Attendance Policy

Document Control

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out how South Cumbria Skills Exchange (SCSE), operated by Whamos Training and Development CIC, records attendance, responds to absence, and works with commissioning schools and Cumberland Council to keep placed learners safe and engaged with their education.

Good attendance at AP is not just an administrative matter. For learners placed with SCSE — many of whom have previously experienced school disengagement, trauma, or chronic absence — attendance is a key indicator of wellbeing and a safeguarding signal.

This policy reflects the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance, KCSIE 2024, and Cumberland Council's local expectations of commissioned AP providers.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all learners on placement at SCSE, including those attending part-time alongside their commissioning school, those attending full-time as part of a registered package, and those attending other SCSE-delivered programmes.

3. Daily attendance recording

A register is taken at the start of every session. The register records:

- The expected start time
- The actual arrival time of each learner
- Any planned absence notified in advance
- Any departure during the session (with time, reason and method of departure)

The register is held electronically and a paper backup is kept on site. Registers are retained for the statutory minimum period and shared with commissioning bodies on request.

4. Reporting attendance to commissioning bodies

For learners placed by a commissioning school or local authority, attendance is reported as follows:

- **Daily**: If a learner has not arrived within 30 minutes of the expected start time, the commissioning school's DSL or named contact is notified the same day. This dovetails with the Missing Child Policy.
- **Weekly**: A weekly attendance summary is sent to each commissioning school by close of business on Friday, covering the previous five working days. This is in line with Cumberland Council's local rule for AP providers.

- **End-of-placement**: A final attendance report is produced at the close of every placement, with attendance percentage and any notable patterns.

Where the commissioning body requests a different reporting cadence (for example, real-time updates for a learner with high non-attendance risk), this is agreed in the placement plan.

5. Categories of absence

Absences are categorised as:

- **Authorised** — known and approved in advance; for example, illness, medical appointment, family bereavement, school commitments at the commissioning school
- **Unauthorised** — not approved or with no satisfactory reason given
- **Late** — arrival after the expected start time, regardless of reason
- **Unplanned departure** — leaving before the expected end time

The commissioning school retains responsibility for the formal absence code recorded on their school register. SCSE provides the underlying attendance data; the school applies the appropriate DfE attendance code.

6. Procedure for non-arrival

When a learner does not arrive at SCSE when expected, the procedure in the Missing Child and Child Missing from Education Policy is followed. In summary:

- Within 30 minutes — attempt to contact the learner, notify DSL
- Within 60 minutes — DSL contacts parent/carer and commissioning school
- Within 90 minutes — if learner remains unaccounted for, escalate to police as missing-from-home/care

Non-arrival is never treated as routine. Every instance is reviewed.

7. Procedure for late arrival

If a learner arrives more than 15 minutes late without notification:

- The time of arrival is recorded
- The reason (where given) is recorded
- A pattern of lateness over three or more sessions in a fortnight triggers a check-in with the learner and conversation with the commissioning school

Lateness is not punished. We seek to understand the cause — often transport issues, anxiety in the morning, or wider family circumstances — and to address it constructively.

8. Procedure for unplanned departure

If a learner leaves SCSE before the expected end of the session without permission:

- The procedure for unauthorised departure in the Missing Child Policy is followed
- The parent or carer is notified the same day
- The commissioning school is notified the same day
- A debrief with the learner takes place at the next session

9. Patterns of absence

SCSE monitors for patterns of attendance concern, including:

- Persistent absence (less than 90% attendance over four weeks)
- Severe absence (less than 50% attendance)
- Repeated absence from specific days or sessions
- Repeated late arrival
- A sudden drop in attendance after a previously good pattern

Any such pattern triggers:

- A conversation with the learner about what is making attendance difficult
- A conversation with parent/carer and commissioning school
- An attendance support plan agreed jointly with the commissioning school, parent and learner
- Where the placement is for safeguarding-supported learners (Child Protection Plan, looked-after, EHCP), faster escalation to the relevant case worker or social worker

10. Authorised absences

Authorised absences include:

- Verified illness
- Pre-arranged medical appointments
- Religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Court attendance or formal appointments with statutory services
- Specific events at the commissioning school (e.g. mainstream exam, school trip the learner has agreed to attend)
- Exceptional family circumstances agreed in advance

Where a learner is unable to attend due to anxiety, mental health, or other SEMH need, this is recorded factually and addressed through the support plan, in conjunction with CAMHS, GP, or other professionals as appropriate. We do not stigmatise mental health absence but we do work actively with the learner and family to support a return.

11. Holidays during term time

Holidays during term time are not authorised. Where a family takes a learner on holiday during a placement, SCSE notes the absence as unauthorised on its records and notifies the commissioning school, which retains responsibility for any wider attendance action.

12. Supporting good attendance

SCSE supports good attendance by:

- Building a trauma-informed, welcoming environment that learners want to attend
- Working in small groups with predictable structures
- Providing transition support (taster sessions, photo guides, gradual introduction) for new placements
- Maintaining a trusted-adult relationship with every learner
- Working with parents and carers as partners
- Recognising and celebrating attendance milestones in age-appropriate ways without making non-attenders feel further marginalised
- Removing barriers where we can (timing, transport, food, sensory environment)

13. Children missing from education

Where SCSE becomes aware that a learner is not attending any educational provision and is not receiving suitable home education, this is referred to Cumberland Council's CME team in line with the Missing Child Policy.

14. Data protection

Attendance data is personal data. It is held, shared and retained in line with the Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy. Only those with a legitimate role in supporting the learner have access.

15. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy

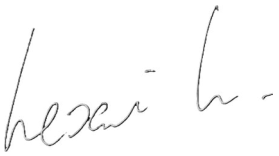
- Missing Child and Child Missing from Education Policy
- SEND Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Admissions and Referral Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy

16. Policy review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Directors and DSL, or sooner if statutory guidance or commissioning arrangements change.

Approval & Review

This policy has been approved on behalf of the Directors:

Elizabeth Amos-Milburn *Co-Director*	**Alexandra Gager-Liebhart** *Co-Director*
	

Date of approval: 18th May 2026

Next review: 18th May 2027

Schedule 1 — Record of Changes

Version	Date	Nature of Change
001	18th May 2026	Initial published version included in the Combined Policies and Procedures 2026 edition.