UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
LEVELLING THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ARENA

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Levels School exists to provide a nurturing environment in which students with specific learning difficulties and co-occurring diagnoses can develop their self-esteem and aspire to be independent young adults who value the rights, responsibilities and rules that exist to promote and support their future welfare. Our approach toward establishing this ideology is predicated on trauma-informed practice and an obligation to develop the social skills required to build their future aspirational communities. We exist to help them find their level.

This policy covers all premises known as The Levels School.

Date of policy	September 2026
Next review date	September 2027
Frequency of policy review (annually, every two years)	Annually
Policy owner	Caroline Cook
Published policy	**Yes** No
List of connected policies	Safeguarding Policy, Absconding Policy, Parent Expectations, Student Expectations, Staff Code of Conduct, Children With Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy, SEND policy, Relational Policy
Approved / Date	Approved by Governors

The Board of Governors acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. Governors undertake a review to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.

The Board of Governors ensures the establishment of familiarity with and the effective operation through monitoring, of school policies, approving those requiring GB sign-off in line with a regular cycle of school policy reviews. This occurs through a cycle of governor committee meetings and full board meetings.

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National Guidance

The policy is written to ensure statutory requirements for attendance and other factors are met as detailed in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)& (6) and 458(4) &(5)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

It also takes account of the guidance produced by Somerset County Council:

- Term Time Leave Advice for Schools and Parents, May 2015.
- Somerset County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, Aug 2024.
- Somerset County Council Children Missing in Education School attendance and children missing education

This policy has been reviewed and updated in line with the statutory guidance from the DofE Working together to improve school attendance up dated July 2026.

Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026

The policy also has regard to the following guideline and advice:

Keeping children safe in education 2026: September 2026

Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)

Resources for families | Children's Commissioner for England

Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK - September 2025

Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK Aug 2017

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK Feb 2023

Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance: effective practice examples Feb 2023

Rationale

The motivation behind The Levels School is to provide high quality, inclusive education for individuals who have been adversely affected by their SEND and associated anxieties often making it difficult to access learning. For a child to get the most out of their experience at The Levels School, a high level of school attendance is essential.

The Levels School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents and students play a part in making our school successful. Our ethos encompasses a culture of inclusivity where students are aware of their rights, develop responsibility, learn to respect others and in turn are respected. Parents and teachers share

the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

At The Levels School we believe that effective teaching and learning takes place when students' attendance rate is as high as it possibly can be for that individual, and punctuality is good. High attendance also enables students to benefit from the wider range of experiences and support on offer at The Levels School beyond the classroom, including Therapeutic support and 1.1 therapy sessions, trips, visits, clubs and extracurricular enrichment. For our children to take full advantage of the educational and therapeutic opportunities offered it is vital the child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable and staff at The Levels School are already aware and a phased timetable or attendance support is in operation.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. For many of our children, consistent routines are also vital to embedding a sense of security and wellbeing. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance. Therapy and other interventions are more successful with regular attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier to cope with and this in turn can lead to reduced anxiety.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between school and higher education, employment or training.
- Regular attendance allows intervention strategies and therapy support to be successful.

The Levels School recognises that attendance monitoring is an important part of Safeguarding the students within the school community. A child missing from school is a potential indicator of neglect or abuse and/or may indicate that a student is at risk of significant harm. The Levels School aims to develop and maintain good relationships with parents and to communicate regularly and effectively over any issues developing linked to attendance and punctuality.

The Levels School's Responsibilities

The Levels School will:

- Encourage good attendance through a positive and safe learning environment, and by embedding our values of courage, creativity and compassion.
- Promote the importance of good attendance and celebrate success.

- Enable continuity and progression of teaching and learning through good attendance.
- Ensure that all students have the support they need to help to reduce anxiety around school attendance.
- Prepare students for the world of work, leisure and independent living.
- Involve Parent/Carer as partners in ensuring good attendance.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Support children who are unable to be in school due to exceptional circumstances.

THE SAC (Senior Attendance Champion)

The Levels School has a senior member of staff from the school's leadership team as SAC to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. This is Mr Simon Scarborough - Deputy Head responsible for Student Personal Development.

The SAC's responsibilities are:

1. to set a clear vision for improving attendance in school

2. to establish and maintain effective systems for absence and make sure the systems are followed by all staff

3. to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy addressing The Levels School's strategies and processes

4. to have oversight of and analyse attendance data

5. to communicate clear messages on the importance of attendance to students and parents.

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Parent/Carer to ensure the attendance and punctuality of their child(ren) in line with government guidelines. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and special educational need.

Provide a minimum of two emergency contact numbers, and preferably three for their child. These are held on record. This is a legal requirement so that the school has more than one option for reaching a responsible adult when a student is absent without explanation.

Communicate any difficulties and challenges voiced at home by the student to the tutor so that staff can unpick any issues in school and support accordingly as early as possible.

Email on the morning of any absence to attendance@thelevelsschool.co.uk communicating reason for absence.

Work closely with The Levels School to explore possible barriers to attendance.

Student Responsibilities

Students at The Levels School are responsible for:

- Providing honest, open communication about any factors which may contribute to low attendance or poor punctuality.
- Accepting support and working with Parents/Carer and the school to ensure good attendance and punctuality.
- Following the school's expectations of Ready, Respectful and Safe as outlined in 'Our Student Expectations'.

Recording Attendance

The school day runs from 8.40am until lessons end at 4.00 pm. The morning register will remain open until 9.00am and must be submitted by 9.10am at the latest. A register is taken at the start of lesson 5. This must be completed by 2.20 pm. Attendance will occur on our MIS system. The Staff Code of Conduct states that a minimum of morning and afternoon registration must be taken.

If a trip offsite is happening during registration time, the trip organiser is responsible for:

- Notifying all staff in advance of the trip;
- Collecting students at registration; and
- Registering the students who are going on the trip.

After the trip organiser has registered students on the trip, this is recorded using MIS codes by Attendance administrator.

A student will be marked either present or absent. Absences must either be marked as:

- **Authorised:** only the authorised person in school, the Head Teacher or as delegated by the Head Teacher, can authorise the absence; or
- **Unauthorised:** where no acceptable reason is given.

It must only be recorded as authorised if:

- The student has been granted leave of absence, which has been approved beforehand by the school (this includes Traveller and Showman absence) or
- The student is unable to attend:
    - either because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause, or

- on a day that the student's Parents/Carers' religion sets aside for religious activities.

A school can change an authorised absence from an unauthorised absence and visa versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to Parents/Carers. An example of this is where a Parent/Carer states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

It is especially important that we identify any students who are missing education as they may be at risk of significant harm. In some cases, there will be a good reason why a student is not at school; they may have health issues which mean they cannot attend. If this is the case the school must be notified as soon as possible and then they can offer support if needed. Where a child has a long-term illness and requires remote learning support, this is covered in the Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy.

As a specialist setting, The Levels School recognises that some students may find it harder than others to attend school. The school works with those students and their parents to remove barriers to attendance by building strong, trusting relationships and putting the right support in place.

Reporting Attendance to Local Authorities

Attendance is reported to the authorities. Our reporting authority is Somerset Local Authority. The Levels School also has students funded by the following Local Authorities: North Somerset, Devon, Bristol, BANES, Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire. Daily attendance is reported using the method communicated by the Local Authority. Somerset Local Authority uses a web-based platform called Welfare Call. The morning and afternoon attendance is recorded each day through Welare Call with the relevant code being added for any non-attendance. Comments can also be added to the system where appropriate.

Somerset Local Authority hold half termly meetings with The Levels School and review attendance of Somerset funded students regularly as part of these meetings.

Reviewing and Monitoring Attendance

The members of staff responsible for reviewing and monitoring attendance are:

- Holly Clark and Emily Finn in their roles as Front of House. They liaise with parents and input the correct codes following information received.
- Katie Walker, in her role as MiS Coordinator. An attendance record is generated at the end of each week and sent to Simon Scarborough, Deputy Head / SAC.
- Simon Scarborough, in his role as Deputy Head responsible for Student Personal Development (In close conjunction with Victoria Billany as SENDCo).
- Caroline Cook, as Head teacher.

- Debbie Williams, as Prep Head

Attendance is monitored in line with academic progress. Tutors will also have oversight of patterns and will be alerted to non-attendance and lateness. Any students with attendance concerns will be identified and the student's tutor will follow up with them as outlined below.

Attendance is reported to parents through the Annual Review process. It is also reported as part of our recording and reporting process through the Progress report which goes home in December and June.

Individual and whole school attendance is reviewed as part of regular meetings with the lead member on SLT for attendance (SAC) and the SENDCo. Actions from this are followed up with tutors to ensure support is in place and intervention is explored if required. Attendance sits as an agenda item on the meeting agenda of the Senior Leadership team. Attendance is also reported to governors as part of termly subcommittee meetings and in twice yearly Head Teachers report to governors as part of the Full Governing Board oversight.

Persistent and Severe absence

A student is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to one day or more a fortnight across a full school year). A student is severely absent when they miss 50% or more of school. As a specialist school we recognise that students and parents are manging attendance in line with a student's SEND.

Most students at The Levels School have an Education Heath and Care Plan (EHCP). When attendance has fallen and factors linked to the school environment are identified as potential barriers, the SENDCo, supported by the tutor, will work with parents to agree any modifications to their provision. This support will be consistent with the special educational provision as set out in the Education Health and Care Plan.

Where attendance continues to cause concern and all available avenues of support have been explored, a meeting will be held by between the SAC and SENDCo to review all actions to date. Where absence persists, the school will work with the local authority and other partners, including through targeted support meetings, to put joint support in place. The Levels School will provide significant focus to students who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). 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. This may include completing a Family Help Assessment.

Where necessary, the school will work with the local authority to review the Education Health and Care Plan to incorporate additional support required where this can be provided within our provision. For students funded by the local authority, this may lead to identifying through the annual review process that adjustments may be required to the plan.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP): Where a pupil has an EHCP, the School should alert the Local Authority which maintains the EHCP about any significant issues emerging over attendance of which it becomes aware, so that the local authority can consider whether needs continue to be adequately supported through the existing plan.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by The Levels School, external agencies and Local Authority, it is important to consider neglect. In such cases The Levels School will follow its Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection processes including a referral to children's social care.

Lateness and Punctuality

The entrance gate to the rear of the school will be locked at 08.30. When students miss the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. This in turn can cause dysregulation. We appreciate that within our setting, catchment areas are large and that travel disruption can occur. Where a child does not use school transport, it is the Parent/Carer's responsibility to ensure their child arrives at school on time and to communicate any difficulties that occur due to travel to school in a timely manner so that we can support and record accurately. Where a child uses school transport, it is the Parent/Carer's responsibility to ensure they are ready for the agreed pick-up time.

When a student is late, this is recorded on the MIS system, and their tutor is made aware. If the student is late three times, the Parents/Carers are contacted and a discussion is had over the reasons why the student is late. Open lines of communication are essential, as poor punctuality could indicate the need for greater support at home, for example with sensory needs or self-organisation. The Levels School will work with parents to support students where possible.

If a student has a persistent late record Parent/Carers will be contacted by the Tutor to discuss how to resolve the problem. If lateness persists, the matter will be referred to the SAC, SENDCo or the Head teacher, depending on the nature of the problem. Parents will be spoken to in line with the parent contract and efforts made to support and resolve the issue.

Many students at The Levels School travel from a number of different Local Authorities and as such have transport provided by the relevant Local Authority. Close links are made with the transport departments so that as a school we are aware of circumstances where lateness may be due to circumstances that are outside of parental and student control.

Truancy

The vast majority of students at The Levels School are transported to school, using student transport, taxi or by parents. Truancy is unlikely. However, when a student is truant, the Parents/Carers are informed and there is an expectation that any missed work will need to be caught up. When the student returns to school, they will have a post-truancy meeting with their tutor to discuss the reasons for the truancy so that appropriate support can be put in place. Further discussions and support will be put in place for students where there is regular truancy. The Levels School will encourage open, honest communication between

students, Parents/Carers and the school in order to identify and address the reasons behind truancy.

Where a student is off school due to anxiety or mental health, Parents/Carers will be asked to come into a meeting in school with the student, if possible. The Parents/Carers, student and school can discuss the need for greater support or a reduced timetable. All can agree on an attendance level and work from that to a gradual increase. These meetings can also occur remotely if necessary.

Students with Modified Timetables

The Levels School does not advocate students on part-time timetables. It is important though to acknowledge that some of our students may be unable to be in school full time due to anxiety or other additional needs. In a minority of cases, The Levels School will work with families to create a bespoke timetable for the student which will gradually build to a full-time timetable. This will form part of a transition package discussed with Janet Andrews, Transition Coordinator, and agreed by Victoria Billany as SENDCo, the parents and the LA Caseworker where relevant. It is usually in line with the requirements stipulated in Section F of the EHCP.

For these students, attendance is marked at 100% if all agreed upon sessions are attended. All other sessions missed are classed as authorised absences. We report attendance against agreed upon sessions but also show the percentage against total attendance. Over time, this would evidence progress as the timetable is built up and overall attendance improves.

If agreed upon sessions are not attended and no notification from the Parent/Carer is received, this would be treated as an unauthorised absence.

Any bespoke, modified timetables are reviewed every six weeks. It is important that increases occur and that they are gradual and phased. The Levels School provides full-time education and so the emphasis is on transitioning a student to that. Where this is not possible, after an agreed period an Annual Review will be called and/or a discussion had to ascertain the next best course of action for the student. This will include considering an alternative placement.

Young Carers

Some students have caring responsibilities at home as young carers, which can increase the barriers to regular attendance. Young carers are recorded in the school census. Where a student's caring role may be contributing to absence, The Levels School will work in partnership with the student and their parents to understand the barriers and put the right support in place and will work with the local authority to facilitate access to family help and other support where needs extend beyond school.

Guidance for Parents/Carers

What do I do if my child is absent?

If a student is unwell or unable to come to school it is important that the Parent/Carer inform the school on the first day and subsequent days, stating reasons for the absence.

This can be done by:

- Calling: **01458 211014**
- Emailing: attendance@thelevelsschool.co.uk
- If emailing, it is also helpful to copy the students tutor into the office communication.

If no contact is made by the Parent/Carer then a phone call will be made from 9.20am by the school regarding the student's absence. If no reason for the absence is given, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If the school is unable to contact the primary Parent/Carer, then the school will work through all contact details for all Parents/Carers connected with the student. If the school is unable to contact any Parent/Carer connected with the student, then the Local Authority will be notified. The Levels School will work with the Local Authority to decide on the next best response.

In the event of a long-term absence, refer to the Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy.

Requests for absence

All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Only exceptional circumstances and unavoidable medical appointments will be authorised. Any request for leave must be made in writing to the Head Teacher in advance. This can be emailed to the main school email on info@thelevelsschool.co.uk. In the case of our prep students contact our Head of Prep debbie.williams@thelevelsschool.co.uk

The Head teacher and Prep head will consider each application individually considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The Headteacher will confirm whether the circumstances meet the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' for which leave of absence may be granted and confirm how long the student may be absent for.

Reasons such as the following will not be authorised:

- Taking siblings to school/sibling school closure
- Parent/Carer illness
- Day trips and treat days condoned by Parent/Carers/carers
- Holiday taken without exceptional circumstances

- Truancy
- Late arrival to school without a valid reason

Reporting duties

The Levels School is required to provide the local authority with the names and addresses of all students of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes classified as unauthorised (G, N, O, and/or U - detailed in Appendix A Unauthorised absences). These must be provided no less frequently than once per calendar month.

The Levels School is required to provide the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.

Please be aware that in a minority of cases The Levels School may seek medical evidence for recording absences. Where a student's health needs mean they need further reasonable adjustments or support because their health needs are complex, long term or frequently recurring, schools can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the student and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions or arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

What will happen if my child's attendance drops?

All student attendance is monitored; if attendance becomes a concern or the school can see a pattern forming in their absences, then Parent/Carers will be contacted by email or telephone.

If a Parent/Carer is in need of assistance or advice, then they are expected to contact the student's tutor in the first instance.

If absences continue then other measures will be put in place. This may be a meeting with relevant staff. In extreme cases of poor attendance referrals will be made to the Somerset County Council's (SCC) legal panel or a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. The students SEN need and ongoing support within The Levels School will be taken in to account in this respect. Parents will be aware that this is a final step and will only occur after exhausting all other avenues.

In Somerset it is expected a Child Missing in Education (CME) referral is made if there are 10 days continuous unexplained absences and the matter is not deemed to be a school attendance issue. If all attempts by school to contact the Parent/Carer are completed within 10 days, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will accept the CME referral earlier. The

school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with Parents/Carers and the student, making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

Attendance is reported daily to Somerset LA and other funding local authorities. The attendance engagement officer from Somerset LA visits annually to review attendance of any students that are of concern and is available throughout the year for support when required.

What do I do if I need to request holiday time during term time?

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. The latest government update (July 2026) makes clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted.

In practice the school will:

Not authorise any requests for holiday taken during term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance. This may include:

- Parent/Carers serving in the armed forces with limited choice of leave.
- Parent/Carers who work in the farming industry and work is dictated around harvest times etc.
- Personal reasons which are deemed exceptional by the Head Teacher.

Any requests for holiday due to exceptional circumstances must be completed by notifying the Head Teacher. This must be done in writing. It is acceptable to give verbal notice to the Head teacher which will then be recorded and signed in the presence of the parent / carer. If leave of absences is deemed not exceptional the response the parent receives from the school will serve as a Penalty Notice Warning letter. Any unauthorised absence during this period of time may be subject to a penalty notice for non-attendance being issued.

The decision to authorise the absence is at the Head Teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances can vary from child to child and so there can be no absolute rule on the subject. Some examples of requested absences may be for:

- **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work & modelling:**

    - The Parent/Carer must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of then work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence.

- Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as an authorised absence.

- **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport:**
  - The Parent/Carer must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.
  - It is down to the Head Teacher's discretion whether to authorise this.
  - Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Head Teacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event.
- **Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families:**
  - Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return.
  - To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed.

What do I do if I need to pull my child out of school part way through the school day?

If a child needs to leave part way through the school day, the Parent/Carer must request this in advance by notifying the Head Teacher. This can be emailed to the office address info@thelevelsschool.co.uk

It is acceptable to give verbal notice to the Head Teacher which will then be recorded and signed in the presence of the parent / carer. The decision to authorise the child leaving early is at the Head Teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation.

If authorised, the child will sign out and be collected by the Parent/Carer from the front desk in reception. This is then recorded on the registers using MIS codes by the administration team.

Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance and other Legal Measures

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/Carer, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'.

Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. It is important that we always have an up-to-date contact number.

In education law, parents/Carer are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will manage this to ensure consistency and prevent conflict with other enforcement sanctions

for poor school attendance. Legislation allows Head Teachers & the Police to issue Penalty Notices. However, by agreement only the Local Authority will issue Penalty Notices in Somerset. If a Head Teacher or Police Officer feels it is appropriate for a Penalty Notice to be issued, they must consult with the EWS.

Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is considered in the following circumstances:

- There have been 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. in consultation with the EWS, believe this early intervention will resolve the poor attendance and stop the matter moving toward a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- If a Head Teacher does not authorise a request for term time leave and the parent takes the leave, there must be at least 10 continuous sessions of unauthorised term time leave taken.
- An excluded pupil is found in a public place, without their parent, during the school day. (A school is not deemed a public place for this legislation).

Penalty Notices should not be issued for children in care. Any attendance concerns will form part of their PEP. Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools' attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each Parent/Carers who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or Somerset County Council will decide whether a penalty notice is issued to one or more Parent/Carers for each child. Please note, this could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one penalty notice for each child to each parent.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is automatically increased to £160.

If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made.

If the fine remains unpaid the Somerset County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Somerset County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing penalty notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay. Monies collected should first be used for administration of the penalty notice system and prosecution. Any surplus left after this should be spent on attendance support.

For further information parents/Carers should visit the Somerset County Council website at: https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/school-attendance-and-children-missing-education/

REVIEWED: C. Cook September 2026

Appendix A

Unauthorised Absence

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school 404. The school has not granted a leave of absence, and the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday.

A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet established. Schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for absence has not yet been established before the register closes, the absence must be recorded with code N.

Where absence is recorded as code N (reason not yet established) in the attendance register, the correct absence code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 school days after the session (regulation 10(7) to (9)). Code N must not therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 school days, schools must amend the pupil's record to Code O.

Code O: Absent in other or unknown circumstances. Where no reason for the absence is established, or the school is not satisfied that the reason would be recorded using one of the codes statistically classified as authorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed Relevant regulation 10(7) and (8) 96 412. Where a pupil has arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session, and either no reason for the lateness is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason would be recorded using one of the codes statistically classified as authorised.

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent. All schools are expected to set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be recorded as absent. This should be the same for every session and not longer than 30 minutes.