Phoenix Arch School

Kind, Curious, Creative and Collaborative

Pupil Attendance Policy

2026–27

School	Phoenix Arch School
Policy owner	Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSL	Falu Mehta
Deputy DSLs	Lennie Sarkis and Luana Oancea
Approval	Governing Body – September 2026
Review date	September 2027, or sooner if statutory guidance changes

Key statutory and national guidance

Working Together to Improve School Attendance – statutory guidance, July 2026

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Children Missing Education – statutory guidance, September 2025

School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

Children and Families Act 2014, including duties relating to EHC plans and secured special educational provision

Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments and the Public Sector Equality Duty

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

Brent Council School Attendance and Absences guidance, including Brent School Attendance Service and Children Missing Education procedures

Brent Council Non-school Attendance and Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

1. Policy statement and Phoenix Arch context

Phoenix Arch School is a maintained specialist SEND school for autistic pupils aged 4 to 11. All pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and may have a wide range of communication, sensory, developmental, learning, physical, medical, emotional-regulation and personal-care needs. Some pupils may require highly individualised routines, specialist transport, therapeutic input, support with transitions or reasonable adjustments to attend successfully. The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010 therefore apply throughout this policy and are integral to every attendance, safeguarding, intervention and registration decision.

Regular attendance is central to pupils' learning, wellbeing and sense of belonging at Phoenix Arch. We maintain high expectations for every pupil while recognising that autistic pupils and pupils with complex SEND may experience individual barriers to attendance. Our approach is safeguarding-led, inclusive and support-focused: we listen to pupils and families, identify barriers early, make appropriate reasonable adjustments and evaluate whether support is improving attendance and access to education. This policy is aligned with Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Children Missing Education statutory guidance, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

2. Aims

- Promote a whole-school culture in which attendance, belonging, safety and readiness to learn are everyone's responsibility.
- Maintain high expectations for attendance while recognising that some pupils with SEND or long-term health needs require additional support and reasonable adjustments.
- Identify changes or patterns in attendance early and understand the underlying reasons.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers, pupils, Brent Council and relevant health, social care, SEND, transport and therapeutic professionals.
- Ensure pupils can access the provision in their EHCP and consider whether unmet or changing needs are contributing to absence.
- Use support and early intervention before formal or legal action wherever appropriate.
- Treat unexplained, persistent or severe absence as a potential safeguarding concern and respond accordingly.
- Maintain accurate admission and attendance registers and use the statutory attendance codes correctly.

3. Why attendance matters

Attendance supports learning, communication, independence, relationships, emotional regulation and preparation for adulthood. For many Phoenix Arch pupils, predictable routines and consistent relationships are particularly important. Extended or repeated absences can make transitions back to school more difficult and can interrupt therapeutic programmes, curriculum sequencing and progress towards EHCP outcomes.

Attendance is also a safeguarding matter. A change in a pupil's usual attendance pattern, unexplained absence, repeated transport difficulties, withdrawal from school or inability to contact a family may indicate unmet need or a safeguarding concern. Attendance information therefore forms part of Phoenix Arch School's wider safeguarding systems.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body

- Promote the importance of attendance across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure leaders fulfil statutory attendance duties and receive appropriate support and challenge.

- Review attendance information regularly through termly headteacher's report, including persistent and severe absence and patterns relevant to the school's SEND context.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate attendance training.

Headteacher and DSL – Falu Mehta

- Provide strategic leadership for attendance and ensure this policy is implemented.
- Ensure attendance and safeguarding systems work together and that concerning absence is acted upon promptly.
- Oversee analysis, intervention and work with Brent Council and other agencies.
- Authorise leave of absence only in accordance with statutory requirements and individual circumstances.
- Ensure governors receive appropriate attendance information.

Deputy DSLs – Lennie Sarkis and Luana Oancea

- Support daily and strategic oversight of attendance and safeguarding concerns.
- Work with families and professionals where barriers to attendance relate to SEND, health, wellbeing, transport, family circumstances or safeguarding.
- Ensure relevant concerns and actions are recorded and escalated appropriately.
- Contribute to reintegration, reasonable adjustment and multi-agency planning.

Class teams and therapists

- Create safe, predictable and welcoming environments that support pupils to attend and belong.
- Notice changes in attendance, punctuality, presentation or engagement and report concerns promptly.
- Share relevant information about sensory, communication, health, regulation or transition barriers.
- Support agreed reintegration and attendance plan consistently.

Parents and carers

- Ensure their child attends regularly and punctually unless there is an allowable reason for absence.
- Contact the school on the first day of absence and explain the reason.
- Keep the school informed during ongoing absence and provide up-to-date emergency contact details.
- Work with the school and relevant professionals to address barriers to attendance.

5. Registration, absence and first-day response

The attendance register will be taken at the beginning of the morning session and once during the afternoon session, at the same time for all registered pupils. The school will use the DfE-prescribed attendance and absence codes.

Where a pupil is absent and the school has not received an explanation, first-day contact will be made. If contact cannot be established, the school will use the emergency contacts held for the pupils and consider what further safeguarding action or reasonable enquiries are required.

Because some Phoenix Arch pupils travel on local-authority-arranged transport, staff will distinguish carefully between a pupil being absent and a pupil being unable to arrive on time because of a verified transport failure. Repeated transport-related absences or lateness will be raised with the family and Brent transport/SEND services as appropriate so that a barrier outside the pupil's control is not treated as disengagement.

6. Monitoring and analysing attendance

Phoenix Arch will maintain an informed and accurate understanding of attendance at individual, class and whole-school level. Leaders will analyse patterns and trends, identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence, and consider the causes and barriers behind the data. Because all Phoenix Arch pupils have SEND, attendance percentages will be interpreted alongside each pupil's EHCP, health and sensory needs, emotional wellbeing, safeguarding information, transport arrangements and any other barriers to learning or wellbeing.

- Persistent absence: missing 10% or more of possible sessions.
- Severe absence: missing 50% or more of possible sessions.
- Repeated illness or medical/dental absence.
- Patterns linked to particular days, transport routes, transitions or activities.
- Pupils with a social worker or who are looked after/previously looked after.
- Pupils with significant medical, sensory, communication, behavioural or emotional-regulation needs.
- Pupils whose attendance has changed suddenly from their individual baseline.
- Pupils on temporary part-time timetables or receiving education away from the school site.

Attendance percentages will not be considered in isolation. Leaders will use the school's attendance monitoring tracker to understand the barrier, put timely and appropriate support or reasonable adjustments in place, review the impact and adapt the response where improvement is not sustained.

7. SEND, disability, health and reasonable adjustments

Phoenix Arch recognises that pupils may experience complex and changing barriers to attendance. We maintain high expectations while ensuring that support is timely, well chosen and targeted to the individual pupil. Reasonable adjustments and adaptations will be reviewed for impact and changed where necessary.

- Work with parents/carers to identify specific barriers and agree practical attendance support.
- Check that the provision specified in the pupil's EHCP is accessible and being delivered and consider whether a review or amendment of the EHCP is needed.
- Use communication support, visual schedules, social stories, transition visits, familiar adults, sensory regulation strategies and adapted arrival routines where appropriate.
- Consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and avoid attendance responses that disadvantage a pupil because of disability.
- Work with SALT, OT, educational psychology, school nursing, medical teams, social care, CAMHS or other professionals where relevant.
- Work with Brent Council where school transport, placement or wider SEND provision is creating a barrier.
- Plan carefully for return after prolonged absence, hospitalisation, family crisis or a period of significant dysregulation.

The school will not routinely require medical evidence for ordinary illness. Where illness is prolonged, recurring or complex, reasonable evidence may be sought where genuinely necessary to understand needs, make adjustments, plan provision or record absence accurately.

8. Working with families: a graduated attendance response

Phoenix Arch uses a graduated, support-first response. We expect good attendance, monitor patterns closely, listen to and understand pupils and families, facilitate appropriate support, formalise support where needed and use legal intervention only when statutory criteria are met and support has not worked, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate.

- Early conversation with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, the pupil.
- Identify barriers and agree actions, responsible people and review dates.
- Consider an individual attendance/reintegration plan and reasonable adjustments.
- Involve relevant school therapists, SENCO/SLT, health, social care, Early Help, transport or SEND professionals.
- Use an Annual Review or request an early EHCP review where provision or placement may be contributing to absence.
- Where absence persists, work with Brent School Attendance Service (BSAS) and consider formal attendance support.
- Legal intervention will be considered only where appropriate, in line with statutory guidance and Brent's processes, after support has been provided or where support is not appropriate.

9. Persistent and severe absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions and severely absent when they miss 50% or more. Pupils approaching or meeting these thresholds are prioritised for review so that barriers can be identified and addressed before absence becomes entrenched.

Severe absence will receive intensified oversight. The DSL/DDSLs will consider safeguarding, SEND, health, family and transport factors and coordinate multi-agency support where appropriate. The pupil's access to education, wellbeing and progress will remain under active review.

Monitoring persistent and severe absence

Phoenix Arch maintains a Persistent and Severe Absence Monitoring Register. For each pupil, leaders follow a simple cycle: understand the barrier; support and adjust; review impact; and adapt the plan. The register records the main barrier, support or reasonable adjustment, impact and next action/review date. This enables leaders to evaluate whether interventions are timely, well chosen and targeted, and whether attendance is improving over time.

Attendance is reviewed individually, considering SEND and health needs, safeguarding concerns, transport difficulties and other barriers. Extreme weather, unavailable SEND transport, emergency closures and other unavoidable circumstances are identified separately so that families are not subject to inappropriate attendance intervention.

Where concerns remain, an individual attendance support plan will identify barriers, reasonable adjustments, actions, a named lead and review dates. Severe absence will receive intensified multi-agency and safeguarding oversight.

- Leaders review attendance regularly to identify patterns, trends and emerging concerns early.
- The main cause or barrier is recorded, including relevant SEND, health, safeguarding, family or transport context.
- Pupil and parent/carer views inform the school's understanding of barriers and the support agreed.
- EHCP provision, reasonable adjustments and adaptations are reviewed where they may affect attendance or access.
- Support is matched to the identified barrier and may include adapted routines, sensory or communication support, reintegration, transport liaison, health or social care input, or an early EHCP review.
- Impact is reviewed against attendance, access and wellbeing. Where improvement is not sustained, support is adapted or intensified.
- Severe absence and safeguarding concerns receive intensified DSL/DDSL and multi-agency oversight, with referral to children's social care or the Local Authority where appropriate.
- Governors receive termly information on persistent and severe absence, patterns and trends, barriers, actions and the impact of interventions.

10. Part-time timetables and reintegration

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and SEND. A temporary part-time timetable will therefore be used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and meets an identified individual need. It will not be used simply to manage behaviour.

- It must be agreed with the parent/carer.
- It must form part of a wider support, healthcare or reintegration plan.
- It must state the sessions the pupil is expected to attend, have regular review dates and a proposed end date.
- It must be in place for the shortest necessary period, with a clear ambition to increase access to education.
- Where the pupil has an EHCP, the local authority will be involved so that the support package can be reviewed.
- Where the pupil has a social worker, they will be kept informed and involved.
- Attendance codes will be used in accordance with the School Attendance Regulations and DfE guidance.

11. Children missing education and safeguarding

Children Missing Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. An on-roll pupil who is absent is not automatically CME; however, unexplained absence, unknown whereabouts or uncertainty about the education being received may indicate that a child is missing or at risk and requires immediate action.

Phoenix Arch will follow the Children Missing Education statutory guidance and Brent Council procedures. The Brent School Attendance Service (BSAS) can advise schools about CME cases from day one and accepts school CME referrals on the third day of absence. Where a pupil's whereabouts or welfare cannot be established, the school will seek BSAS advice promptly and make a referral by the third day at the latest, without waiting where safeguarding risk requires earlier action. Referrals may be made through Brent's Assessment and Referral Form or by contacting cme@brent.gov.uk.

Reasonable enquiries and safeguarding action

- Complete first-day contact and use all available parent and emergency contact details.
- Establish the pupil's location, who is caring for them, the reason for absence, their welfare, any education being received and the expected return date.
- Check relevant information with professionals and agencies already involved with the pupil and family, sharing information lawfully and proportionately.
- Record every contact attempt, response, decision, risk assessment, referral and agreed review date.
- Consider a home visit in accordance with school and Brent procedures, and refer to Brent Family Front Door, children's social care or the police where the level of risk requires it.

The school will continue reasonable enquiries and regular liaison with Brent until the pupil's location and circumstances are established or the school and local authority agree that enquiries have concluded. A pupil will not be removed from roll merely because of prolonged absence, overseas travel or failure to return on the expected date.

Failure to return and removal from roll

If a pupil does not return within 10 school days immediately following the end of authorised leave, the school and Brent Council will make joint reasonable enquiries. Where absence has been continuously unauthorised for 20 school days or more, the school will follow the applicable statutory ground and joint-enquiry requirements. Removal from the admission register is never automatic and will occur only when the School Attendance Regulations permit it and all required enquiries have been completed.

The school will also provide Brent with required attendance returns, including information about pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or who have been continuously absent for 10 school days with absence recorded using unauthorised codes G, N, O and/or U.

Protection against off-rolling and unlawful removal from roll

Phoenix Arch will never remove a pupil from roll, encourage or pressure a parent to withdraw a pupil, suggest elective home education, or allow a pupil to disappear from the register as a way of managing absence, behaviour, dysregulation, unmet SEND, resource pressures, safeguarding concerns or difficulties delivering provision. This would be unlawful off-rolling. Parents will receive neutral and accurate information and must not be led to believe that withdrawal is required.

12. Lateness and transport

Punctuality supports predictable routines and reduces anxiety for many autistic pupils. However, Phoenix Arch will investigate the cause of lateness before deciding how to respond. Where lateness is caused by local-authority transport, medical needs, disability-related barriers or another circumstance outside the family's reasonable control, the school will work to resolve the barrier rather than treating it as wilful non-attendance.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be coded in accordance with statutory guidance. Persistent lateness will be discussed with parents/carers and an individual support plan considered where appropriate.

13. Illness, medical appointments and pupils unable to attend because of health needs

Parents/carers should notify the school promptly when a pupil is too unwell to attend. Physical and mental-health-related illnesses will be recorded using the appropriate statutory code.

For prolonged or recurrent health-related absence, the school will work with the family and relevant health and local-authority services to identify appropriate education and support. Remote education will not be treated as a routine substitute for attendance and, where used, will be considered only in line with national guidance and as part of a wider plan for education and reintegration.

14. Leave of absence during term time

There is no automatic entitlement to leave during term time. In line with regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Working Together to Improve School Attendance and Brent Council guidance, leave for exceptional circumstances is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. A parent must never assume that a request will be approved.

Where the regulations require an application in advance, it must be made by a parent with whom the pupil normally lives and received before the absence begins. The school will consider every request individually and will not operate a blanket approval or refusal. The existence of a serious family event may be relevant, but it does not automatically establish that the pupil must be absent or that the entire period requested is justified.

Information and evidence considered
The Headteacher may consider the nature and urgency of the circumstances; why the pupil must be absent; the proposed duration and destination; the pupil's age, SEND, health, safeguarding needs and views; the effect on education and EHCP provision; previous attendance and leave; whether the absence could reasonably occur outside term time; arrangements for care, contact and return; and any relevant supporting evidence.

The school may request proportionate evidence, including medical or hospital correspondence, travel details, an overseas address and contact number, and confirmation of the intended return date. Evidence will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data-protection requirements. Where evidence is unavailable immediately because of a genuine emergency, the school will consider what information is reasonably available but is not required to approve the full period requested without sufficient information.

The school's decision
- The school may approve the request in full, approve a shorter period, or refuse it.
- Where leave is granted, the school determines the number of days authorised and confirms the authorised period and expected return date in writing.
- Code C will be used only where the school has granted leave because it is satisfied that exceptional circumstances justify the absence. Unauthorised term-time leave will be recorded using the applicable statutory code, including Code G where appropriate.
- A parent's request for a particular attendance code, retrospective amendment, exemption from enforcement or assurance that no referral will be made does not determine the school's decision. Registers will be amended only where permitted and where the evidence establishes that another code is correct.
- Providing work or remote access does not authorise the absence and does not count as attendance. The school is not ordinarily required to provide remote education for parent-requested leave, although limited materials may be offered where practicable and educationally appropriate.

For extended leave or overseas absence, parents must provide the pupil's location, accompanying and caring adults, reliable contact details and travel and return information. Phoenix Arch may maintain agreed welfare contact and consult or notify BSAS, SEND services, social care or other agencies where required by safeguarding, attendance or local procedures.

If a pupil does not return on the agreed date, any further absence will be recorded using the correct statutory code. The school will contact the family immediately and follow its safeguarding, BSAS and CME procedures. Unauthorised leave may be referred to Brent Council where the national threshold and Brent's local criteria are met.

15. Formal and legal intervention

Phoenix Arch will work with families to understand barriers and provide appropriate support. Where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with, or support is not appropriate, the school will work with Brent School Attendance Service in accordance with the national framework and Brent's current procedures.

Formal action may include an attendance contract, Notice to Improve, Education Supervision Order, Parenting Order, School Attendance Order, Education Penalty Notice or prosecution. The appropriate route will depend on the statutory criteria, the nature and coding of the absence, the support offered,

parental engagement, safeguarding information and the pupil's SEND, disability and health circumstances.

Education Penalty Notices and prosecution

Brent Council may issue an Education Penalty Notice following a referral where the national threshold and Brent's Code of Conduct are met. The current national framework limits penalty notices for the same parent and child to two within a rolling three-year period; a further offence may lead to prosecution. Amounts, timescales and thresholds will be applied as set out in the law, national framework and Brent's current published guidance rather than reproduced as fixed school rules that may become out of date.

There is no statutory right to appeal against an Education Penalty Notice. If a notice is unpaid, Brent Council may prosecute for the original attendance offence. Courts may impose the sanctions available under the Education Act 1996. The school cannot promise in advance that no referral, penalty notice, prosecution or other lawful action will be considered.

The school will not use a simple attendance percentage as an automatic trigger for legal action. It will keep a clear written record of support, correspondence, evidence, decisions, attendance codes and referrals so that action is fair, proportionate, consistent and capable of scrutiny.

16. Communication and emergency contacts

Parents/carers must ensure that the school holds up-to-date telephone numbers, home addresses and emergency contact information. Phoenix Arch will seek to hold more than one emergency contact for each pupil wherever reasonably possible. For any child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the school will ensure that the allocated Social Worker's current contact details are recorded and readily accessible to the DSL and DDSLs. Contact details will be checked termly during Target Setting Days and also be verified as part of the pupil's Annual Review.

17. Attendance, EHCP reviews and multi-agency working

Attendance will be considered as part of the wider picture of each pupil's progress and wellbeing. Where attendance is affecting access to EHCP provision or progress towards outcomes, this will be discussed with parents and relevant professionals and may be considered through the Annual Review process.

Where appropriate, Phoenix Arch will work with Brent SEND services, Brent School Attendance Service, social care, Virtual School, health services, school transport and other agencies. Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately for education and safeguarding purposes.

18. Reporting to governors

The Headteacher will report attendance to the Governing Body at least termly. Reporting will give governors an informed and accurate picture of attendance, including persistent and severe absence, significant patterns and trends, key barriers, safeguarding implications, actions taken and evidence of impact. Information will be interpreted in the context of Phoenix Arch as a specialist school so that governors can provide appropriate challenges and support.

19. Responsibilities for attendance at Phoenix Arch School

Headteacher / DSL	Falu Mehta
Deputy DSL	Lennie Sarkis
Deputy DSL	Luana Oancea
Governing Body	Strategic oversight, challenge and review

20. Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where legislation or statutory guidance changes, where local authority procedures require amendment, or where learning from attendance, safeguarding or case review indicates that changes are required.

Next planned review: September 2027.