

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Irlam Primary School • 2026–27

Respect • Achieve • Aspire

Policy owner	Senior Attendance Champion
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs L Freer, Assistant Headteacher
Overall accountability	Headteacher
Day-to-day contact	Attendance Lead, via the school office: 0161 560 8176
Approved by	Local Governing Board
Review	July 2027, or earlier if guidance or local arrangements change

This policy should be read alongside the safeguarding, SEND, supporting pupils with medical conditions, behaviour, children missing education and data protection policies.

1. Purpose and principles

Regular attendance and punctuality help pupils to belong, learn well and benefit fully from school life. At Irlam Primary School, attendance is everyone's responsibility and is promoted through our values of Respect, Achieve and Aspire.

- We set high expectations for attendance and punctuality while recognising that pupils and families can face genuine barriers.
- We work early and respectfully with pupils, parents and partners to understand barriers and agree practical support.
- We consider individual circumstances, including disability, special educational needs, physical or mental ill health, caring responsibilities and safeguarding concerns.
- We use accurate information to identify need, act and review impact. Attendance figures are never considered without context.
- Formal or legal action is considered when support has not worked, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy reflects the current requirements and guidance for schools in England, including:

- Education Act 1996, including parents' duty to secure regular attendance and local authority duties relating to education and attendance;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- Department for Education statutory guidance, Working together to improve school attendance, updated July 2026;
- Department for Education statutory guidance on children missing education, updated September 2025;
- Equality Act 2010 and the duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- current safeguarding and supporting pupils with medical conditions guidance.

The school will update its procedures when new provisions come into force or national or Salford guidance changes. References to legislation in this policy describe the position at the date of approval.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Local Governing Board and Trust

- promote the importance of attendance through the school's ethos and policies;
- support and challenge the school's strategy, including the use of data and the impact of support;
- receive regular reports on recent and historical attendance, persistent and severe absence, groups and priorities;
- ensure leaders have the capacity and training to fulfil their attendance responsibilities.

The Headteacher

- holds overall accountability for attendance and ensures this policy is applied consistently;
- ensures attendance work is connected to safeguarding, inclusion, curriculum, wellbeing and pupil premium strategy;
- makes decisions about leave of absence and authorises formal escalation in accordance with this policy and Salford arrangements.

The Senior Attendance Champion and Attendance Lead

- lead the school attendance strategy and communicate high expectations clearly;
- oversee accurate registers, first-day response, analysis and early identification;
- meet pupils and families, coordinate support and work with the Inclusion Manager, pastoral staff, teachers, Salford School Attendance Team and other services as needed;
- maintain secure, individual case records and review whether agreed actions are improving attendance;
- report to the Headteacher, governors and Trust using proportionate, anonymised information.

All school staff

- welcome pupils positively, take registers accurately and report concerns promptly;
- notice patterns, changes and possible barriers, including changes in presentation or engagement;
- support relational communication with pupils and families where appropriate, while sensitive casework and formal correspondence remain coordinated by the Attendance Lead;
- help pupils to reconnect with learning after absence without shame or lowered expectations.

Parents and carers

- ensure their child attends every day the school is open, on time and ready to learn;
- contact the school on every first day of absence before 9.15 am, explain the reason and advise how long the absence may last;
- keep contact details, including more than one emergency contact where possible, up to date;
- make routine appointments outside school time where possible and provide information reasonably requested by the school;
- request leave in advance and work with the school when attendance support is offered.

Pupils

- attend regularly and arrive on time, with support where needed;
- share worries or barriers with a trusted adult and contribute to support plans in an age-appropriate way.

4. The school day, registers and punctuality

The school is open for 32.5 hours each week. Gates open at 8.30 am, doors open at 8.40 am, registration begins at 8.45 am and the school day ends at 3.15 pm.

Session	Register taken	Register closes	Recording
Morning	8.45 am	9.15 am	Doors open at 8.40 am. Pupils arriving from 8.50 am to 9.15 am receive an L mark. Arrival after 9.15 am is recorded as unauthorised absence for the morning session unless another code applies.
Afternoon	1.20 pm	1.50 pm	Pupils are normally already in school. A return from an appointment or other exceptional absence is recorded using the appropriate national code and actual time of return.

Registers are taken electronically at the same time for all pupils in each session, using the national attendance and absence codes. Every entry is preserved for six years from the date it was made.

Punctuality concerns are addressed promptly and supportively. Repeated arrival after the register has closed contributes to unauthorised absence and may be considered under the national penalty notice framework.

5. Reporting absence and first-day response

Parents should report absence before 9.15 am by telephoning the school office on 0161 560 8176 or using the school's published absence contact route. They should give the reason and likely duration.

- Where a pupil is absent without explanation, the school will contact the first parent or carer promptly.
- If there is no response, the school will try other emergency contacts and consider further safeguarding action, including a welfare visit or contact with relevant professionals or the police where necessary.
- The school will establish the reason, decide whether the absence is authorised and enter the correct national code.
- A temporary N code will be followed up and replaced with the correct code as soon as possible and within five working days.
- Where a pupil has a social worker, youth offending team worker or other relevant professional, unexplained or concerning absence will be shared in line with safeguarding and statutory expectations.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. A parent's explanation does not itself authorise the absence. The school will apply the national codes and consider each request fairly and individually.

Illness and medical or dental appointments

- Parents should notify the school on each first day of illness and maintain contact during longer absence.
- Where possible, medical evidence should be provided.
- Routine appointments should be outside school time where possible. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend for the rest of the day and the school may ask for appointment information.
- For physical or mental ill health, the school will work with the pupil, family, Inclusion Manager and relevant services. Reasonable adjustments and reintegration support will be considered.
- Where illness is likely to prevent attendance for 15 school days, consecutively or cumulatively, the school will notify Salford and work with the local authority regarding suitable education and support.

Leave of absence

Requests must be made in advance to the Headteacher. Leave during term time is granted only in exceptional circumstances and for the period the Headteacher considers necessary. Each application is considered on its own facts. A holiday or leisure trip is not an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised.

Religious observance

Absence may be authorised for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belongs. The school may seek advice where necessary. Additional leave is considered individually under the leave of absence arrangements following guidance from the Local Authority.

Performances, activities and employment

Where a performance or activity requires a licence, parents must obtain the appropriate local authority licence. The school will apply the relevant national attendance code and consider any leave not already specified by the licence.

Children of mobile parents

Code T is used only where the regulatory conditions are met, including travel for occupational purposes. It is not a general authorisation for travel or holidays.

7. Supporting attendance

The school follows a graduated, support-first approach. Percentages help us identify possible need, but do not replace professional judgement or individual context.

Expect and prevent	Clear routines, positive welcome, an engaging curriculum, regular communication and early identification of changes or patterns.
Listen and understand	A respectful conversation with the pupil and family to understand barriers, strengths and what may help. Appropriate pupil voice is included.
Facilitate support	Agree practical actions, responsibilities and a review point. Support may involve teaching, pastoral, inclusion, medical, transport, housing, family or external services.
Formalise support	Where voluntary support is insufficient or not engaged with, consider an attendance contract or other formal plan in partnership with Salford. The plan remains specific, time-limited and regularly reviewed.
Enforce as a last resort	Where support has not worked, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate, the school and local authority may consider a Notice to Improve, penalty notice, Education Supervision Order or prosecution.

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible sessions. Severe absence means missing 50% or more. The school also acts before these thresholds where a pupil's attendance is declining, patterns are emerging or welfare is a concern.

Support and communication will be adapted where appropriate so that disabled pupils and pupils with SEND are not disadvantaged. The school will not lower expectations, but will consider reasonable adjustments, individual medical advice and the pupil's entitlement to suitable education.

8. Part-time timetables and reintegration

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to suitable full-time education. A temporary build-up timetable may be used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests, for example as part of a medical reintegration plan. It must not be used to manage behaviour.

- The Headteacher must agree the arrangement with the parent and relevant professionals.
- The plan must state its purpose, timetable, support, safeguarding arrangements, review dates and the intended return to full-time education or other suitable provision.
- It must be for the shortest necessary period and reviewed at least within Salford's required timescale, currently no later than six weeks.
- Salford must be notified in accordance with local procedures and the register must use the correct national codes.

9. Penalty notices and legal intervention

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions may be a combination of unauthorised absence codes and may span terms or school years. Reaching the threshold does not make a penalty notice automatic.

- Where appropriate, a Notice to Improve gives a clear improvement period before a penalty notice is considered.
- A first penalty notice for a pupil is £160 per parent, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second within three years is £160, payable within 28 days with no reduction.
- Only two penalty notices may be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within a rolling three-year period. Further offences may lead to other legal action.
- Salford Local Authority issues penalty notices in accordance with the national framework and its local code of conduct.

Where legal action is being considered, the school will ensure records clearly show the attendance concern, contact, support offered, actions agreed, reviews, the pupil's circumstances and the rationale for escalation.

10. Children missing education and safeguarding

Attendance is a safeguarding matter. The school follows current children missing education and safeguarding guidance, makes reasonable enquiries and works with the Local Authority before removing a pupil from the admission register.

Unexpected or unexplained absence, repeated absence, a failure to return and concerns about a pupil's welfare are considered alongside all known safeguarding information. Immediate risk is escalated without waiting for an attendance threshold.

11. Using information to improve attendance

The school uses its management information system as the official attendance record. Insight and other agreed reports may support analysis, discussion and planning but do not replace the statutory register.

- Daily: complete registers, follow up unexplained absence and correct coding.
- Weekly: review individual pupils, emerging patterns, lateness, unauthorised absence and pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- Half-termly: analyse whole-school, year-group and group patterns, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils known to social care, young carers and pupils with overlapping barriers.
- Termly: review priorities, the impact of support and trends with the Headteacher and governors, benchmarking against local, regional, national and similar-school information where available.
- Annually: evaluate the strategy, policy, workload and impact, and agree priorities for the following year.

Analysis includes authorised and unauthorised absence, punctuality, day and session patterns, reasons and codes, seasonal trends, movement into and out of persistent absence, and the response to support. Group figures are starting points for questions, not explanations in themselves.

Where appropriate, attendance information is considered alongside pupils' learning, wellbeing and wider context to identify missed learning and helpful next steps. It is not used to make simplistic claims that attendance alone caused an outcome.

12. Communication, recognition and confidentiality

- Parents receive clear, timely information about attendance, days missed, punctuality and the effect on access to learning.
- Recognition focuses on improvement, positive routines, resilience and contribution as well as high attendance. It is designed carefully so that pupils are not disadvantaged by disability, medical need or circumstances beyond their control.

13. Monitoring and review

The Senior Attendance Champion reviews implementation with the Headteacher. The Local Governing Board monitors strategy and impact. The policy is reviewed annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, Salford arrangements or school procedures change. Pupil and parent views are sought proportionately to improve communication and support.