Orchard Manor School

Attendance strategy

To be read in conjunction with the Special Partnership Trust Attendance Policy

2022-2023

Approved by:	Date:
Last reviewed on:	
Next review due by:	

Contents

1. Aims

Our School

At Orchard Manor School we are committed to and passionate about the learning and progress of our pupils. Staff and governors have high aspirations for our children and young people through a broad and varied curriculum; highly structured; differentiated and personalised learning programmes. We provide a specialist; high quality and relevant education for young people aged 3-19 who have communication and interaction difficulties, Autistic spectrum conditions and associated learning needs. This focuses on individual, personal, and academic achievement-setting high expectations for all.

As a school we are also committed to celebrating all achievements and providing a wide range of rich, meaningful, and varied opportunities- preparing our pupils well life beyond school. We aim to foster a love of learning, regardless of need, developing independence through inclusive and accessible learning.

Orchard Manor School is a special school for children aged 3 – 19 years. There are currently 197 pupils/students on role (September 2023). All children and young people (CYP) who attend Orchard Manor School will have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Most pupils who attend have a diagnosis of ASC and needs relating to communication and interaction. In addition to a learning need, pupils may also have other associated needs in:

Communication and interaction – Processing, expressive and receptive language difficulties, speech difficulties, complex communication difficulties.

Sensory – Sensory Process difficulties, Hyper and hypo sensitivities, muiti-sensory needs.
Physical – Mobility needs, physical disabilities, epilepsy.
Social, Emotional and Mental Health – Mental Health needs, Trauma attachment high level anxiety.

Our Trust

Orchard Manor School is part of the Special Partnership Trust, an ambitious and inspiring collaboration of specialist provision in Cornwall, with a focus on excellence in learning for everyone. We are committed to ensure that every pupil, irrespective of need or location gets the best learning opportunities possible. We believe in providing challenge and support in equal measure to our pupils, nurturing the talents and skills of all learners.

Commitment to attendance

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families so pupils have the support in place to attend school.

At Orchard Manor School we recognise that evidence shows that securing excellent attendance at school is key to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people. We have the highest expectations for all our pupils. Poor attendance leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind, creating gaps in their learning, and diminishing their self-confidence.

The Leaders of the school:

- have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school.
- communicate these expectations clearly, strongly, and consistently to parents and to pupils.
- set expectations about attendance from the outset – from Nursery onwards.
- explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve.
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that they can act accordingly.
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed.
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents.
- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately.
- systematically analyse attendance information so that they can see patterns and trends.
- use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school.

- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour, and inclusivity.

- do not stop pushing for whole-school improvement once attendance reaches the national average.

- see the process of securing good attendance for all pupils as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished.'

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

- DFE attendance guidance May 2022 - Working together to improve school attendance, DFE Working together to improve school attendance

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The local governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.

- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Link Governor for Safeguarding / Attendance: Gavin Garman

3.2 The Headteacher: Nicola Jones

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Making referrals to the Education Welfare Officer as required.

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance: Esther Craddock – ecraddock@orchard-manor.org

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Esther Craddock and can be contacted via 01626 862363.

3.4 The attendance champion: Peter Smith - psmith@orchard-manor.org

The school attendance champion is responsible for:

- **Analysing attendance data (see section 7)**
- **Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.**
- **Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head teacher**
- **Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.**
- **Advising the headteacher/ school admin manager (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed penalty notices.**

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes and submitting registration marks via Arbor every day in line with the registration timings, see appendix 1. They are also responsible for raising any concerns regarding attendance concerns / issues to SLT (Senior Leadership Team) immediately.

3.6 All staff

To promote excellent attendance by pupils and provide opportunities to celebrate good attendance. To raise concerns with the SLT where necessary

3.7 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.

- Transfer calls from parents to the designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance, a member of SLT to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

3.8 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) and advise when they are expected to return.

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

- Refrain from taking term time holidays- except in 'exceptional circumstances.

3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register 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

- 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 2 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.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9:10am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:15 am and will be kept open until 9:30am The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9amor as soon as possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We 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 unauthorized, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorized if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Please request a leave of absence form from the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Any repeated lateness will result in a discussion with the Home School Liaison Officer in the first instance to support. The designated leader for attendance may request a meeting if punctuality continues to be an issue.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact external services such as Social Care and/ or the Police.

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.

- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via half-termly written reports. Where there are immediate concerns the parents/ carers will be informed verbally in the first instance, before receiving a letter addressing concerns.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request.

The school recognises the additional pressures placed upon families with a child with disabilities and/or special educational needs and the need for respite. We also recognise that the additional costs involved in taking such children on holiday can make them prohibitive, often to the point where the family could not afford them. In many cases, the only option is to take the holiday when costs are lower, or times are quieter for the child (e.g. – if the child is autistic) within school term times. Without condoning it, the school recognises that this is sometimes the only option available to some families.

To address this, the school has developed a protocol on how it manages pupil leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. To support this process our schools will undertake a risk assessment to secure safeguarding. If the school has any doubt regarding the safety of any pupil whose parent has requested an exceptional circumstance this will be discussed with the CEO/LADO/Social Care/MARU with immediate effect. In accordance to established protocols, any Child in Care will not be authorised for any leave of absence from the school without discussing this with their allocated social worker.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least six weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- 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.

5.2 Legal sanctions

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

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If a child is absent from school without authorisation, a parent will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

As a Special School for students with complex needs, OMS recognises that the students and their families may not have full autonomy over their attendance. Therefore, attendance rewards and sanctions for individual students are not appropriate. The following strategies are employed at OMS:

- we have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school.
- we have a team that is passionate about high expectations for all learners.
- we provide a varied and engaging curriculum so that all students enjoy being at school.
- we give students a purpose to be in school each day.
- we provide a safe and welcoming environment for all in the school community.
- we make sure students know who they can communicate with if they have any worries or concerns.
- we communicate expectations clearly, strongly, and consistently to parents and to pupils.
- we set expectations about attendance from the outset – from EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) transition onwards.

- we explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve.
- we listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that we can act accordingly. We provide ongoing support from our Home School Liaison
- we challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed.
- we have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents.
- we ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately.
- we systematically analyse attendance information so that we can see patterns and trends.
- we use this analysis to target actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- we make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school.
- we engage in, and welcome, further reading, resources, research and 'good ideas' about continually improving attendance.

7. Attendance monitoring
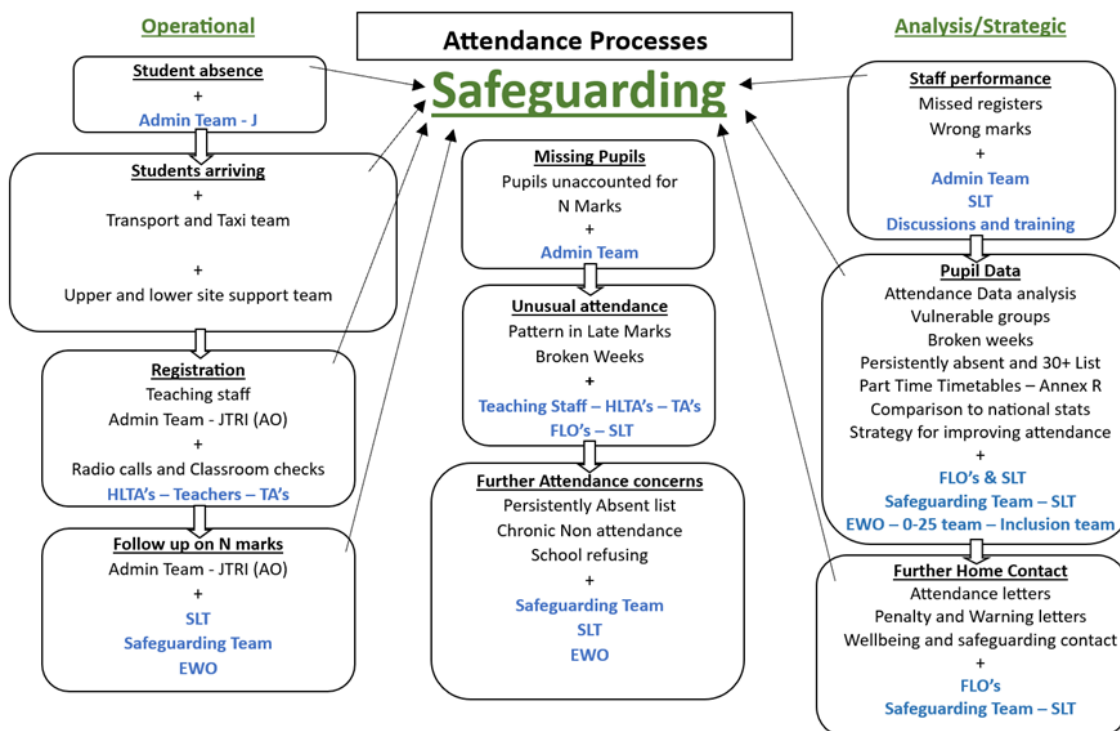
7.1 Monitoring attendance

Orchard Manor School will:

Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.

- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Discuss attendance concerns as part of regular Safeguarding team meetings.

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance.

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 20% or more of school (as per Special School Benchmarks), and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by Esther Craddock, Designated Senior Leader with responsibility for Attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Behaviour policy

- Special Partnership Trust Attendance Policy

Appendix 1: Registration Timings

Registration times

	School Starts	Register Open	Late Marks	Late after Register
Mark Given		**/** **Present**	**L** **Note mins late**	**U** **Unauthorised Late**
Morning Reg	**9:10**	**9:15** **To** **9:25**	**9:25** **To** **9:45**	**After 9:45** **If it is a late taxi, then use L not U**
Afternoon Reg	**13:20**	**13:25** **To** **13:35**	**13:35** **To** **13:40**	**After 13:40**

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma, and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel because of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Registration Processes

- o   Load Arbor each morning with comments and marks from parent mail and the answerphone
- o   Add commentary for pupils not attending to notify staff of reasons for absence (where appropriate)
- o   Ensure radio is charged and working
- o   Monitor emails and radio/Telephone in front office for updates in attendance status
- o   Check with RIRV and lower site HLTA office that any other notifications have been shared and input into Arbor
- o   Check staff absence list and communicate with appropriate staff to ensure that adequate registration cover is in place to complete the register
- o   Check Arbor and with staff that there are no Arbor issues which will be a barrier to completing the register – offer support – note issues raised
- o   Listen to radio announcements of pupils arriving to be able to support accurate registration processes
- o   Check residential pupils and mark L when it is confirmed pupils are with staff but struggling to register in timely manner. We do not use the U mark for these pupils
- o   Announce on radio at 9:15am that the registers are officially open, remind staff to let us know if there are any operational issues or barriers to completing Arbor register
- o   Announce on radio at 9:23am that the registration period has 2 more mins and then we will need to use the L mark, remind staff to let AO know if there are any operational issues or barriers to completing registers
- o   Announce on radio at 9:25am (Tue to Fri) 10:50am (Mon) that the registration period has closed and then we will need to use the L mark for the next 10 mins, remind staff to let us know if there are any operational issues or barriers to completing Arbor register
- o   Announce on radio at 9:40 am if there are any operational issues or barriers to completing Arbor register as (there may not be) are missing marks
- o   Use the Radio and Phone to contact classes who have outstanding marks.
- o   Announce on radio when 'All marks are in' (we should not have any missing marks after the close of registers). 9:45 am

9:35

- o   Triangulate with **Taxi list from upper site** and **liaise with RIRV** to ensure pupils who are registered in have been checked on the taxi list as present. Also check that pupils who haven't been registered present have not been signed in on the taxi list
- o   Communicate with main reception to record any late taxis including adding times and mins late
- o   Address immediately and concerns over Arbor and taxi disparity – use the radio and phone to confirm pupil whereabouts and notify SLT of any concerns.
- o   Check Taxi List for pupils walking to upper site to see who has arrived on lower site and that they have been supported to upper site
- o   There are key staff positioned along the route to ensure safe transit of pupil

9:50am

- o Check N marks and follow up with phone calls to staff before parents – this is extremely time critical and must be completed and communicated to SLT before calling home to check pupil status. Adjust marks where appropriate.
- o Check all any other marks are valid and there are appropriate comments in the comments triangle. This may also include checking communication logs to validate mark. Check and confirm any concerns with SLT
- o Must be persistent with accounting for pupils including contacting home. This is extremely time critical.

11:00am

- o Notify Safeguarding team / SLT if any pupils remain unaccounted for. (Email and call)
- o Notify Safeguarding team / SLT of any issues relating to the administration of attendance marks and staff performance (register completition as well as flagging up any N marks left over from previous day rolling into N marks for today. (Email and call)
- o Liaise with outreach staff to confirm contact and update Arbor   1
- o Additional and miscellaneous attendance duties

1:25pm

Complete PM registration processes including reminders on the radio to ensure staff are 'chased up' to complete registers

Registration times

	School Starts	Register Open	Late Marks	Late after Register
Mark Given		**/** **Present**	**L** **Note mins late**	**U** **Unauthorised Late**
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Safeguarding Scenario

	N mark as family cannot be contacted – no response	Follow up/Action
Day 1	Mark in register and **contact both** parents if applicable	Unresolved – notify **SLT** of an **N** mark for both **am and pm**
Day 2	Mark in register and **contact both** parents a second time if applicable	**Unresolved** – notify **SLT as soon as possible** of an **N** mark rolling into two days **without confirmation** Depending on **safeguarding Risk factor** SLT **may organise a home visit**
Day 3	Mark in register but **call all numbers** in contacts list to establish whereabouts of pupil(s)	**Unresolved** – notify **SLT as soon as possible** of an **N** mark rolling into three days **without confirmation.** SLT **will** organise a **home visit** If still **no resolve**, SLT will direct to contact the **police on 101**

Appendix item 3: Parent Reporting Absence Process

Planned Absence:

If you have a planned absence you will need to contact school and complete a planned absence request form. Except in exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical appointments) absences will be unauthorised.

Absence on the Day:

If your child is absent on a day due to illness contact the school office 01626 862363 and select option 6. You will need to phone in every day of absence unless otherwise informed by school.