

Bassingbourn Village College

Attendance Policy

Approved/Ratified by Governors on	28 th September 2022
Review cycle	Annually
Date of next review	September 2023

College Aim:

To know all our students and treat them as individuals, developing leadership at all levels. To provide a wide variety of opportunities and experiences through a personalised and engaging curriculum. To nurture individuals to have high aspirations, a love of learning and to become confident, responsible, respectful, resilient, healthy and independent members of society prepared for life and work in the 21st century.

Please read this Policy in conjunction with the BVC Expectations for Learning Policy and BVC Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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Introduction:

This is a successful college and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to aim for excellence. Bassingbourn Village College expects attendance to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

We acknowledge the proven correlation between high level attendance and student outcomes. This Attendance Policy emphasises positive strategies and a range of interventions to ensure the highest levels of attendance.

Absence during term-time interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and fragments learning. Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

Attendance is a national priority. Research shows that student attendance of less than 95% can impact on student attainment by as much as a grade or level.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Legislation and guidance:

This policy meets the requirements of the [College attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [College attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern College attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [College census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Legal sanctions:

The College or Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from College, where the child is of compulsory College age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during College hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent YOU MUST:

Contact us as soon as possible on each day of absence; Using the absence phone line (01763 242344) or by email (absence@bassingbournvc.org)

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you if we have not heard from you
- Contact you to discuss the situation with the relevant member of staff if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Attendance Authority Officer if appropriate

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility; parents, students and all members of College staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you at least twice a year on how your child is performing in College, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and certificates.
- Run promotional events when parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the College.
- Provide attendance references to potential employers/colleges.

Understanding authorised and unauthorised absence:

Every half-day absence from College has to be classified by the College (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from College for a good reason. The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidelines to all Colleges detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- absence due to an exceptional or unavoidable family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

Unauthorised absences are those which the College does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. DfE guidelines state that the following activities are examples that would be classified as **unauthorised** :

- Parents/carers keeping children off College unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the College day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at College too late to get an attendance mark at Registration
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be off College because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend College. Any problem with regular attendance is best sorted out between the College, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is not a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Leave of absence:

Government Legislation which came into effect in September 2013 states that it is now illegal for any Principal to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence. Therefore, Bassingbourn Village College will not consider authorising a leave of absence during term time unless exceptional or unavoidable reasons for the absence are detailed in a letter for the attention of the Principal. This should be handed into the office at least two weeks before the period of absence requested.

Contact Details:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers and emails throughout the year.

Punctuality

It is a legal requirement that your child attends College both regularly and punctually.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable at Bassingbourn Village College. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital work and information.

The College day starts at 8:55am and the afternoon session starts at 1:40pm.

If a child arrives late to College, for example due to a dental appointment, a note must accompany the child on their return which they will give to the Attendance Administrator, Mrs Jones, when they sign in. In this case the absence will be recorded as authorised.

Achievement leaders will follow up lateness with individual students. In cases of persistent lateness parents may be asked to attend a meeting with a member of the Attendance team and the Local Attendance Authority Office may be informed.

College Targets

Good punctuality and attendance is the key to success and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the country therefore we expect attendance at College to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence as outlined.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this College are:

- Mentors
- Achievement Leaders
- Members of the Student Support Team
- Ms V Larkins, Deputy Principal
- Ms V Poulter, Principal

Summary:

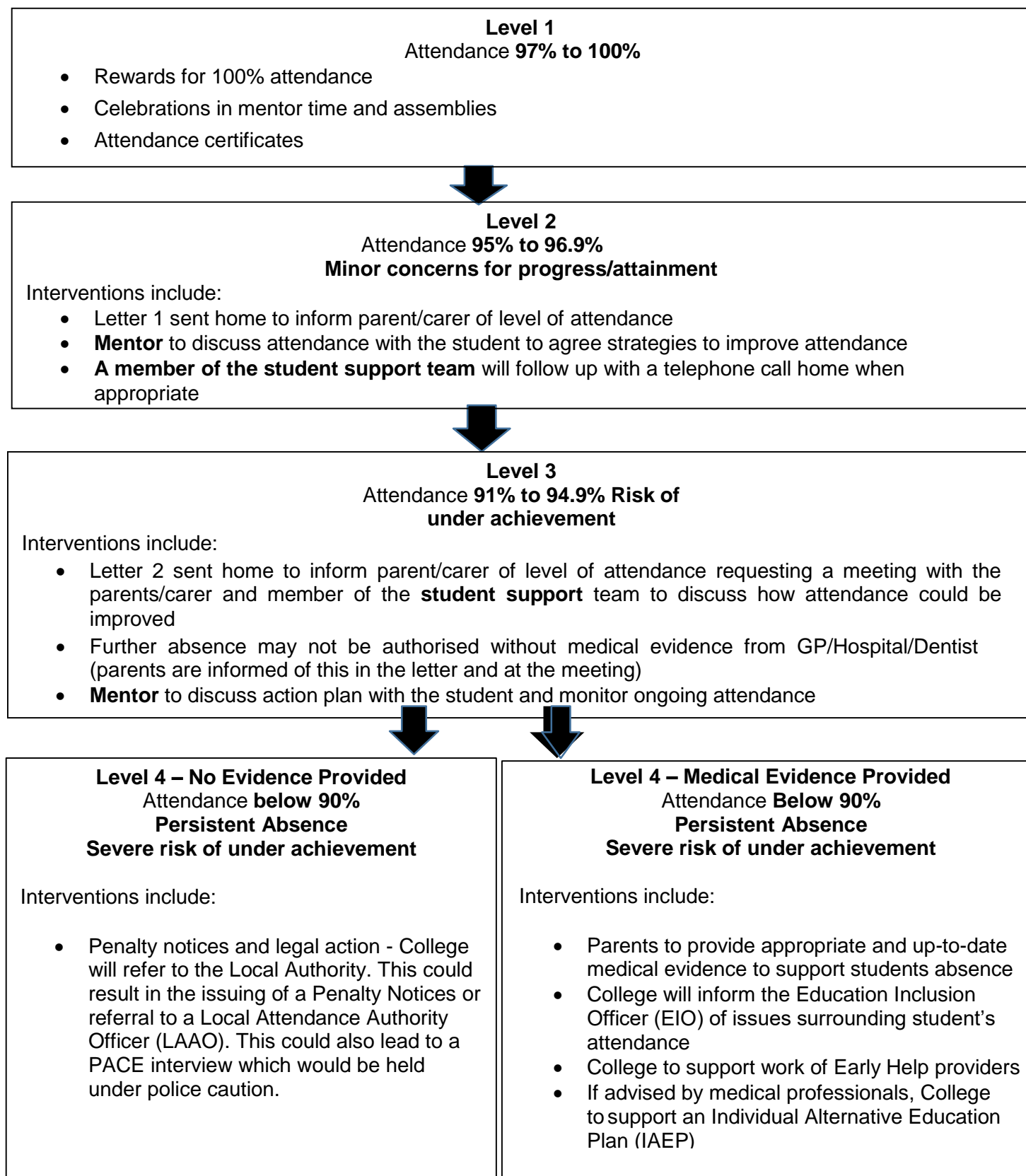
The College has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All College staff are committed to working with parents and students in order to achieve the highest level of attendance.

APPENDIX A

BASSINGBOURN VILLAGE COLLEGE ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Improving attendance is a whole College initiative. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility including parents, students and all members of College staff. The diagram below highlights the whole College approach to attendance. These actions will be applied in the majority of cases but they are dependent on context.



APPENDIX B

LETTER 1 – Letter to parents

Dear

Parent/Carer

(Student's

name)

I would like to advise you that (student's name)'s College attendance has fallen to (attendance figure)% putting them at risk of missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of (student's name)'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

We expect attendance at College to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence. Regular attendance is extremely important as missing College can have an impact on learning and attainment, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement.

We will continue to monitor (student's name)'s attendance and we look forward to seeing an improvement. We of course recognise that there may be situations out of your control that prevent your student from attending such as illness or medical appointments however in this instance we do require evidence.

If there are any particular circumstances that the College may not be aware of which are having an influence on (student's name) attending College regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

LETTER 2 – Letter to parents

Dear

(STUDENT NAME)

I am writing to inform you that (STUDENTS NAME) attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting (STUDENTS NAME) progress and we need to meet with you. Expected attendance at College is 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence supported by appropriate evidence.

You are required to attend a meeting with a member of the attendance team to discuss the matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should (STUDENTS NAME) attendance remain irregular we may be required to take more formal action.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve (STUDENTS NAME) attendance. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Penalty Notice - Code of conduct

Introduction

1. Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 local education authority officers, headteachers and the police have the discretionary power to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.
2. The new power provides an alternative to prosecution of parents under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days.
3. Should the Penalty Notice remain unpaid or have been paid only in part at the end of the 28 day period Cambridgeshire County Council must prosecute the parents for the offence to which the notice relates, or, in specified circumstances (see section 29 below), withdraw the notice.
4. Penalty Notices may only be issued in Cambridgeshire in accordance with the terms of this Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that the power is applied fairly and consistently across the County Council and that suitable arrangements are in place for the effective and efficient administration of the scheme.
5. In implementing this Code of Conduct the County Council will liaise when appropriate with neighbouring education and police authorities.
6. This Code of Conduct has been drafted in accordance with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004: Statutory Instrument 2004 No 181 and guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills.
7. In preparing this Code of Conduct the County Council has consulted with Cambridgeshire headteachers and the Chief Officer of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. This complies with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007.

Circumstances in which Penalty Notices may be issued

8. Penalty Notice may be considered as an alternative to prosecution for failure to ensure regular school attendance in any given period of unauthorised school attendance as below:

8a. Unauthorised absence

As the Government changed the PA (Persistent Absence) threshold to 90% (in effect from Sept. 2015), the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice in relation to a child whose attendance at school is 90% or less over a given period. There must be at least 8 unauthorised sessions over an 8 week period with all absences recorded as unauthorised or 90% and below mostly unauthorised over a longer period. To allow time and opportunity for early intervention work with the family, attendance will be monitored by school and Local Authority before enforcement actions are considered. Such a Fine is intended to offer a rapid intervention, which may be used to address non-school attendance before it becomes entrenched, following guidance in section 13 of 'PN Code of Conduct'.

8b. Unauthorised term time leave (includes holiday)

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a

Penalty Notice. Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with a 'G' code in the attendance register. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. (The Supreme Court Judgement in the case between Isle of Wight Council v Platt (6th April 2017) clarified the meaning of regular school attendance in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996. To attend school "regularly" means "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".)

Procedural guidelines

9. The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a Penalty Notice should be whether it is considered likely to be effective in helping the child to whom it relates to return to regular attendance.
10. Before issuing a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence (refer to section 8A), due consideration should be given to other strategies which may help return the child concerned to regular school attendance. Such strategies might include:
 - a) writing to the child's parents to remind them of their legal responsibilities;
 - b) meeting with the child's parents;
 - c) ensuring a first-day response to any absence;
 - d) setting targets for improvement;
 - e) involvement of other services/agencies.

These strategies do not apply to term time leave / holiday. (refer to section 8B)

11. It is expected that schools will communicate with parents and issue a warning about potential Penalty Notice fine being issued for unauthorised absences. This warning can be in the form of communication sent to parents via school Newsletters, School Web page as well as any direct mail sent to individual parents
12. Head teachers and police officers should only issue a Penalty Notice following consultation, discussion, reflection and joint decision with County Council Attendance Legal Panel.
13. The Local Authority will not agree to sanction the issuing of a Penalty Notice unless he/she considers that with regard to the offence to which it relates there is sufficient evidence to secure a conviction under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Evidence could be letters sent to parent, minutes of meetings and record of telephone conversations.
14. A maximum of three Penalty Notices may be served on any one parent over a 12-month period.
15. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice. A parent should therefore, if possible, be given warning of the possibility of a notice being issued (refer section 13) in order to allow him/her to make representations should he/she wish to do so. If a head teacher refuses to authorise any absence or requests for holidays during term time and parents are not happy with the decision, they should make representations to the Governing Body of the school. They should not wait and make a representation to the County Council once a Penalty Notice has been issued.

Authority to Issue a Penalty Notice

16. The Attendance Legal Panel may issue a Penalty Notice to the parent of a child who is a registered pupil at a school in Cambridgeshire or who is a registered pupil at a school in an authority, which has an agreement to that effect with Cambridgeshire County Council.

17. A headteacher or an authorised deputy or assistant headteacher may issue a Penalty Notice to the parent of a child who is registered at his/her school, in consultation with CCC Attendance Legal Panel.
18. A police officer, including a community support officer or other accredited person, may issue a Penalty Notice.
19. Head teachers and Police Officers should comply with the terms of this Code of Conduct when issuing a Penalty Notice and should provide a copy of any notice issued to the Attendance Legal Panel.

Form and Content of Penalty Notices

20. A Penalty Notice should give the following particulars alleged to constitute the offence to which the notice relates and should contain:
 - a) the name and address of the person to whom the notice is issued;
 - b) the name and address of the child who is failing to attend school regularly and the name of the school at which he/she is a registered pupil;
 - c) the name, title and official details of the authorised person issuing the notice;
 - d) the date of the offence and of the issue of the notice;
 - e) the amount of the penalty which is to be paid and details of the timescales and any variation involved;
 - f) the address of the County Council office at which the penalty is to be paid and to which any correspondence relating to the notice may be sent;
 - g) the method/methods by which payment may be made;
 - h) the specified period within which the penalty should be paid;
 - i) a statement that full payment within the specified period will discharge any liability for the offence;
 - j) an explanation of the consequences should the penalty not be paid in full before the expiry of the specified period;
 - k) an explanation of the grounds on which the notice may be withdrawn.
21. Should there be more than one person liable for the offence (Section 576 Education Act 1996) a separate notice should be issued to each person, per each child.
22. Should the offence involve more than one child a separate notice should be issued for each child, per each parent.

Service of Penalty Notices

23. A Penalty Notice may be served by:
 - a) giving it to the recipient; or
 - b) leaving it at the recipient's usual or last-known address; or
 - c) sending it to the recipient at that address by first-class post.
24. Service by post is deemed to have been effected, unless the contrary is proved, on the second working day after posting the notice by first-class post.

Methods of Payment

25. The preferred method of payment of a Penalty Notice would be on-line payment via the Cambridgeshire County Council website. However, alternatives methods are available on request. Late or part payments (including instalments) will not be accepted and no reminders will be sent.

Failure to Pay a Penalty Notice

26. Should the recipient of a Penalty Notice fail to pay the full amount before the expiry of the period for paying it the County Council will either begin proceedings against the parent under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or withdraw the notice in accordance with specified conditions (see section 29 below).
27. An electronic record will be retained to monitor that the recipient of a Penalty Notice has or has not paid the amount due on or before the date specified and presented as evidence in any subsequent Section 444 Education Act 1996 proceedings.

Withdrawal of a Penalty Notice

28. A Penalty Notice may be withdrawn by the County Council, regardless of whom within the authority issued it, if it is deemed that:
 - a) the notice ought not to have been issued (i.e. where it has been issued outside of the terms of this Code of Conduct or where no offence has been committed); or
 - b) the notice ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient.
29. Should a Penalty Notice be withdrawn:
 - a) notice of the withdrawal should be given to the recipient;
 - b) any amount already paid by the recipient should be reimbursed;
 - c) any proceedings under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 instituted against the recipient should be discontinued.

Retention of Receipts and Revenue Collection

30. The County Council will retain all revenue from the issuing of Penalty Notices in order to cover the costs of issuing and enforcing notices and the cost of prosecuting those recipients of the notices who fail to pay.
31. The County Council will produce an annual audit statement as part of its usual audit procedures in order to show that income received from Penalty Notices does not exceed enforcement costs as defined above. Any surplus acquired will be surrendered to a consolidated fund.

Appendix D – Attendance Codes

- # -Not a school day;
- B – Off site education activity
- C - Other authorised circumstances
- D – Dual registers at another educational establishment
- E - Fixed term exclusion
- G - Family holiday (not agreed)
- I - Illness
- J – At an interview with prospective employers or another educational establishment
- L - Late (before registers closed)
- M - Medical appointment
- N - No reason provided
- O - Unauthorised absence
- P - Approved sporting activity
- R – Religious observance
- S – Study leave
- T – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- U – Late (after registers closed)
- V - Educational visit
- W – Work experience
- X - Non-compulsory school age absence
- Y - Enforced closure
- Z -Not on roll