



PARITY
EDUCATION

Shaping Futures
With Equal Opportunities

Attendance and Non-Engagement Policy

Alternative Provision • EOTAS • SEND • Tuition • Mentoring

Organisation	Parity Education and Careers Services Ltd
Policy owner	Head of Provision
Version	2.1 - August 2026
Last reviewed	August 2026
Next review due	August 2027, or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, commissioner requirements or organisational practice changes
Applies to	Employees, tutors, learning support practitioners, mentors, contractors and anyone delivering or overseeing Parity Education provision
Related Policies	Safeguarding and Child Protection; Lone Working; Behaviour; Admissions; Data Protection; Tutor & Contractor Handbook

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1. Purpose and scope

Parity Education is committed to ensuring that every planned session is accounted for and that patterns of absence, non-engagement or reduced participation are identified early. Attendance is both an educational and safeguarding matter. Many learners referred to Parity Education have disrupted education, SEND, SEMH needs, emotionally based school avoidance, exclusion histories, reduced timetables or other barriers to attendance. Our response must therefore be prompt, supportive, proportionate and informed by the individual learner's circumstances.

Parity Education is a non-school alternative provision provider. We record attendance at the sessions we are commissioned to deliver and share this information with the commissioning school, local authority or other responsible professional as agreed. Where a learner remains on a school roll, the school retains its statutory attendance-register responsibilities. Parity Education does not purport to exercise powers that belong to a school or local authority, such as authorising statutory school absence or issuing penalties.

2. Policy principles

- Attendance must be recorded for every planned Parity Education session.
- Unexpected absence or failure to engage must never be treated as an administrative issue only; safeguarding implications must be considered.
- Early intervention should focus on understanding and reducing barriers rather than blaming the learner or family.
- Attendance information must be accurate, timely and capable of being shared with commissioners and safeguarding partners.
- Individual commissioning arrangements, risk assessments and safeguarding plans may require faster or different escalation than the standard thresholds in this policy.
- A safeguarding concern overrides all attendance thresholds: staff must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy immediately.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Head of Provision

- Oversees attendance and non-engagement across provision.
- Reviews emerging patterns and ensures appropriate parent/carer and commissioner follow-up.
- Leads attendance reviews with commissioners where engagement is deteriorating.
- Works with the Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements where absence raises a welfare or safeguarding concern.

Tutors and delivery staff

- Attend punctually and remain available for the full commissioned session unless otherwise agreed.
- Complete the Tutor Hub session check-in for every planned session, including where the learner is absent.
- Record the attendance outcome and known reason accurately; do not guess or retrospectively create a reason that has not been confirmed.
- Notify Parity Education promptly of unexpected absence, repeated lateness, inability to make contact, concerning explanations or any safeguarding concern.
- Do not independently agree permanent timetable changes, make-up sessions or cancellation arrangements with families without Parity Education approval.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are asked to notify Parity Education as early as possible if a learner will not attend a planned session, using the Attendance & Absence Line or other agreed route. They should provide the reason for absence and, where possible, the expected duration. They should also keep contact details up to date.

Commissioners, schools and caseworkers

Parity Education will work collaboratively with the commissioning body and relevant professionals. The commissioner remains responsible for its own statutory or contractual duties and for determining any action that sits outside Parity Education's role as the delivery provider.

4. Recording attendance

A record must be completed for every planned session. The session outcome should distinguish, as applicable:

- Present - learner attended the planned session.
- Late / partial attendance - learner attended for only part of the planned session; actual attendance should be clear.
- Absent - parent/carer or responsible professional has confirmed the learner will not attend and a reason is known.
- Unexplained absence / no engagement - the learner does not attend or engage and no satisfactory explanation has yet been received.
- Cancelled or rescheduled - the session has been formally cancelled or moved with Parity Education's approval and the record reflects the agreed arrangement.

Administrative staff may record an absence and its reason without completing educational session information where no teaching took place. If a session is cancelled entirely or formally rescheduled, the schedule and attendance record should be amended so that reporting and payment records remain accurate.

5. First response to unexpected absence

Where a learner does not attend or engage as expected:

- The tutor records the non-attendance promptly and alerts Parity Education through the agreed process.
- Parity Education checks whether an explanation or authorised change has already been received.
- Where appropriate, the parent/carer is contacted to establish the reason and confirm that the learner is safe.
- Any commissioner-specific same-day attendance notification is completed.
- If contact cannot be made, or the circumstances are concerning, the matter is considered immediately from a safeguarding perspective and escalated to the DSL/Deputy DSL as required.
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6. Attendance and non-engagement escalation

The following provides Parity Education's standard early-warning framework. It is deliberately simple so that patterns are acted on consistently. Professional judgement, the learner's risk assessment, safeguarding history and commissioner requirements always take precedence.

Trigger	Parity Education's response	External communication
Any unexpected absence	Record immediately; establish reason where possible; consider welfare/safeguarding; follow any same-day commissioner reporting requirement.	As required by the placement/referral arrangement or immediately if safeguarding concerns arise.

Trigger	Parity Education's response	External communication
3 absences or non-engagement events within 1 week	Head of Provision reviews the pattern and follows up with the parent/carer and tutor to understand barriers and agree practical next steps.	Caseworker/commissioner informed where the pattern is concerning, unexplained, placement-specific reporting requires it, or support is needed.
Attendance below 80% over a rolling 3-week period	Head of Provision completes an early attendance review: reasons, engagement, timetable suitability, SEND/SEMH barriers, venue, tutor match and any support required.	Early-warning notification to the caseworker/commissioner, with a concise summary and proposed actions.
Continued deterioration, repeated unexplained absence, or agreed actions not improving engagement	Formal provision review led by the Head of Provision; consider changes to delivery, timetable, staffing, venue, support or whether provision remains suitable.	The commissioner/caseworker asked to review the placement and agree on the next steps. Relevant school/LA attendance or CME teams may be involved by the responsible body where appropriate. DSL/Deputy DSL determines referral/information-sharing with children's social care, police, LADO, commissioner or other agencies as appropriate.
Safeguarding concern at any point	Attendance thresholds are overridden. Follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy immediately.	

7. Understanding barriers to attendance

Low attendance should trigger curiosity about what is preventing engagement. Parity Education will avoid a one-size-fits-all response, particularly for learners with SEND, SEMH needs, anxiety, trauma, medical needs or emotionally based avoidance. Reviews may consider:

- whether the timetable, session length or time of day remains appropriate;
- the suitability and accessibility of the venue or home/community arrangement;
- the learner's relationship with the tutor and whether a change of approach or staffing is needed;
- sensory, communication, regulation, transport, health or family barriers;
- whether planned learning is pitched appropriately and supports re-engagement;
- whether a reduced or phased timetable has been formally agreed by the commissioner;
- whether other professionals need to contribute to a coordinated plan.

8. Safeguarding, welfare and children missing education

Repeated, unexplained or unusual absence can be an indicator of safeguarding risk. Staff must remain alert to changes in pattern, inability to contact a family, concerning explanations, exploitation risk, neglect, domestic abuse, mental health concerns, missing episodes or other information suggesting that a learner may be at risk of harm.

Parity Education will share relevant attendance and welfare information promptly with the commissioner and safeguarding partners where lawful and necessary. Where there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, safeguarding action must not wait for an attendance threshold.

Children missing education (CME) has a specific statutory meaning. A learner attending alternative provision is not automatically CME. Where Parity Education becomes concerned that a compulsory-school-age child may not be receiving suitable education, or their whereabouts or education arrangements are unclear, Parity will notify the commissioning/responsible body promptly so that the appropriate school or local authority procedures can be followed.

9. Lateness and partial attendance

Persistent lateness or shortened sessions can materially reduce access to education and may indicate an emerging barrier. Tutors should record actual attendance accurately. Repeated lateness or early departure should be considered alongside absence when reviewing engagement, particularly where the pattern affects the learner's commissioned hours.

10. Planned absence, cancellations and timetable changes

Families should give as much notice as possible of planned absence. Parity Education will record the reason supplied and inform the commissioner where required. Parity Education does not determine whether an absence is 'authorised' for the purposes of a school's statutory attendance register; that decision remains with the relevant school or responsible body.

Tutors must not independently promise replacement sessions or alter the learner's regular timetable. One-off rescheduling, cancellation or permanent changes require Parity Education approval and must be reflected in Tutor Hub so that attendance, reporting and payment records remain consistent.

11. Illness and medical needs

Illness should be recorded using the information provided by the parent/carer or commissioner. Parity Education will not routinely demand medical evidence for ordinary short-term illness. Where illness is prolonged, recurrent or materially affecting access to education, the Head of Provision will liaise with the commissioner about appropriate adjustments, medical evidence requirements (where applicable to the responsible body) and continuity of education.

12. Monitoring and reporting

Attendance data is monitored on an ongoing basis through Tutor Hub and operational oversight. Parity Education will use session-level data to identify individual patterns, support placement reviews and provide attendance information to commissioners in the format and frequency agreed.

- Attendance is reviewed at learner level rather than relying only on whole-provider percentages.
- Rolling three-week attendance is used as an early-warning measure, not as a substitute for professional judgement.
- Patterns of cancellation, lateness, partial attendance and unexplained non-engagement are considered alongside percentage attendance.
- Records of follow-up and escalation should be sufficient to demonstrate what was known, what action was taken, by whom and when.

13. Data protection and information sharing

Attendance information is personal data and will be handled in accordance with Parity Education's Data Protection and Privacy arrangements. Information may be shared with schools, local authorities, social workers, commissioners and safeguarding agencies where this is necessary for education, safeguarding, contractual oversight or another lawful purpose.

14. Training and compliance

Tutors and relevant staff must understand the attendance recording and escalation expectations that apply to their role before delivering provision. Attendance procedures form part of induction and the Tutor & Contractor Handbook. Failure to record sessions accurately or to escalate concerns may be treated as a compliance or conduct matter.

15. Relevant guidance

- Department for Education - Working together to improve school attendance (statutory guidance for schools and local authorities; used by Parity to support alignment with commissioners).
- Department for Education - Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools.
- Department for Education - Alternative provision: statutory guidance.
- Department for Education - Non-school alternative provision: voluntary national standards.
- Parity Education - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

16. Review, approval and version control

Version	Date	Summary	Status
1.0	1 September 2025	Previous Attendance Policy issued under former branding and school-style operating model.	Superseded
2.0	August 2026	Revised for Parity's current non-school AP model; session-level recording; safeguarding alignment; clear absence and rolling-attendance escalation framework; updated guidance references.	Approved

Approved by: Patrick Iberi - Head of Provision / Designated Safeguarding Lead; Nicola Catherall - Operations Director / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Approval date: August 2026

Next review: August 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance, commissioner requirements or organisational practice changes.