Attendance Policy

Policy Owner:	**Director of Inclusion**
Approved by:	**Curriculum & Standards Committee**
Last reviewed:	**October 2026**
Next review due by:	**October 2027**

Due to the evolving nature of The CAM Academy Trust, procedures behind this policy will be reviewed and amended accordingly to reflect changes.

At the heart of our work lie the six core principles of The CAM Academy Trust. These drive everything that we do.



Aims

The CAM Academy Trust and all its schools, including sixth forms, believe that consistent school attendance is vitally important in delivering positive outcomes for our pupils and preparing pupils for life after school.

The Trust and all its schools aim to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence, for all pupils
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and ensuring those pupils who cannot access in-school education are supported in accessing education in alternative ways
- Acting early and purposefully to address patterns of absence and lateness
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Although post-16 education is non-compulsory, we expect students that attend our sixth forms to attend regularly and meet the high expectations of attendance that we expect of all other pupils. The actions outlined in this policy apply to all sixth form students unless specifically stated otherwise.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on 'Working together to improve school attendance' and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures'. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

School procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an electronic attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Absent- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Each of our schools will have set times at which pupils are expected to attend the first session of the school day. This will either be a form time period or lesson 1 depending on the organisational structure of the school day. The register will be closed 30 minutes after this time and pupils arriving after this will be marked with a U Code for the session in question. At the beginning of each academic year, each of our schools will remind parents/carers of the timings of the first and second registration sessions. The afternoon session register will remain open for 30 minutes for registers to be taken.

Due to the nature of post 16 studies, some sixth form students may not be required on the school site at all times. Where our sixth forms operate this system, they will have local procedures that clearly outline attendance expectations and how pupils will register when they are on site. These procedures will be reviewed annually and will be shared with all sixth form students, and their families, during the admissions process, during induction and each year that the student attends the sixth form. If a sixth form does require students to be on site all day, every day, this will be clearly explained during the admissions process and during induction.

Unplanned absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – prior to the closing of the first session's registers or as soon as practically possible. Parent/carers should provide as much information as possible about the nature of the illness. Students that attend a Trust sixth form can contact the attendance team at their setting themselves to report an absence.

The follow up procedures outlined in this policy still apply in sixth form settings.

Each of our schools will have information on their websites about how to contact the school regarding pupil attendance concerns and pupil absence.

Absence due to physical or mental illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. Our schools will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

If a pupil is absent due to illness for more than three days, the school may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence such as those listed above.

Planned Absence

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice and evidence of the appointment is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and the amount of time deemed necessary is at the discretion of the school the pupil attends.

If a pupil repeatedly misses registration due to medical or dental appointments, our schools may request a meeting with parents to discuss this and request that they make alternative arrangements.

Each of our schools will have information on their websites about how to contact the school regarding pupil attendance.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but within 30 minutes of the registration period beginning, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L). A pupil who arrives late, but after the register has closed, will be marked as absent using the appropriate code (U).

The Trust and our schools believe that punctuality is important for maximising pupil's time in the classroom and teaching pupil's good practices for their life after school. Each of our

schools will have their own processes for identifying pupils who are late to school and procedures for responding to ongoing punctuality issues.

Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Our schools will attempt to contact parents/carers on the first day of absence to discuss the reason for pupil's absence and offer support for a swift return. If a school is unable to make contact, staff or associated figures such as Safer Schools Officers, may visit addresses held in the school's records to check on a pupil's wellbeing. Reasons for absence should be provided on each day of a pupil's absence.

Reporting to parents/carers

The Trust and our schools understand the importance of regular communication with parents/carers regarding pupil attendance. Parents/carers can request information regarding their child's attendance at any time by contacting the school. Our schools will share attendance information with parents/carers on a termly basis.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Granting approval for term-time absence

Principal's may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. This may include bereavement, attending a family funeral, or visiting a relative who is terminally ill.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for, and must be requested prior to being undertaken.

The Trust and our schools will not grant leave of absence for holidays during term time. Valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Pupils in Year 11 or Sixth Form may be granted permission to attend interviews for further or higher education provision or employment at the discretion of the principal. Pupils may also be granted study leave, but this is not granted by default.

If you have a request for pupil absence which is not covered by the reasons above, please contact your child's school to discuss this with the relevant member of staff.

Legal sanctions

Fixed Penalty Notices

All Trust schools will adhere to the national framework for penalty notices and the 'Local code of conduct for issuing fixed penalty notices' that the local authority have written and have published on their website.

Schools or the local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If the school issues a penalty notice, they will check with the local authority before doing so, and send the local authority a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National

Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Additional legal sanctions

The Trust and our schools will work with local authorities and employ the procedures and systems provided by the local authorities to support and improve pupil attendance. These systems may include further legal interventions. Details of this process are available from our schools and will be shared with parents upon request or when relevant to their child's attendance.

Legal sanctions for sixth form students

There are no legal sanctions for sixth form students but schools with sixth forms and sixth form colleges will have local procedures and processes in place to address levels of attendance that fall below expectations. Copies of these procedures and practices are available from Sixth Forms on request.

Strategies for promoting attendance

The Trust and our schools want to work with parents/carers, pupils, and our communities to support and improve pupil attendance. Each of our schools has a Senior Attendance Champion; a senior leader who is responsible for pupil attendance. They are responsible for working with the stakeholders mentioned above in improving pupil attendance and reducing overall absence.

Our schools are proactive in monitoring, supporting, and improving pupil attendance and positive in our approach to working with pupils and parents/carers. Our schools will work openly and positively with external agencies and third parties to improve pupil attendance as and when possible.

Staff at our schools expect to speak to a parent or carer on every day of a child's absence unless the absence is for a pre-authorised period of time.

Our schools will have their own processes for supporting consistent attendance at school. All our schools will request meetings or telephone calls with parents/carers whose child:

- Has had sessions of unauthorised absence
- Has been late to school or lessons on multiple occasions
- Has been ill for a significant period of time or for multiple days within a term
- Has had multiple medical appointments in a term leading to school absence

Our schools will regularly send out letters to parents regarding pupil attendance.

School Attendance Support Panel (ASP)

The Trust and our schools may request a pupil, their parents/carers and other relevant stakeholders attend a School Attendance Support Panel if:

- A pupil's attendance is below 90%, which meets the government's definition of 'persistent absence'
- A pupil has 10% unauthorised absence over a six-week period

The aim of ASPs is to work collaboratively with pupils and parents/carers to support good attendance. Key to supporting pupils is identifying the barriers to attendance and helping them to overcome these.

Our schools may initiate a School Attendance Support Panel without the above criteria being met for reasons including, but not limited to, proactively supporting good attendance or because the school believes this is a more appropriate approach than legal action.

Recognising good attendance

Consistent attendance at school is an expectation of every pupil. We recognise that some levels of pupil attendance are exceptional, and our schools will have their own processes for recognising this without negatively impacting other pupils. These may include, but are not limited to;

- Attendance assemblies
- Attendance rewards
- Attendance celebration events
- Attendance recognition displays
- Other rewards linked to the rewards system at the school

Our schools will be mindful of the fact that in exceptional cases some pupils miss schools for reasons beyond their control, for example pupils with longer term medical issues who need to attend regular appointments. These pupils will not be penalised for such absences when determining attendance rewards.

Attendance monitoring

Our schools will monitor attendance and absence data on a daily, weekly, half termly and termly basis across the school year and at a pupil, year group and cohort level. The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the key stakeholders.

Parents/carers are expected to call or message the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. Parents/carers are expected to do this on each day of a child's absence and should provide as much information as possible. If a reason is not provided by the parents/carers, a member of staff will attempt to make contact with the pupil's named contacts.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

The severe absence threshold is 50%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 50%, the pupil will be classified as a severe absentee.

On a weekly basis, our schools conduct reviews of attendance data which are used as the basis for arranging meetings with parents/carers, telephone calls with parents/carers or sending letters to parents/carers. Attendance is monitored at a pupil-by-pupil level but our schools will also monitor the attendance of groups including, but not limited to, year groups, pupils receiving free school meals or pupils with special education needs.

Data will be analysed systematically at school and Trust level to identify barriers to attendance, to inform practice and inform the strategic goals of our schools. Patterns of absence will be looked at over time, both during the academic year and over the course of a pupil's schooling. Where patterns are evident, strategies will be put in place to support better attendance in the future. Data will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of any strategies that are employed so that the most effective ones can be identified for future use. Learning from across the trust will be shared with all schools to ensure the best attendance for every pupil.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. Our schools compare their attendance data to the national average, and share this with trustees, the executive leadership team and other stakeholders.

The Trust and its schools will comply with data sharing regulations as required which may include, but not be limited to, providing data about individual pupils to the Secretary of State when requested and enabling local authorities to access attendance registers for all Trust schools as and when required.

Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board

The Trust Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole Trust and each school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Director of Inclusion and Primary and Secondary Executive leads to account for the implementation of this policy.

Executive Leadership Team

The Executive Leads (at primary and secondary) have the strategic responsibility for attendance across the Trust. They are responsible for ensuring that all schools meet their statutory duties with regard to attendance and are working proactively to promote high standards of attendance in their schools.

The Principal

The principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently in their school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Trust Board and executive leadership team of the Trust. The principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary. The principal is responsible for deciding whether or not to authorise pupil absence. The principal is responsible for ensuring high levels of attendance in their school.

Other staff involved in attendance

Each of our schools have staff with a designated responsibility for attendance. There will always be a senior leader in the school who has a responsibility for pupil attendance, and this should be identified on the relevant school's website.

Other teaching and support staff across our schools may have some responsibility for attendance and leaders in our schools will ensure that pupils, parents/carers and other stakeholders know who these people are and how they can get help and support when needed.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Director of Inclusion for the Trust annually. At every review this policy will be approved by the Curriculum & Standards Committee, on behalf of the Trust Board.

Links with other policies

This attendance policy is linked to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy