ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Status: Statutory

Member of Staff Responsible: Principal

Related Policies:

- Behaviour Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- SEND Information Report

Implementation date: September 2016

Reviewed date: September 2026

Next review date: September 2027

Statutory and Non-Statutory Reference Documents

The single biggest change this year is that the DfE's guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance, became statutory from August 2024 (previously non-statutory/advisory), and was most recently updated in July 2026. This policy's status has therefore changed from Advisory to Statutory to reflect this – the UTC is now legally required to have regard to this guidance, not simply encouraged to follow it.

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE statutory guidance, most recently updated July 2026)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 1996 (sections 7, 444 and 444B)
- Children Missing Education (DfE, 2024)
- Equality Act 2010

Aims

UTC Derby Pride Park is committed to getting the most out of educational opportunities and achievement for all students. For students to gain the best from their time at the UTC, it is vital that attendance and punctuality is excellent. We strive for 100% attendance for all students. The UTC will actively promote good attendance and discourage unjustified absence.

The UTC needs to ensure that all its students access a full-time education which meets their needs and allows all to realise their potential.

What We as a UTC Will Do to Encourage Good Attendance (97% and Above)

- We will strive to provide a safe and caring environment where each student can engage in all opportunities offered.
- Engage with students and their families to ensure every student has good attendance and punctuality.
- Challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Parents can access their child's attendance through Class Charts as this is updated daily.
- Continue to develop ICT-based attendance recording systems in order to provide accurate information and to use suitable tracking strategies to recognise any trends that can damage good attendance and learning.
- Support the requirements of the Education Act 1996 and the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance by implementing this policy in a consistent manner. We will adhere to the Equality Act 2010, and reasonable adjustments will be made for young people.

What the UTC Expects from Students

To attend regularly and on time. To be punctual to all lessons, to ensure that they register for all timetabled lessons and inform reception, where appropriate, if they are not able to be registered. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that any communication from parents is handed to reception.

What the UTC Expects from Parents/Carers

To ensure their child attends the UTC on those days it is open, punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn. To ensure their child attends every day the UTC is open unless they are too ill to do so. To avoid keeping their child away from the UTC for any reason other than illness or other authorised explanation. To avoid arranging holidays during term time. To immediately inform Learning Manager/Reception/Attendance if their child is unable to attend (by 8.30am where possible), including the reason for absence and expected date of return. The UTC should be updated daily with regards to student absence and failure to do so could result in an unauthorised absence, which could be used to take legal action.

Registration

The law requires the register to be taken twice a day – during the morning Tutor period and once in the afternoon session. This is at 8.30am and 11:15am. Students are expected to arrive by 8.25am in order to be ready for the start of Tutor period at 8.30am. We are aware that students travel quite a distance to attend the UTC, which is unique; we will therefore take every individual student's circumstances into consideration. Students are registered at the start of every lesson of the day. Registers close at 9.00am in the morning and 12:40pm in the afternoon, after which students will be marked as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation has been received.

In line with the July 2026 update to Working Together to Improve School Attendance, the attendance register must be taken at the same time for all registered students in both the morning and afternoon sessions – staggered registration by tutor group or year group is not permitted. The UTC's MIS is configured accordingly, and this should be checked whenever registration arrangements or timetabling change.

The register is marked using the DfE Attendance and Absence Codes. Guidance on applying the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 can be found in 'Advice on School Attendance' published 2024 by the DfE.

Daily Attendance Data Sharing

In addition to reporting Persistent Absence data to the Local Authority via the School Census on a termly and annual basis, the UTC shares daily attendance data with the Department for Education via the national Attendance Data Collection service, in line with the DfE's guidance on sharing daily pupil attendance data. This is a statutory requirement and is managed centrally through the UTC's MIS.

Punctuality

The UTC day starts at 8:30am; any student arriving after this time should sign in at reception, giving their reason for being late. Students arriving to the UTC after 9.00am, without prior consent or without medical evidence, such as a GP appointment card, will be coded as a “U” in the register. This means they have arrived after registration has closed. Having U codes in the register could provide grounds for prosecution as it is an unauthorised absence code and affects a student's attendance.

Responding to Absence/Lateness

If a student is absent at morning registration without contact from a parent/carer to explain the absence, the UTC will contact parents/carers. We take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will always do our best to contact parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of their child's absence.

Contact will be via automated message which will attempt to call/text landline numbers and mobile numbers for priority 1 contact numbers. Parents/carers are able to respond directly upon receiving this call.

Alternatively, where a message has been left by the automated service, a parent should contact the Learning Manager/Reception to inform us of the reason for their child's absence. We ask that parents/carers ensure that the UTC has the most up-to-date contact details at all times. If no response is received to the automated service, the UTC will phone and/or email parents/carers requesting an explanation. All absence notes will be retained. Where a student's absence is cause for concern, the UTC will write to parents/carers and/or invite the parents/carers into the UTC or visit parents/carers at home. Where no sustained improvement in attendance is demonstrated despite intervention, the Fast Track to Attendance process will be followed, following the DfE's Expect – Support – Enforce pathway and 'support first' approach set out in Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Penalty notices may be issued in line with each relevant Local Authority's Code of Conduct.

Persistent Absence and Severe Absence

A student becomes a Persistent Absentee when they miss 10% of their schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Any student whose attendance has reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority for intervention.

A student is classed as Severely Absent where they miss 50% or more of possible sessions. Severely absent students are given the highest priority for intervention and will normally be referred for Early Help and multi-agency support without delay.

Intervention may be via:

- An action plan to improve attendance will be created which may involve Early Help and referrals to other agencies alongside meetings between relevant UTC staff and parents/carers.
- Where parents/carers fail to co-operate with support and strategies provided by the UTC, further advice may be sought which could lead to legal sanctions being imposed.

Persistent Absence and Severe Absence data is communicated to the relevant Local Authority via the School Census on a termly and annual basis, and shared daily as set out above.

Parents can access Class Charts to check on their child's attendance. The UTC teaching staff and/or tutor may request to see parents/carers if there is a problem with regards to attendance. The expectation is that parents make every effort to engage with these

appointments to support the UTC in promoting good attendance (97% or above) for every student.

Early Help

Any child may benefit from early help, and all UTC staff will monitor attendance and alert to the potential need for early help for a student who is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

Any absence interrupts the continuity of a student's learning. Government legislation states that only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence; please refer to the Department for Education for the latest guidance. Parents/carers are strongly urged not to take students out of the UTC for holidays during term time.

Where the circumstances are considered exceptional, please be aware that:

- Your request will not be authorised during exam periods (these could be throughout the year).
- Your request will not be authorised during the month of September.
- Your request will not be authorised for any student in Year 11.
- Your request will not be authorised if your child's attendance is below the UTC's attendance target for the 12 months prior to application.
- Your request will not be authorised if your child has unauthorised absences.

Any authorised absence will be at the discretion of the Principal.

It is expected that a Request Form is submitted to reception at least 4 weeks in advance of the proposed absence. All factors that need to be considered must be stated on the request form. This legislation also applies to any student taking leave of absence without prior notification to the UTC.

Penalty Notices

Where support has not been appropriate, has not worked, or has not been engaged with, the UTC (via the Local Authority) may issue a formal Notice to Improve – a final opportunity for parents/carers to engage with support before a penalty notice is considered. This replaces what was previously known as a 'court warning letter'.

Under the National Framework for penalty notices, a first penalty notice is charged at £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent within a rolling period is charged at a flat £160, with no reduction for early payment. It is not possible to issue a third penalty notice for the same child within the same period – at that point, the Local Authority will consider prosecution instead.

The UTC has the right to request that the Local Authority serve a Penalty Notice on parents/carers who insist on taking their children out of the UTC without authorisation. Failure to pay within the specified timescale could result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure regular school attendance.

For the 2026-2027 school year in England, parents can receive a penalty notice if their child has 10 or more unauthorised absence sessions (5 school days) within a rolling 10-week period.

How the UTC Will Promote Good Attendance

- It is the belief that all students are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is engaging and personalised to meet their needs. The curriculum is monitored and revised on an annual basis so that it meets the ability needs of all students.
- Students are regularly informed of their attendance levels and, if appropriate, how they can improve. Where appropriate, students whose attendance falls below the appropriate target for the UTC will be set a target for improvement and progress towards these targets will be regularly reviewed by the tutor.
- Good and improved attendance and punctuality will be promoted, acknowledged and rewarded. Students, parents/carers and staff are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to contact the UTC at any time to discuss their child's attendance. Regular meetings will be held with the appropriate members of staff/external agencies to identify and support those students whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Students who have been absent for extended periods of time will be supported as appropriate to re-integrate back into the UTC.

Illness Absences

Students will only be permitted a total of five days of illness-related absence (marked as “I” on the register) during an academic year without the need for medical evidence.

After five days of illness absence have been recorded, any further absences due to illness will be marked as “O” (unauthorised absence) unless medical evidence is provided. Medical evidence can include a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card, or hospital letter.

We understand that children can become unwell, and we will continue to support families in managing their children's health needs. However, we are required to follow these attendance guidelines to help ensure consistent attendance and support students' educational progress.

If your child is absent due to illness and has already had five days of illness absence in the academic year, please provide medical evidence as soon as possible to avoid their absence being recorded as unauthorised.

Statutory Requirements, the Law and the Local Authority

Registers are legal documents; regulatory requirements placed on schools regarding the keeping of registers are to be found in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child receives a suitable education. Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered is guilty of an offence.

In relation to any potential child missing from education, the UTC will communicate with and notify the Local Authority in line with the above regulation and the DfE's Children Missing Education (2024) guidance.

The UTC works together with the relevant Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibility. The Local Authority's School Attendance Support Team provides a named point of contact for the UTC to seek advice and support. There are a range of legal sanctions that may be imposed for dealing with unauthorised absence: Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts and Orders, Education Supervision Orders or referral to the Magistrates Court, which can recommend fines (up to £2,500) or up to 3 months in prison. All sanctions are used to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce absence.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Subject teachers are passionate that students attend all subject lessons to facilitate learning and maximise progress. We will ensure all students are accurately registered and that students know the register is being taken. The subject teacher/Curriculum Director will identify student absence to lessons and take appropriate action. Subject staff will identify any absence trends or concerns and will raise these with the appropriate members of staff.

Learning Managers/Attendance will discuss absence and attendance weekly with students. They will identify any absence trends or concerns and will raise these with the appropriate members of staff. They will work with identified students, setting targets to improve attendance and monitoring progress towards those targets. Reception/Attendance ensure that all absence notes or verbal messages are sent to the appropriate Learning Manager.

Learning Managers will monitor absence and attendance regularly, by use of the weekly Cumulative Attendance report. They will discuss absence and attendance concerns with students and set targets for improvement. They will contact parents/carers where attendance concerns have been identified and will support students to improve their attendance. If attendance drops below 92% and then subsequently 90%, the Learning Manager will seek advice and support from the appropriate Senior Leader and outside agencies to support an improvement in attendance; this will include the Local Authority. Where this fails and attendance falls below 90%, the UTC reserves the right to consider requesting a penalty notice.

Note: the 92%/90% figures above are internal UTC monitoring thresholds used to trigger earlier staff intervention, and are distinct from the national Persistent Absence (10% or below 90% attendance) and Severe Absence (50% or below) definitions used for statutory reporting purposes.

The UTC will promote attendance through assemblies. It will work with other members of staff to share information and support students and their parents/carers to improve attendance.

The Principal and Senior Leaders, including the Local Authority, will ensure that the UTC attendance policy is implemented and regularly reviewed. They will report to the Local Authority on attendance. The UTC will monitor the curriculum to develop ways of improving the provision of educational experience and utilise attendance data to inform strategic planning.

Key Changes for 2026-2027

This page summarises the substantive changes made during this review. All changed or new text is also highlighted in yellow within the body of the policy.

- Status changed from Advisory to Statutory. The DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance became statutory from August 2024 (most recently updated July 2026), meaning the UTC is now legally required to have regard to it, rather than simply encouraged to follow it. This is the headline change for this review.
- Cover: Reviewed and Next Review dates updated to September 2026 and September 2027. Associated Policies expanded to include the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (renamed from 'Safeguarding & Child Protection') and the SEND Information Report.
- New 'Statutory and Non-Statutory Reference Documents' section added.
- Aims: Incorrect reference to 'UTC Sheffield Academy Trust' corrected to UTC Derby Pride Park. Outdated references to the Children Act 2004 'Every Child Matters' framework and the (superseded) Disability Discrimination Act 1995 removed, replaced with the current Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance and the Equality Act 2010.
- Registration: New paragraph added confirming that, per the July 2026 guidance update, registers must be taken at the same time for all students in both sessions – staggered registration is no longer permitted.
- New 'Daily Attendance Data Sharing' section added, reflecting the statutory requirement to share attendance data with the DfE daily, in addition to termly Census returns.
- New 'Severe Absence' definition added (50%+ sessions missed), alongside the existing Persistent Absence (10%) threshold, with severely absent students prioritised for Early Help.
- Penalty Notices section rewritten: added the formal 'Notice to Improve' step (replacing 'court warning letter'), and clarified that a second penalty notice is a flat £160 with no early-payment reduction, and that a third cannot be issued (the Local Authority will consider prosecution instead).
- Staff Roles: New note added distinguishing the UTC's internal 92%/90% monitoring thresholds from the national Persistent Absence and Severe Absence definitions, to avoid confusion between the two.
- Internal inconsistency corrected: the policy referred to good attendance as both '97% and above' and '96% or above' in different sections. This has been standardised to 97%, matching the figure used in the policy's main heading – please confirm this is the correct target, as it is a policy decision rather than a guidance-driven change.