

School Attendance Update September 2026

Important – please read

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Government Attendance Expectations and Supporting Student Attendance

As we start a new school year, I would like to thank you for the support you give to your child and to our schools. Coming to school every day gives children the best chance to do well.

Good attendance helps children:

- keep up with their learning;
- build strong friendships;
- feel part of school;
- develop good habits;
- feel more confident;
- prepare for their future.

Even a few days away from school can quickly add up. Across Central Regions Schools Trust, we want to work with families to help every child attend school as often as possible.

What You Can Expect From Us

Attendance is everyone's responsibility. If we notice that your child is starting to miss more school, we will contact you early. We do this so that we can understand what is happening and see how we can help.

Support may include:

- talking with you and your child;
- support from teachers, tutors or Heads of Year;
- meetings to agree next steps;
- wellbeing or SEND support;
- reasonable changes in school;
- support from our Attendance Team or Education Welfare Officer;
- help from other services where needed.

Our aim is to help early, before absence becomes a bigger problem.

Children Who Need Extra Support

We know that some children find it harder to attend school than others. This may include children with:

- special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- medical needs;
- mental health difficulties;
- difficult family or personal circumstances.

We still want these children to attend as much as they can, but we know that they may need extra help.

Schools will work with families to understand the problem and put the right support in place. If your child is finding school attendance difficult, please speak to us as early as you can.

How We Will Keep You Informed

Schools check attendance often. If your child starts to miss more school, you may receive:

- a phone call;
- a letter;
- an email;
- an invitation to a meeting.

This does not always mean that you are in trouble. It means that we want to work with you early and stop the problem from getting worse. A child is called persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of their school sessions. We do not wait until this point before offering help.

National Attendance Rules

The Government has national rules about school attendance and penalty notices. These rules continue to apply in the 2026/27 school year. Schools must consider a penalty notice when a child of compulsory school age has:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- Ten sessions are the same as five full school days.
- The 10-school-week period can cross different terms and school years.

For example, unauthorised absence at the end of one school year could count with further unauthorised absence at the start of the next.

Penalty Notices

If a penalty notice is issued:

- the first fine is £160 per parent, per child;
- this is reduced to £80 if it is paid within 21 days;
- a second fine for the same child within three years is £160;
- the second fine cannot be reduced;
- only two penalty notices can be given to the same parent for the same child within three years.

If the attendance threshold is reached again within those three years, another penalty notice cannot be given. Other legal action may then be considered. It is important to know that the three-year rule is about penalty notices, not about adding up all absences for three years.

Holidays During Term Time

Headteachers can only agree to leave during term time in exceptional circumstances. Each request will be looked at on its own. However, family holidays are not normally seen as an exceptional reason for missing school. Leave must also be requested before the absence takes place. Schools cannot usually authorise leave after it has already happened. If an unauthorised holiday reaches the national limit of 10 sessions in 10 school weeks, a penalty notice may be considered.

Our Approach – Support First

When a child is missing school because they are facing a real difficulty, our first aim is to help. We will work with families to:

- understand the problem;
- remove barriers where we can;
- agree what support is needed;
- review whether the support is working.

However, where absence is unauthorised and support is not needed, does not work or is not accepted, schools may need to take formal action.

Our aim is not to fine families. Our aim is to make sure children receive the education they need and deserve.

Attendance at Every Age

We want children to develop good attendance habits from the start of their education and keep them throughout school and Sixth Form.

The law about school attendance and penalty notices applies to children of compulsory school age. However, good attendance is important for all children and young people, including those in Nursery, Reception and Sixth Form.

Working Together

Our message for this school year is simple:

Every day matters. Every child matters. Attendance is everyone's responsibility.

If your child is struggling to attend school, please speak to us early.

We would always rather work with you to find a solution before absence becomes harder to improve. Thank you for your continued support.

By working together, we can give every child the best chance to attend, belong, achieve and thrive.

Yours sincerely,



Niall Brennan

Trust Attendance Lead,
Central Region Schools Trust

DATA SNAPSHOT

ATTENDANCE & ATTAINMENT



Central Region Schools Trust - Founded by the RSA

Understanding Attendance:

What the Percentages Really Mean

Attendance figures can be misleading at first glance. **95%** attendance means your child has missed **10 full days of school in a year** — that's two full weeks of learning. **90%** attendance means **19 days missed** — nearly a whole month. While 90% might sound good, it actually puts a child in the **persistent absence category**, which can have a real impact on progress and confidence. Every day really does count.



Attendance Band

95% Or above

National % at Expected Standard

61% meet national expected standard

90% Or below

30% meet national expected standard

Key Stage 2 (End of Primary - Year 6)

% of pupils Meeting Expected Standard in Reading, Writing & Maths

Even at the primary level, the pattern is clear: pupils with **strong attendance** are far more likely to meet or **exceed** the expected standards in core subjects by the end of Year 6.



Key Stage 4 (GCSE - Year 11)

% of students Achieving a GCSE Pass (Grade 4+) in English & Maths

By secondary school, the link between attendance and achievement becomes even stronger. National data (2019) shows that students with **higher attendance** are significantly more likely to **achieve** a Grade 4+ in English and Maths GCSEs. (Grade 4 is equivalent to a standard pass or old Grade C.)

Attendance Band

95% Or above

National % achieving Grade 4+ (Maths & Eng)

72% meet national expected standard

90% Or below

Less than 40% meet national expected

Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form - Year 13)

Post 16 Outcomes and Attendance



Although detailed national stats are limited, the same pattern holds at sixth form: students with high attendance are more likely to achieve strong A-Level or BTEC results. **Good attendance** helps build on earlier learning, prepares students for exams, and supports a **smoother transition** to university or employment. Every day still counts in Years 12 and 13.

Attendance Today, Success Tomorrow

Research shows that students with good attendance are more likely to achieve higher qualifications, which directly impacts future earnings. In fact, over a lifetime, someone with strong GCSEs can earn up to **£100,000** more than someone without them. Attendance isn't just about school — it's about setting up a successful future.



Source: Department for Education (DfE) and Education Policy Institute research on the link between attendance, attainment, and lifetime earnings.