ACADEMY
GREAT BARR

Attendance Policy

2026-27



Policy owner	Mr A Collins
Approval	Local Governing Body
Effective from	November 2026
Next review	November 2027

1. Purpose and scope

Regular and punctual attendance helps students learn, stay safe, and take part fully in school life. This policy explains Q3 Academy Great Barr's expectations, how to report and request absence, the support available, and when formal action may be considered.

Every child of compulsory school age is entitled to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational needs. Where a child is registered at school, their parents have a legal duty to make sure they attend regularly. A student remains of compulsory school age until the last Friday in June in the school year in which they turn 16.

The school records attendance for every student on roll, including sixth-form students and students aged 18. Students over compulsory school age must attend every session required by their timetable. The attendance legal interventions in section 11 apply only to students of compulsory school age.

In this policy, 'parent' includes a natural parent, anyone with parental responsibility, and anyone who has day-to-day care of the student.

2. Attendance contacts and responsibilities

The senior attendance champion is Mr A Collins, assistant headteacher responsible for attendance. Contact him through the parent/carer helpdesk.

For day-to-day attendance matters or individual support, students and parents should contact Mrs D Duckett or Mrs A Ruby through the parent/carer helpdesk or on 0121 358 6186.

The linked governor for attendance is Mrs A Connop.

Students must:

- attend every session required by their timetable
- arrive on time and ready to learn
- follow the agreed process if they arrive late or need to leave during the day
- speak to a member of staff if something is making attendance difficult

Parents must make sure a child of compulsory school age attends regularly and on time. They must report unexpected absence as set out in section 4 and request planned absence in advance.

Students over compulsory school age are responsible for their attendance and may report or request absence themselves. Parents should continue to support attendance, subject to the information-sharing arrangements in section 10.

Parents and students should work with the school and local authority to address attendance concerns and engage with appropriate support.

The headteacher decides whether to grant leave of absence and its length. The school decides the correct attendance code for each session.

3. The school day and punctuality

The school day operates as follows:

Event	Time
Voluntary Breakfast Club	8am to 8.30am
General site entry for students	8.30am
School day starts and students are due	8.40am
Morning register taken	8.40am
Morning register closes	9.10am
Afternoon register taken	midday
Afternoon register closes	12.30pm
School day ends	3.10pm

Each register will remain open for the same period and for no longer than 30 minutes.

Students must be on site and ready to start the school day by 8.40am.

A student who arrives after the register is taken but before it closes will receive code L. This records the student as attending but late. A student who arrives after the register closes will receive code U, unless another code applies. Code U is an unauthorised absence even though the student is known to be on site.

The school will contact parents where punctuality causes concern. Repeated code U absence can contribute to the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.

Parents should contact the attendance team promptly if there is a barrier to punctual attendance. The school will consider relevant individual circumstances and any support or reasonable adjustment needed.

4. Reporting unexpected absence

If a student cannot attend, their parent, or the student if they are over compulsory school age, must call the school on 0121 358 6186. They must do so before 8.45am on the first day and every further day of absence. If the call is unanswered, they must leave a message. State:

- the student's name and year group
- the reason for absence
- when the student is expected to return

Anyone who leaves a voicemail may receive a follow-up call before the school decides how to record the absence.

The parent or student reporting the absence must tell the school promptly if the reason or expected return date changes. Parents should keep contact and emergency-contact details up to date.

If the school has not received an explanation, the Attendance Team will try to contact the student or a parent, as appropriate, on the first and each further day of absence. It may:

- telephone, text, or email the student or parents
- contact the student's emergency contacts
- write to the home address
- make an unannounced home visit where this is proportionate to a safeguarding concern

The Attendance Team will refer safeguarding concerns promptly to the designated safeguarding lead under the school's safeguarding procedures.

Where a student has a social worker or youth offending team worker, the school will inform them of any unexplained absence.

The duty to report absence remains with the parent, or the student if they are over compulsory school age, even where the school makes contact.

The school will record an unexplained absence temporarily with code N. It will seek the reason and replace code N with the correct code as soon as possible and no later than 5 school days after the session. If the reason has not been established by then, the school will use code O.

If the school cannot establish a student's whereabouts or safety, it will follow its safeguarding and children missing education procedures. This may include contacting relevant professionals, children's social care, the police, or the local authority.

5. How absence is recorded

Each morning and afternoon counts as a separate session. The school records each session using the national attendance codes. Only the school can decide whether an absence is authorised and which code applies.

An authorised absence is one that meets the conditions for an authorised national code. Examples include:

- physical or mental illness that prevents attendance
- a medical or dental appointment for which leave has been granted
- religious observance on a day exclusively set apart by the religious body to which a parent belongs
- leave granted in advance by the headteacher
- an unavoidable cause that meets the statutory conditions

Absence is not authorised merely because a parent considers the reason acceptable. Unauthorised absence includes:

- an absence for which no reason has been established
- an absence where the reason does not meet an authorised-code condition
- arrival after the register closes where no authorised code applies
- a holiday or other leisure absence for which leave was not granted
- shopping, day trips, or birthdays
- staying at home to look after another child or accompany someone else to an appointment

- leave taken after a request was refused or without applying in advance

Where transport normally provided by the school or local authority is unavailable, the code will depend on the statutory conditions. An ordinary transport difficulty affecting the parent does not automatically authorise absence. Parents should contact the school immediately so it can consider the circumstances and any available support.

Remote education does not count as attendance at school. A student receiving remote education while absent will still receive the national absence code that best describes why they cannot attend.

6. Illness, medical needs, SEND, and disability

Parents, or students over compulsory school age, should report illness using the process in section 4. Illness includes physical and mental ill health. In most cases, the school will accept their notification that the student is too ill to attend.

The school will not routinely ask for medical evidence or operate a blanket evidence rule. It may request reasonable evidence where it has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness. It may also seek evidence to understand and support a prolonged or repeated pattern of illness.

Where evidence is needed, the school will discuss the circumstances and consider different forms of relevant evidence. These may include appointment information, prescriptions, medication, or a letter from a health professional. Parents must provide available evidence when reasonably requested and make sure the student returns as soon as they are well enough.

Medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside school hours where possible. If this is not possible, a parent or a student over compulsory school age should request leave in advance. The student should miss only the time needed for the appointment and attend before or after it where practical.

Students and families should contact the attendance team where physical health, mental health, SEND, disability, caring responsibilities, or another vulnerability affects attendance. Support is based on individual need and may include pastoral support, a phased return, or work with external services. Students remain entitled to required SEND provision and reasonable adjustments for disability.

High attendance expectations apply to all students, but fair treatment does not always mean identical treatment. The school will consider equality duties, safeguarding, the student's best interests, and the barriers faced. Support or a reasonable adjustment may accompany action to improve attendance.

Where health prevents attendance, the student remains entitled to suitable education. Remote education is a last resort, considered after reasonable adjustments and as part of reintegration planning.

Pregnancy-related needs will be considered individually and without discrimination.

7. Planned absence and leave of absence

For a student of compulsory school age, a parent must request planned absence in writing using Sandwell's leave request form. The Attendance Team provides the form. Parents should submit the completed form at least 10 days before the leave begins. The headteacher will consider any request received before the absence on its individual facts. Leave cannot be granted retrospectively.

If the student will be over compulsory school age at the time of the absence, the student or a parent they normally live with may make the request. The request should give the dates, explain the reason, and provide the relevant circumstances.

Only the headteacher may grant leave. The headteacher will consider each request individually, including its facts, background, timing, and effect on the student's education. If leave is granted, the headteacher will decide its length. Good previous attendance does not, by itself, make a request exceptional.

The school may grant leave for:

- a medical or dental appointment that cannot reasonably take place outside school hours
- a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad, subject to any required licence or approval
- an interview for admission to another educational institution or for employment
- study leave for public examinations, agreed in advance
- a temporary part-time timetable in the circumstances set out in section 8
- another exceptional circumstance considered on its individual merits

Study leave will be used sparingly. It will not be granted for internal examinations such as mocks. Where study leave is granted, school-based study provision will remain available to students who wish to attend.

A holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation is not normally an exceptional circumstance. The school will not grant leave for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours.

If a student takes leave that was not granted, the school will record the absence as unauthorised. This applies whether no request was made or a request was refused.

Where unauthorised leave meets the national threshold, the school will normally ask Sandwell Council to consider a penalty notice for each responsible parent.

When deciding whether to refer, the school will consider the individual circumstances and equality duties. Sandwell Council will decide whether issuing a notice is appropriate and in the public interest.

There is no statutory appeal against a headteacher's leave decision. A student or parent may raise a concern about how the decision was made under the Trust's 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy and Procedure'.

8. Part-time timetables and education off site

A student of compulsory school age is entitled to suitable full-time education. The school may agree a temporary part-time timetable only in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the student's best interests and meets an individual need.

A part-time timetable will:

- have the agreement of the school and a parent with whom the student normally lives
- form part of a wider support, health, or reintegration plan
- state the sessions the student must attend
- have a proposed end date and regular reviews involving the student and parent

- last only as long as necessary

The school will involve the student's social worker where they have one. It will discuss the arrangement with the local authority where the student has an education, health and care plan.

A part-time timetable will not be used as a behaviour sanction or to manage behaviour. Sessions the school has agreed the student need not attend will be recorded with the appropriate national code.

A sixth-form student over compulsory school age may have a timetable that does not require attendance at every session. The school will agree the required sessions with the student or a parent they normally live with. Absence from a session the student is required to attend will receive the appropriate attendance or absence code.

Approved education away from school, such as work experience, a school visit, or attendance at another school where the student is dual registered, is recorded using the relevant national code. Students must attend the agreed provision, and unexpected absence must be reported as set out in section 4.

The school will arrange prompt confirmation of a student's attendance at approved off-site provision and follow up any unexplained or unexpected absence. It will use the relevant national attendance code only where the statutory conditions are met.

Remote education is not an approved off-site attendance activity and is recorded as set out in sections 5 and 6.

9. Monitoring, promotion, and support

The school uses individual and group attendance patterns, alongside progress, safeguarding, SEND, and other relevant information, to identify concerns early and target support.

A student is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions. This includes authorised and unauthorised absence. A student is severely absent when they miss 50% or more of possible sessions.

Where persistent or severe absence is a concern, the attendance team will work with the student and family to understand barriers and agree and review appropriate support. More intensive support may be needed as absence increases.

The school will listen to and consider the student's views when identifying attendance barriers, planning support, and reviewing whether that support is effective.

Where a student has a social worker or youth offending team worker, or has identified young-carer responsibilities, the school will work with relevant professionals and consider the student's individual circumstances when identifying barriers, agreeing support, and responding to absence.

Support may include:

- an individual action or support plan, reviewed with the family
- work with the education welfare officer from VIP Education or Sandwell Schools Attendance Support Service
- support from a Sandwell nurse, mental health and emotional wellbeing service, Child and Family Support Worker, or relevant local-authority team

- a Team Around the Family meeting where several services are involved
- a referral to another suitable service or signposting towards one
- a formal attendance contract or work with the local authority where voluntary support is not effective or is not engaged with

The response will depend on the individual circumstances. Support and formal action may be used together, as set out in section 11.

The school will report attendance to parents regularly. It will explain the time missed and the effect on learning and progress. It will contact parents when a pattern or concern emerges.

The school promotes attendance through communications with families and recognition and rewards for good or improving attendance and punctuality. Rewards will take account of disability-related absence and other protected circumstances.

10. Attendance data, safeguarding, and records

Attendance information is shared with the Department for Education, the local authority, and relevant partners where required or lawfully necessary for education, attendance support, or safeguarding.

Absence can be a warning sign of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or another safeguarding risk. The school will follow its 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy' where a concern arises. It will make reasonable enquiries with the local authority before removing a student's name from the admission register where the law requires this. It will not remove a student from roll unless a statutory ground applies.

The school will handle personal information under the Trust's 'Data Protection Policy' and applicable data protection law. It will disclose only information for which there is a lawful basis and will protect third-party and confidential information.

Where a student is aged 18, the school will handle their information as an adult's personal data. It will involve parents only with the student's consent or where another lawful basis permits.

11. Formal attendance intervention

Formal attendance intervention applies only where the student is of compulsory school age. Decisions are made case by case. The school and local authority will consider the reason for absence, support offered, engagement, safeguarding, equality duties, and which action is most likely to improve attendance.

Support will normally be considered before enforcement. This does not require the school or local authority to offer unsuitable support, such as where the matter is an unauthorised term-time holiday.

Attendance contracts

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school or local authority. It sets out attendance actions and support. It is not legally binding or a punishment, and a parent cannot be compelled to enter one. It cannot be agreed in the parent's absence.

Failure to comply does not itself create an offence. It may, however, be relevant when the school or local authority decides whether a different intervention is needed.

Notices to improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is considered. It will usually be considered where the national threshold has been met, support is appropriate, and previous support has not worked or has not been engaged with.

The school or Sandwell Council may issue the notice. Under the national framework and Sandwell's local code, the improvement period will be at least 3 weeks and no more than 20 school days. The notice explains the required improvement, available support, and possible consequences. A notice is not required where support is inappropriate or it is unlikely to change behaviour.

Penalty notices

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. It may be met by any combination of codes G, N, O, and U. The sessions do not have to be consecutive, and the period may span terms or academic years.

This is a threshold for mandatory consideration, not an allowance for absence. Sandwell Council may consider a notice before the threshold where the law and local code allow. This may include absence identified during or following a truancy sweep.

Reaching the threshold does not make a penalty notice automatic. The school will consider the individual case and refer it to Sandwell Council where appropriate. Sandwell Council decides whether to issue a penalty notice under the national framework and local code.

A penalty notice may be issued to each parent considered responsible for each child. Usually, this will be the parent or parents who allowed the absence, regardless of who made any leave request.

For a first penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, the penalty is £160. It reduces to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second notice within that period is £160, payable within 28 days.

Only 2 penalty notices may be issued to the same parent for the same child within 3 years. A third cannot be issued within that period. If a further offence occurs, the local authority will consider another response, which may include prosecution.

This limit does not count a notice for absence before 19 August 2024, a withdrawn notice, or a notice about presence in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion. It also excludes a notice where non-payment led to prosecution and the parent was acquitted.

There is no statutory right of appeal against a penalty notice. If it is not paid within 28 days, the local authority must decide whether to prosecute the original attendance offence or withdraw the notice. Non-payment does not automatically lead to prosecution.

Prosecution and court orders

Only the local authority can prosecute an attendance offence. Prosecution is normally a last resort where support or other intervention has failed, has not been engaged with, or is inappropriate.

The ordinary offence of failing to secure regular attendance can result in a fine of up to £1,000. The more serious offence applies where a parent knows their child is failing to attend regularly and does not ensure attendance. It can result in a fine of up to £2,500, a community order, or up to 3 months' imprisonment. A conviction creates a criminal record.

The local authority must fully consider an Education Supervision Order before prosecution. It may apply to the Family Court for this order so it can advise, support, and direct the child and parent to secure suitable education. The court may also make a Parenting Order following an attendance conviction.

A School Attendance Order is different. The local authority may use one where it considers that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving suitable education and the statutory process has been followed. It concerns securing a school place or suitable education, not the school's decision on an individual absence. Failure to comply can lead to prosecution.

12. Questions, corrections, and complaints

Students and parents should first contact the attendance team if they believe an attendance record is factually wrong or want an explanation of a code. The school will consider any relevant information and correct the record where required.

A concern about the school's application of this policy may be raised under the Trust's 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy and Procedure'. A complaint does not normally suspend an attendance decision or external legal process.

Statutory notices and court documents have their own procedures. The relevant document will explain any representation, response, review, or court rights. A school complaint cannot determine a decision by the local authority or a court.

Under Sandwell's code, a dispute about a penalty-notice referral should be raised with the headteacher. There is no statutory appeal against the notice, although the local authority may withdraw one on the limited grounds allowed by law.

Requests concerning personal information will be handled under the Trust's 'Data Protection Policy'. A student or parent is not automatically entitled to another person's confidential information.