



Kick Start Futures

Attendance Policy

Belong • Engage • Achieve

Policy Date: August 2026

Review Date: August 2027

1. Policy Statement

At Kick Start Futures, we believe that **attendance begins with belonging**.

Young people are more likely to attend, engage and achieve when they feel safe, valued, understood and successful.

We recognise that many students referred to alternative provision have experienced significant barriers to attendance. These may include anxiety, SEND, previous negative experiences of education, disrupted relationships, family circumstances or difficulties with emotional regulation.

Our response to poor attendance is therefore **relational, supportive and curious**, while maintaining clear expectations about the importance of attending education.

We do not simply ask:

"Why aren't they attending?"

We also ask:

"What is making attendance difficult, and what can we do together to help?"

Regular attendance provides students with greater opportunities to build relationships, develop confidence, achieve qualifications and make progress towards their next steps.

2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- promote good attendance and punctuality;
- establish clear attendance expectations;
- identify absence quickly;
- safeguard students who do not attend as expected;
- identify and address barriers to attendance;
- work effectively with parents/carers and commissioning schools;
- provide accurate attendance information;
- support students to re-engage following periods of absence;
- recognise and celebrate improved attendance.

3. Our Approach

KSF takes a **support-first approach with clear expectations**.

We recognise that attendance difficulties are rarely solved by simply telling a young person to attend.

Where attendance becomes a concern, we will seek to understand:

- what is preventing attendance;
- how the student feels about their placement;
- whether SEND or additional needs are contributing;
- whether relationships or peer difficulties are involved;

- whether the timetable or programme requires adjustment;
- what support has worked previously;
- what the student believes would help.

Students will be involved in these conversations wherever appropriate.

Support does not remove expectations. Students are expected to attend all agreed KSF sessions unless there is a legitimate reason for absence.

4. Legal and Guidance Framework

KSF will work in accordance with relevant current legislation and guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Children Act 1989;
- Children Act 2004;
- Equality Act 2010;
- **Working Together to Improve School Attendance** – current statutory guidance;
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education** – current edition;
- relevant Department for Education guidance relating to alternative provision and attendance.

Where a student remains registered at another school, that school retains its statutory responsibilities for the student's attendance and registration.

KSF will support those responsibilities by providing accurate and timely attendance information and raising concerns promptly.

5. Shared Responsibility

Successful attendance requires partnership.

Kick Start Futures

KSF will:

- record attendance accurately for every agreed session;
- identify unexplained absence promptly;
- contact parents/carers and/or commissioning schools as agreed;
- share attendance information with commissioning schools;
- identify patterns of absence or lateness;
- raise safeguarding concerns promptly;
- work with students and families to overcome barriers;
- provide a welcoming return following absence.

Commissioning Schools

Where the student remains on the roll of a commissioning school, the school retains responsibility for:

- maintaining the statutory admission and attendance registers;
- determining the appropriate statutory attendance code;

- monitoring the student's overall attendance;
- considering statutory attendance intervention where necessary.

KSF and the commissioning school will agree appropriate arrangements for exchanging attendance information.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- support regular attendance;
- ensure students arrive at the agreed time;
- notify KSF promptly when a student will be absent;
- provide the reason for absence;
- keep contact details up to date;
- work with KSF and the commissioning school where attendance difficulties arise.

Students

Students are encouraged to:

- attend every agreed session;
- arrive on time;
- communicate when something is making attendance difficult;
- participate in plans designed to improve attendance;
- recognise the connection between attendance and achieving their goals.

6. Recording Attendance

Attendance will be recorded at the beginning of each KSF session.

Records will identify whether the student is:

- present;
- absent;
- late;
- attending an approved alternative activity where relevant.

KSF attendance records will be shared with commissioning schools through agreed reporting arrangements.

7. Expected Absence

Parents/carers should notify KSF as soon as possible when a student is unable to attend.

Where possible, notification should be received before the student's expected start time and should include:

- the student's name;
- reason for absence;
- expected duration where known.

KSF will record the information and share it with the commissioning school in accordance with agreed arrangements.

Parents/carers may also need to report absence directly to the commissioning school.

8. Unexplained Absence

Where a student expected at KSF does not arrive and no explanation has been received, staff will act promptly.

KSF will:

1. check that the student has not arrived elsewhere on site;
2. check available messages or information;
3. contact the parent/carer;
4. inform or liaise with the commissioning school in accordance with agreed arrangements;
5. consider whether the absence presents a safeguarding concern.

If the student's whereabouts cannot be established or there are concerns for their welfare, the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** will be informed immediately.

Further action will be determined according to the individual circumstances and level of risk.

Unexplained absence is always considered from both an attendance and safeguarding perspective.

9. Punctuality

Arriving on time helps students settle, connect with staff and participate fully in their programme.

Where a student is regularly late, staff will seek to understand what is contributing to this rather than responding punitively.

Support may include:

- adjusting morning routines;
- discussing transport difficulties;
- agreeing a supported arrival;
- reviewing anxiety or transition needs;
- working with families and commissioning schools.

Persistent lateness will be monitored and discussed with the student, parent/carer and commissioning school where appropriate.

10. Barriers to Attendance

Where attendance begins to decline, KSF will respond early.

Potential barriers may include:

- emotionally based school avoidance;
- anxiety;
- SEND or sensory needs;
- transport difficulties;
- peer relationships;
- bullying;
- difficulties at home;
- physical or mental health needs;
- previous experiences of education;
- difficulty managing transitions or routines.

Depending on the circumstances, support may include:

- a trusted adult meeting the student on arrival;
- gradual re-engagement;
- changes to the programme where appropriate;
- increased communication with home;
- additional regulation support;
- reasonable adjustments;
- work with the commissioning school or other professionals.

The aim is always to **remove barriers while maintaining the expectation that education matters.**

11. Returning Following Absence

Students returning after absence will be welcomed positively.

Staff should avoid interactions that make a young person feel ashamed or anxious about returning.

Where appropriate, staff will:

- check in with the student;
- identify whether additional support is needed;
- help them reconnect with the group;
- agree manageable next steps;
- recognise the achievement of returning.

Where absence has been prolonged, an individual reintegration plan may be agreed with the student, family and commissioning school.

The first successful step back through the door matters.

12. Persistent and Severe Absence

Where attendance becomes a continuing concern, KSF will work with the student, parent/carer and commissioning school to understand the barriers and agree appropriate support.

We will consider:

- patterns in absence or lateness;
- the student's views;
- SEND or health needs;
- family or transport circumstances;
- relationships and peer issues;
- whether the current programme remains appropriate;
- support already tried and its impact.

Where necessary, an **Attendance Support Plan** may be developed with clear, achievable steps towards improved attendance.

Where attendance remains persistently or severely low, the commissioning school will be informed promptly so that it can consider any further action required under its statutory attendance responsibilities.

13. Safeguarding and Absence

Attendance is an important part of safeguarding.

Repeated, unexplained or unexpected absence may indicate that a young person requires additional support or is at risk of harm.

Staff should remain alert to concerns including:

- unexplained changes in attendance;
- repeated absence without clear reason;
- concerns about the student's whereabouts;
- exploitation;
- neglect;
- family difficulties;
- reluctance to return home;
- concerning information shared by the student;
- patterns of absence linked to particular days, people or activities.

Where an absence raises a safeguarding concern, staff must inform the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** without delay.

Safeguarding procedures will take priority where necessary.

14. Children Missing Education

A student who repeatedly fails to attend education or whose whereabouts become unknown may require additional safeguarding action.

KSF will promptly share concerns with the commissioning school and, where appropriate, other professionals involved with the student.

Where the student remains registered at another school, the commissioning school retains responsibility for statutory Children Missing Education procedures.

KSF will provide relevant attendance and safeguarding information to support that process.

A student's placement will **not simply be removed because they have stopped attending** without appropriate communication, review and consideration of safeguarding concerns.

15. SEND and Reasonable Adjustments

KSF recognises that students with SEND may experience additional barriers to attendance.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- supported arrival;
- predictable routines;
- access to a trusted adult;
- sensory or regulation support;
- gradual increases in attendance;
- adapted activities;
- changes to transitions;
- visual schedules or communication support.

Adjustments will be based on individual need and reviewed to ensure they are helping the student move towards meaningful and sustainable engagement.

Reduced attendance should not become the default response to SEND.

Where a temporary reduced programme is considered necessary, this will be agreed carefully with the commissioning school, family and relevant professionals and reviewed regularly.

16. Health-Related Absence

Students should not attend where illness means they are genuinely too unwell to participate or where attendance would present an infection risk to others.

Where health needs are contributing to repeated or prolonged absence, KSF will work with the family, commissioning school and relevant professionals to consider what support or adjustments may enable continued engagement with education.

Medical information will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

17. Attendance Support Plans

Where attendance requires additional support, an Attendance Support Plan may be agreed.

The plan should be **simple and achievable** and may identify:

- the main barriers to attendance;
- the student's views;
- what KSF will do;
- what the family will do;
- what the commissioning school will do;
- any reasonable adjustments;
- short-term attendance goals;
- a review date.

The aim is not to create paperwork for its own sake, but to make sure everyone understands **what is getting in the way and what we are going to do about it.**

18. Recognising Improvement

Attendance improvement should be recognised and encouraged.

For some students, success may initially mean:

- arriving on time;
- attending one additional session;
- returning after a difficult period;
- remaining for the agreed session;
- communicating when attendance feels difficult;
- gradually building towards their full programme.

Staff will recognise genuine progress while continuing to encourage students towards regular attendance.

We celebrate **improvement, resilience and re-engagement**, not simply perfect attendance.

19. Information Sharing

KSF will maintain clear communication with commissioning schools regarding attendance.

Attendance information will be shared at agreed intervals and more frequently where concerns arise.

Where appropriate, information may also be shared with:

- parents/carers;
- local authorities;
- social workers;
- Virtual Schools;
- SEND professionals;
- other agencies involved with the student.

Information will only be shared where there is a legitimate reason to do so and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

20. Placement Reviews

Attendance will form part of regular placement reviews.

Where attendance is poor, the purpose of review is to identify what needs to change rather than simply record that the student is absent.

KSF will consider:

Is the placement meeting the student's needs?

What is preventing engagement?

What has already been tried?

What does the student say?

What needs to happen next?

Where concerns continue, KSF will work with the commissioning school to determine the most appropriate next steps.

21. Ending a Placement

Poor attendance alone will not automatically result in a KSF placement ending.

Before considering this, there should normally be evidence that:

- barriers have been explored;
- the student's views have been considered;
- appropriate support and reasonable adjustments have been attempted;
- the family and commissioning school have been involved;
- safeguarding implications have been considered.

There may be circumstances where a placement is no longer appropriate or viable. Any decision to end a placement will be made in consultation with the commissioning school and communicated clearly to relevant parties.

22. Roles and Responsibilities

Education & Provision Lead

The Education & Provision Lead will:

- oversee attendance arrangements;
- ensure unexplained absence is followed up promptly;
- monitor patterns and concerns;
- ensure commissioning schools receive appropriate information;
- support staff to address barriers to attendance;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately.

Staff

All staff will:

- record attendance accurately;
- notice and report emerging patterns;
- welcome students positively;
- avoid shaming students about absence;
- listen when students explain barriers;
- communicate concerns promptly;
- support agreed attendance strategies.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to work with KSF and the commissioning school to support regular attendance and communicate promptly about absence or emerging difficulties.

Commissioning Schools

Commissioning schools retain their statutory attendance responsibilities for students remaining on their roll and should work collaboratively with KSF when attendance concerns arise.

23. Monitoring

KSF will monitor:

- individual attendance;
- punctuality;
- patterns of absence;
- unexplained absence;
- engagement with agreed programmes;
- progress following attendance interventions.

Attendance information will help us identify where individual students or groups may require additional support.

24. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Relationships Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Health & Safety Policy;
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy;
- Missing Student Procedure;
- Data Protection Policy.

25. Our Commitment

At Kick Start Futures, we believe **attendance is about much more than a percentage.**

Attendance means being connected to education, relationships, opportunities and a future.

We will maintain high expectations while recognising that some young people need considerable support to rebuild their relationship with education.

When attendance becomes difficult, our response is to **notice, listen, understand and act.**

We will work with the student, their family and commissioning school to remove barriers and help them move towards regular, meaningful engagement.

Sometimes progress begins with something as simple as a young person choosing to walk back through the door.

We notice that step. We build on it. And we keep moving forward.