



Underley Garden

School Attendance Policy

Reviewed:	May 2025
To be reviewed:	September 2025

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children and young people (CYP) need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. At Underley Garden we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for CYP. We will encourage good attendance for all children and young people, by offering an environment in which they feel valued and part of the school community.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. The most recent guidance is Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Published August 2024.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child/young person has good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children and young people are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school. The School Attendance Policy should be published on the school website.

We will:

- Make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school; including CYP, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve CYP's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all CYP, apart from those with chronic health and disability challenges making consistent attendance a challenge.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and CYP of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of their education.
- Work in partnership with CYP, parents, staff and the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Team so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which CYP feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in CYP a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

Registration

Registration begins at 9am and ends at 9.15am. Registers are completed via iSAMS. Attendance registers are **legal documents**, and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Parent/Carers must contact the school office in the event of absence, providing an explanation with the reason for their child's absence, as soon as possible and **no later than 9.30am** on the day.

If a child is absent from school and we have not received information as to why, it is our duty to follow our Safeguarding policy and make appropriate referrals.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Children and young people who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Those who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A CYP whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at school, have missed two whole terms of learning, therefore having potential impact on their learning.

Headteacher

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss barriers to attendance
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to Local Authority School Attendance Support Team
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Local Authorities School Attendance Support Team
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Parents and carers

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment (which should be made out of school hours where possible).
- Contacting the school office in the event of absence, providing an explanation with the reason for their child's absence, as soon as possible and **no later than 9.30am** on the day.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary, using the Leave Request Form and submitted to school prior to the proposed date.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Form Tutors

Registers **MUST** be completed each day for all children in school. Any absences should be recorded with an explanation. If an unexplained absence occurs this should be reported to the Administrator to follow up.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by CYP and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at parent/carers consultation evenings where necessary.

Administration staff

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Contacting parents of absent CYP where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of CYP who arrive late or go home
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Local Authority:

Individual pupils' barriers to attendance often go far beyond the school gates. Persistent absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life, and barriers to attendance are often specific to local contexts.

The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.

Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term.

All local authorities are expected to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
 - Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
 - Targeting Support Meetings: hold regular conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
 - Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
 - Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

Authorised Absence

Definition:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Examples of authorised absences

- Exceptional circumstances requiring leave in term time (you should ask permission first, by law, the school can only authorise in exceptional circumstances)
- Short term emergency
- Certain days for religious observation
- Bereavement
- Dentist or doctors' appointment (try to make appointments outside school time)
- Hospital treatment
- Medical Needs

If possible, notify the school of any issues that may affect your child's attendance before the absence occurs.

Unauthorised Absence

Definition:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a CYP is away from school without the permission of the school, therefore the absence is unauthorised if a CYP is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Unacceptable reasons for absence include;

- Shopping
- Holidays in term time
- Hair cut
- Truancy
- Birthday treats
- Days out / trips
- Non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Oversleeping
- Working

Please note that the decision to authorise absences rests with schools and not parents.

Leave of Absence

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in **regulation 11 of the School Attendance Regulations 2024** (as per below):

- **Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad:** in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see Code C1)
- **Attending an interview:** for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- **Study leave:** for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
- **A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable:** where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable)
- **Exceptional circumstances:** All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it 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.

Leave of absence forms can be found on the school website. A paper copy can be requested from the school office if required. Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the CYP normally resides, and
- the Headteacher believes that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

Holiday absence

Underley Garden will not authorise any holidays being taken in term time. If parent/carers take their child out of school, during term time, for a holiday the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Medical Absence

It is recognised at Underley Garden that our CYP may have medical needs and this is taken into consideration when recording absences.

Illness

When CYP have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork and provide where possible and appropriate access to online learning.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact support services to see if arrangements can be made for the CYP to be given some home tuition outside school.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Attendance at Alternative Provision Commissioned and Monitored by Underley Garden

Whilst Underley Garden offers a broad and balanced curriculum and range of subjects, very occasionally alternative provision is appropriate for aspects of a young person's education. In these circumstances, UG ensures that the AP provider has robust safeguarding measures in place, offers a high-quality programme of learning by monitoring on a termly basis the programme on offer and by continuing to monitor the overall attendance in all settings including the alternative provision of the pupil through close communication between UG and the alternative provider. All alternative providers used by Underley Garden are regulated by OFSTED.

Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning

Underley Garden use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual CYP and whole school level. We will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In school we rely upon parents/carers to ensure their CYP attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim of improving attendance. Where a CYP's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Team.

The School Attendance Support Team may issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to the Attendance Team from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Local Authorities School Attendance Support Team contact Underley Garden regularly to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify CYP with low attendance (usually below 85%). They then work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Systems for dealing with absence

Persistent Absence (pupils missing more than 10% of their education)

It is when attendance falls below this level that school will consider whether it is appropriate to offer support in order to improve the situation. Schools, local authorities and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of CYP who fall into the persistent absence category (PA). A CYP becomes a persistent absentee when their attendance falls **below 90%** at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level CYP miss significant amounts of schooling; meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. We need parents' full support in ensuring that attendance does not reach this level.

Severe Absence (pupils missing more than 50% of their education)

Particular focus should be given by all partners to CYP who are absent from school more than they are present (those **missing 50% or more**). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support

Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and action planning

If for any reason a CYP's attendance does fall into these categories, parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation with support from school and the local authority where necessary. Furthermore, absence data for individual CYP who are classed as persistent and severe absentees are reported to local authorities; along with whole school absence figures.

Taken from 'Working together to improve school attendance – 2024' ***"If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education."***

Appropriate alternative curricular arrangements and exceptional circumstances

Appropriate support will be given in order to ensure the best possible attendance at school so each CYP can learn to their potential.

Review of Whole School Attendance Policy

Underley Garden will review this policy and the associated procedural framework annually.