trustees. All of our students are expected to attend school regularly and on time so they can become resilient and confident learners who are able to achieve their potential, attain satisfaction and fulfilment, and make a positive contribution to society.

Safeguarding

Attendance at school is an important protective factor for all children and young people, and in particular for the safeguarding of those who are more vulnerable. Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, action will be taken in line with Denefield's safeguarding policy.

Purpose

This policy sets out the expectations and procedures with regard to attendance and punctuality at Denefield.

Expectations

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child receives a full time education and we are delighted to provide this to students and their families who choose our school. Parents, carers and students therefore agree to work together with the school in order to ensure the best outcomes for the academic and personal development of each young person. We expect all of our students to attend school regularly and on time. We set all students a minimum attendance target of 96%. Students whose attendance falls below 90% would be regarded as *persistent absentees*. An attendance of 50% or below is considered *severe absence*. The school will work closely with families and the local authority to improve attendance where it falls below expectations.

Denefield School maintains the same ambitions for students with SEND and strives to work collaboratively with students and parents / carers to maximise their attendance.

Leave of absence during term time (e.g. family holiday)

Leave of absence will only be granted by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances. This must be requested, in advance, through completion of a leave of absence request form obtainable from Mrs G Fox via absence@denefield.org.uk. **Holidays are unlikely to be authorised.**

National Penalty Notices

Penalty notices (fines) may be issued to all adults with parent responsibility, separately, should their child miss 10 half-day sessions (i.e. 5 school days) within a rolling ten-week school period, where the absences are unauthorised. Decisions to issue penalty notices are made on a case-by-case basis. The level of fine is set nationally and administered by the local authority. The school does not benefit financially from any aspect of the penalty notice process.

Penalty notices are £160 if paid within 28 days, and £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period is £160 with no option for a reduced early payment.

Students returning to school after a period of absence

Denefield staff will work together with parents / carers and their child who has, for any reason, been absent from school for an extended period of time, or who may be worried about returning to school. This may include a key member of staff or other supportive measures.

Key contacts September 2024

Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs Anna Williams	aws@denefield.org.uk
Attendance Manager	Mrs Gemma Fox	gfx@denefield.org.uk
To report an absence	absence@denefield.org.uk or ClassCharts (via the app)	
To discuss wider attendance or punctuality concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's form tutor The attendance manager: Mrs Gemma Fox gfx@denefield.org.uk A welfare manager: Mrs Kelly Cook kck@denefield.org.uk Mrs Tam Hill thl@denefield.org.uk Mrs Nicky Wilcox wlx@denefield.org.uk The student's head of house: kentwoodheadofhouse@denefield.org.uk langleyheadofhouse@denefield.org.uk norcotheadofhouse@denefield.org.uk sulhamheadofhouse@denefield.org.uk 	
Education Attendance Officer (West Berkshire local authority)	Alex Pilkington	0118 9167770

Timings of the school day (timings of any extraordinary days are published to parents and carers in advance)

Morning session	Begins at 8:30am, students must arrive by 8:28am	Registers close at 9:00am
Afternoon session	Begins at 1:35pm	Registers close at 2pm
End of the school day	Ends at 3:00pm	

Roles and responsibilities

The trustees will:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies;
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;

- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, challenge trends, and help school leaders focus on cohorts and individual students who need it most.

The headteacher will:

- implement the school's attendance and punctuality policy within the school;
- ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to attendance and punctuality;
- consider any request for leave of absence during term time due to exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is the only person in school who can authorise a student's absence;
- Have an overview of the school's attendance including that of different cohorts.

The senior attendance champion will:

- monitor and track whole school attendance and punctuality on a weekly basis;
- monitor and oversee intervention for cohorts such as disadvantaged and vulnerable students;
- compare school attendance with available local and national data;
- meet with the attendance manager and welfare managers on a fortnightly basis, and the local authority's Educational Welfare Officer three times a year to discuss attendance concerns and strategies for improvement;
- liaise with the attendance manager on a fortnightly basis regarding punctuality concerns;
- ensure that targeted support and intervention is put in place for students whose attendance falls below 92%;
- write to parents/carers of students whose attendance falls below 92% to inform them of concerns and available support;
- follow up with any staff not taking a timely or accurate register.

The attendance manager will work with the welfare managers (the welfare team) to:

- monitor student attendance and punctuality on a daily, weekly and termly basis
- contact home on the first day of absence for any student whose attendance is below 90%;
- contact home on the first day of absence for any student who is in receipt of the Pupil Premium, is looked after by the local authority or who has a social worker or youth offending team worker
- identify students whose attendance is below 92% for support;
- discuss any attendance concerns or issues with welfare managers at their fortnightly meetings;
- attend termly meetings with the local authority Education Attendance Officer
- oversee the first day response process at 9.00am every morning to ensure that the parents of students with unexplained absence are notified. This will be in the form of text, e-mail or voicemail;
- produce weekly dashboard data for SLT and house teams;
- promote good attendance with parents, carers and students;
- organise events focused on promoting and raising attendance;
- celebrate and incentivise students good attendance, including contacting home and rewards;
- work with house teams to celebrate improved attendance and punctuality;
- work with the local authority, families and internal school interventions to support students who are EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance).

The House team will:

- ensure that the lates protocol is followed by all tutors in their house;
- support sanctions for students who are late to school or to lessons;
- work with the welfare team to identify reasons for absence and ensure that targeted support and intervention is put in place for students whose attendance falls below 92%;
- ensure that students who are consistently late are supported and sanctioned as necessary;
- promote, celebrate and reward excellent and/or significantly improved attendance and punctuality in assemblies and tutor groups.
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Tutors will:

- take an accurate and timely register during morning and afternoon registration, marking students as present, absent or late;
- mark any students arriving after the late bell as late;
- send an late student to the attendance office if a late mark has not already been populated;
- monitor the attendance and punctuality of students in their tutor group;
- discuss concerns about absence or lateness with students and parents / carers, liaising with the welfare team;
- have conversations with parents / carers regarding attendance as requested by the attendance manager, logging conversations on Provision Map;
- raise any concerns regarding attendance or punctuality with their house team.

Subject teachers will:

- take an accurate register within the first five minutes of every lesson, marking students as present, absent or late;
- inform oncall@denefield.org.uk of any student with unexplained absence from their lesson;

The trust board will:

- monitor and review the attendance and punctuality policy through reports to the Standards Committee;
- monitor data on attendance by protected characteristics through termly reports to the Standards Committee;
- set annual attendance targets and monitor the school's progress towards these through termly and annual reports to the Standards Committee.

Parents / carers will:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and on time, meaning they must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend;
- Notify the school on each day of their absence by sending a message via ClassCharts or by emailing absence@denefield.org.uk by 8:30am;
- provide a reason for their child's absence on the day they return to school following absence if not already provided;
- while the school will not routinely request parents / carers for medical evidence for absence, if there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, it may be requested;
- ensure that any dental or medical appointments are, wherever possible, made for out-of-school hours (optician appointments are not considered medical);

- complete and submit a leave-of-absence request form if they need to request time off school for their child during term time due to exceptional circumstances. This can be obtained by emailing absence@denefield.org.uk.

Students will:

- attend school every day and on time;
- attend every lesson on time;
- comply with any late sanctions put in place;
- sign in at the attendance office if they arrive after the late bell and they have not been registered at the school gate;
- sign out at the attendance office if they have permission to leave school for an appointment before the end of the school day. They will sign back in on their return.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually and will be updated in response to new guidance and/or legislation as necessary.

Termly attendance reports are provided to the Standards Committee to enable the Governing Board to monitor data on student attendance by protected characteristics.

The Headteacher reports termly to the Trust Board to enable them to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's policies, practices and procedures.

Who/what was consulted

The Senior Leadership Team
Educational Welfare Officer

Department for Education: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118222/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Linked policies

Behaviour and Discipline Policy
Exclusions Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Teaching and Learning Policy

Appendix 1: attendance recording and procedures

Denefield uses SIMS to record attendance. Parents may access an overview of their child's attendance record via ClassCharts. A detailed attendance certificate can be provided on request to the attendance officer.

Morning registers are taken by form tutors. The attendance manager receives any messages from parents via ClassCharts or absence@denefield.org.uk and codes and annotates registers as appropriate. In the attendance manager's absence, office staff and welfare managers assist. Where a student is marked absent with no reason given, parents / carers are contacted via text message to alert them, after reasonable checks have been made to establish whether the student is on site. First day phone calls will be made by the attendance manager or welfare managers where contact with parents or carers has not been established. Generally, contact will be made on every day of absence to the parents / carers of students who may be disadvantaged or particularly vulnerable.

Codes used in registers are as follows*:

Code	Meaning	Type
/ \	Present at the school / morning \ afternoon	Present Mark
B	Attending any other approved educational activity - Alternative Provision not arranged through the approved framework	Present Mark
C	Authorised Circumstance (see next page for breakdown)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registered at another school - Attending Sheffield Inclusion Centre - Attending Alternative Provision at another school site - Chapel House / Becton Outreach / CAMHS Lodges - Hospital education - Education at a secure / residential site - Off-site direction / managed move	Present Mark
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school or Term Time Leave not granted by the school	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Authorised Absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised Absence
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority - Home Tutoring - Approved Framework for Alternative Provision - Blended Learning	Present Mark
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed	Present Mark
M	Attended a medical appointment	Authorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised Mark
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised Absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Present Mark
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Not expected to attend
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school.	Authorised Absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.	Authorised Absence

U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised Absence
V	Attending an Educational Trip or Visit	Present Mark
W	Attending Work Experience	Present Mark
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause (see next page for breakdown)	Not expected to attend
Z	Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register	Not expected to attend

Code	Meaning	Type
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend
The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.	Authorised Absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised Absence

* Denefield School will make an informed decision on how to code individual absences in consultation with parents / carers where possible. The school will not normally require medical evidence for absence but reserves the right to do so.

Appendix 2a: Late arrival to school

Minutes late every day during the school year...	...is the equivalent of missing
5 minutes	3.4 days a year
10 minutes	6.9 days a year
15 minutes	10.3 days a year
20 minutes	13.8 days a year
30 minutes	20.7 days a year

Students are late if they are not at their tutor base by 8:30am and will be marked on the register as an L. Registers close at 9am, meaning that any student arriving after this time is marked on the registers using code U which counts as an unauthorised absence for the entire morning session. The following protocol is applied for any student with an L or a U mark:

“8:28 at the gate”

A bell will ring at 8.28am in the morning. At this point every student is expected to be on the school grounds and making their way to their tutor base. A second bell will ring at 8:30am, when every student is expected to be in their tutor base. A member of staff will normally be at the school gate from 8:30 and will register students as late. If a student arrives when the member of staff has gone, they must sign in at the attendance office.

Sanctions for being late to school in the morning are notified to parents / carers via ClassCharts and completed on the same day. Students will receive a 30 minute detention for being late to school.

If there are exceptional circumstances, parents or carers should contact absence@denefield.org.uk to give the reason why their child will be or was late to school.

Appendix 2b: Late arrival to lessons

Students are expected to travel directly and without delay to every lesson. All teaching staff take a register on ClassCharts promptly at the start of each lesson. A student is considered late if they arrive more than five minutes after the bell: if this is the case they will be removed to the inclusion room for the remainder of the lesson. Should a student be more than five minutes late to more than one lesson in a day, they will work in the inclusion room for the remainder of the day. Detentions are set as part of this sanction.

Strategies and procedures may vary in detail over the course of the year in response to emerging need.

Appendix 3: Steps and measures for addressing absence

Denefield's practices for addressing high rates of absence for individual students are in line with government guidance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Denefield's priority is to work with parents and carers together with external agency support before considering legal measures. Steps that the school and local authority take to support and encourage students and parents / carers to make school attendance a priority are as follows:

- Support students and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners (such as the Education Attendance and safeguarding services) should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This will include meeting with students and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may also include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support.
- If the needs and barriers are individual to the student this may, in exceptional circumstances and with agreement with parents, carers, the student and the school, include provision of intervention such as mentoring, careers advice, off-site intervention, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment by the local authority.
- If engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parents and student. This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include a referral to the local authority Education Attendance Service. These meetings should clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the student and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but is also an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

If support has not been effective or engaged in by the family:

- Formal support in place in the form of an attendance contract may be put in place by the school with the local authority.
- If support is not appropriate such as taking term time holidays, the local authority, together with the school, may issue a fixed penalty notice.
- The school will intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially if absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- The local authority may prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for an education supervision order or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

The following table illustrates the tools* the school utilises to raise attendance:

All students	<p>Promoting attendance as part of the wider school culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has consistent expectations for good behaviour and a calm culture throughout the school • The school works together with parents / carers and students to foster positive relationships and listen to concerns. • The school will promote the benefits of good attendance to students and families. • Tutors are invested in supporting their students' school experience.
<p>Actions the school is likely to take should attendance become a concern*</p>	
Attendance is beginning to be a concern (e.g. falls below 96%)	<p>Early intervention (tutors, welfare managers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is broadly students with an attendance of 92% - 95.9% • Contact is made with parents / carers home to establish good relationships and communication and to discuss what barriers may be preventing excellent attendance • A meeting is held to establish how school and home will work together and agree targets for improvement • Support is put in place as needed. For example, SEND support, access support, medical support, emotional support • A letter is sent home to make parents / carers aware of any emerging concerns
Attendance is not improving or is falling	<p>Focused intervention (welfare managers, attendance manager)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular liaison with parents / carers if absent from school • Concerns are shared and discussed with the senior leader responsible for attendance and the head of house • Parents / carers are invited to school for a formal meeting with targets put in place and a time scale for improvement, documented on an attendance action plan • Home visits where appropriate • Review and update any support plans • After a monitoring period, and if there continues to be no improvement, a letter is sent to explain the next steps.

Attendance continues not to improve due to there being insufficient engagement in support offered by the school	<p>Formal intervention (attendance manager, senior attendance lead)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This category notes that there is a significant risk of under achievement. • Students in this category and below are classed by the Department for Education as <i>persistently absent</i> • A meeting is held with parents / carers, the student, key staff and a senior member of staff with clear targets, time scales and outcomes formalised. The meeting is recorded in writing with all parties receiving a copy of agreed targets and time frames. • Attendance contract.
Attendance continues not to improve due to there being insufficient engagement in support offered by the school	<p>Referral to the local authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This category notes that there is a severe risk of under achievement and / or a safeguarding concern. • Support may be sought by the school or parents / carers from the Education Welfare Officer or Children’s Services • Should parents / carers not engage in support, the Education Welfare Service’s hierarchy of legal action is: formal attendance contracts, education supervision orders, fast-track intervention, attendance prosecution and parenting orders. • Disengagement with school or local authority support services may result in a referral to children’s services.

*The table of information above is a general illustration, however, it is acknowledged that individual students’ circumstances may require a bespoke approach where there are specific barriers to attendance, such as an acute medical condition. The school is obligated to work in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There will be circumstances where the process will not be appropriate for individual circumstances, for example, it may not be the tutor who has initial contact and conversations, or an attendance concern may become suddenly apparent and be raised with the attendance manager immediately.

Appendix 4: Leave of absence request

Request for Leave of Absence from school during term time

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all children can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – children need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Education is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and the Department for Education has recommended that leave of absences should not be taken in term time.

This school follows Government guidance when deciding whether to authorise leave of absences during term time. The government statutory guidance (August 2024) states that:

“[Leave of absence] must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.”

Leave of absence in term time is not a right and will not automatically be granted. Approval will not be given for leave of absence during examination weeks. Parents should check for information on such dates.

For any absence taken where a request has been refused by the Headteacher, the absence will be recorded as “Unauthorised Absence”.

Denefield implements penalty notices in relation to unauthorised absences during term time. West Berkshire’s Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence from school allows for the issue of a fine where a student is absent for five school days or more. Repeated fixed penalty notices may result in escalation, for example, increased fines or prosecution. This course of action is available to schools, though is only used in the most extreme cases.

Denefield does not benefit financially from Penalty Notices and any fines are paid directly to the local authority who use the income solely on administering the process. Parents and carers have no right of appeal against a fixed penalty notice.

If parents or carers wish to request term time leave for exceptional circumstances they should contact the Attendance Manager, Mrs G Fox, at absence@denefield.org.uk to request an application form at least four weeks in advance of the proposed absence.

Appendix 5: Sixth Form attendance and punctuality

The school's expectations with regard to attendance and punctuality apply to all Sixth Form students. Sixth Form students are expected to attend school for all lessons, briefings and tutor time.

Attendance

- The Head of Sixth Form and the Sixth Form Welfare Manager, with tutors, have a responsibility for monitoring student attendance on a daily, weekly and termly basis;
- Students who have attendance below the school's target of 96% are closely monitored by tutors, the Welfare Manager and the Head of Sixth Form.

Stages of intervention:

If the student's attendance is between 96%-100%:

- Internal monitoring
- ClassCharts sent home on day of student absent if not reported by parents/carers or authorised by the Headteacher.

If the student's attendance has fallen below 96%:

Tutor intervention

- The tutor will arrange a meeting with parents/carers and student;
- Student will be placed on attendance report to tutor with specific targets set.

If the student's attendance has fallen below 92% and tutor intervention has been unsuccessful:

Student manager intervention

- The student manager will arrange a meeting with parents/carers and student;
- The student manager will place student on a four-week contract with specific targets which will be monitored daily and reviewed weekly.

If the student's attendance continues to fall below 90% after the four-week targeted support:

Head of Sixth Form intervention

- The Head of Sixth Form will arrange a meeting with parents/carers and student; the student will be placed on two-week final contract which will be monitored daily and reviewed with parents/carers at the end of the two-week period; The Head of Sixth Form may escalate to the Headteacher if there is no significant improvement in attendance;
- The student may have post-16 bursary payments withdrawn (if applicable);
- The student's place in the sixth form may be withdrawn.

Absence

The school must be notified by parents / carers in advance of foreseen absence. The following absences will be authorised:

- University open days;
- Interviews (university, college, apprenticeship or post-18 job) ;
- Driving tests;
- Scholarship programmes;

- Relevant and appropriate work experience;
- Community service.

Absence will not be authorised for any of the following:

- Driving lessons;
- Shopping trips;
- Studying at home (outside of allocated study leave times);
- Family holidays;
- Any other non-educational activity which is deemed inappropriate.

Punctuality

Teachers will mark students who are late to their sessions as late (code L). If a student receives three late marks in a half term they will be given an hour's detention, held after school on a Tuesday or Thursday with the Head of Sixth Form.