ATTENDANCE POLICY

Peopleton Brook Care Farm

Field	Details
Policy owner	Jake Payne, Business Manager
Effective date	1st September 2026
Review date	August 2027, or sooner after legal, guidance or operational change

Provider status and responsibility: PBCF is a part-time alternative education provider. It records attendance at the sessions it delivers and reports promptly to the commissioning school or local authority. Unless the placement agreement expressly states otherwise, the commissioning school retains the pupil on roll and remains responsible for the statutory admission and attendance registers, national attendance codes, authorising absence and any legal intervention.

1. Purpose and principles

Regular and punctual participation at PBCF supports learning, wellbeing, safety, relationships and successful reintegration or progression. Attendance is everybody's business. PBCF will combine high expectations with curiosity about barriers, early support and proportionate safeguarding action.

- Expect every learner to attend every session shown on their agreed placement timetable, for the full session, unless an authorised change has been confirmed.
- Listen to the learner and family, understand the reason for absence and work with the commissioner to remove barriers before patterns become entrenched.
- Apply this policy fairly, without discrimination, and make reasonable adjustments for disability while maintaining ambitious attendance expectations.
- Treat unexpected, repeated, persistent or severe absence as a potential welfare and safeguarding indicator, not merely an administrative matter.
- Use accurate, timely and proportionate information-sharing so that the school or local authority can maintain the legal register and safeguard the learner.

2. Scope and legal framework

This policy applies to children and young people attending PBCF through school, local-authority or other agreed education placements, and to all staff, volunteers and contractors involved in attendance recording or follow-up. It should be read with the placement agreement and PBCF safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, transport, data-protection and complaints procedures.

2.1 Current framework

- Education Act 1996, including parental responsibility for regular attendance and local-authority duties to arrange suitable education in relevant cases.
- Education Act 2002 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, where applicable to the commissioning setting.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, which replaced the 2006 regulations on 19 August 2024.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance, Department for Education statutory guidance, July 2026.

- Arranging Alternative Provision: A Guide for Local Authorities and Schools, February 2025.
- Equality Act 2010; Children and Families Act 2014; SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 until 31 August 2026, and KCSIE 2026 from 1 September 2026.
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, including necessity, accuracy, security and data minimisation.

3. Responsibility boundary

PBCF and the commissioner have connected but different responsibilities. The placement agreement must name the commissioner, the learner's roll status, expected sessions, reporting contacts and required reporting times.

Area	PBCF responsibility	Commissioner responsibility
Attendance record	Record arrival, departure and participation for each scheduled PBCF session.	Maintain the statutory admission and attendance registers where the learner is on its roll.
Codes and authorisation	Provide factual, time-stamped information; do not assign or promise a statutory code.	Choose the national code and decide whether absence or leave is authorised.
Same-day absence	Check promptly, contact agreed adults and notify the commissioner within the agreed timescale.	Complete its own first-day response and wider safeguarding checks.
Support	Identify farm-specific barriers and provide reasonable, agreed adjustments.	Coordinate the overall attendance plan, EHCP or early-help response.
Formal action	Share evidence and attend meetings; do not issue legal warnings or penalties.	School/local authority decides on attendance contracts, Notices to Improve, penalties or prosecution.

4. Roles

4.1 Business Manager / policy owner

- Approve resources, reporting systems and placement-agreement standards.
- Ensure attendance arrangements align with safeguarding, data protection, transport and commissioning requirements.
- Review policy effectiveness and significant failures in attendance practice.

4.2 Senior Manager or Supervisor

- Champion a culture of high attendance and maintain the day-to-day system.
- Ensure staff are trained, records are accurate and unexplained absence is followed up promptly.
- Analyse learner and cohort patterns weekly, including punctuality, missed sessions and emerging concerns.
- Coordinate attendance support with learners, parents, commissioning schools, local authorities, social workers and other professionals.
- Work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where absence may indicate harm.

4.3 Session staff and transport staff

- Know the learner's agreed timetable, expected transport and collection arrangements.
- Record attendance at the required time; never pre-mark a learner present.
- Report absence, lateness, early departure, missing-from-session concerns or record errors immediately.
- Provide a calm welcome and avoid shaming, public comparison or punitive responses to attendance difficulty.

4.4 Parents, carers and learners

- Attend every agreed PBCF session on time and remain for the full session.
- Notify PBCF and the commissioning school, using the arrangements each has specified, as soon as absence is known and before 9:30am on the day unless the placement agreement sets an earlier time.
- Provide the reason for absence and expected return date, update PBCF if circumstances change, and engage with support.
- Request planned leave from the commissioning school or local authority; PBCF cannot authorise statutory leave.

5. Attendance expectations and session recording

5.1 Expected attendance

A learner is expected for every PBCF session recorded on the current placement timetable. A bespoke or part-time placement does not reduce the importance of attending all sessions actually arranged. Attendance percentage must be interpreted against the learner's agreed PBCF sessions and alongside their overall school attendance.

5.2 Start, finish and register closure

- The placement plan must state the scheduled arrival and collection times for each learner.
- Staff record attendance at the start of every scheduled PBCF session. Where a learner attends both morning and afternoon, each session is recorded separately.
- PBCF's operational session record closes 30 minutes after the agreed start time, unless the placement agreement specifies a shorter period. Arrival after that point is recorded as late after close and reported factually to the commissioner.
- Only a learner who is physically present at PBCF or at a PBCF-supervised agreed activity is marked present in the PBCF session log.
- Early departure is time-stamped with the reason, collecting adult and authorising staff member.

5.3 Recording standard

The staff member taking the session records present, late, absent or not expected, together with arrival/departure times and relevant factual notes. An amendment must retain the original entry, reason, date/time and identity of the person making the change. Staff must not guess a reason, backdate an entry without an audit trail or use attendance codes on the commissioner's behalf.

> **Attendance-code note:** Depending on who arranged the placement and the legal circumstances, the commissioning school may use Code K, B, D or another national code. PBCF supplies the facts; the school determines the correct statutory code under the 2024 Regulations and July 2026 guidance.

6. Reporting and responding to absence

6.1 Parent/carer notification

Parents/carers should contact PBCF before 9:30am, or earlier where required by the placement agreement, by phone or by email. They should also follow the commissioning school's absence process. Messages must include the learner's name, reason, expected duration and a safe callback number.

6.2 First-session response to unexplained absence

1. Confirm the learner was expected and check known timetable, transport, appointment and placement changes.
2. Check that the attendance mark is accurate and ask transport/session staff whether the learner has been seen.
3. Contact the parent/carer and other agreed emergency contacts without delay. Record each attempt and outcome.

4. Notify the commissioning school or local authority through the agreed route as soon as the absence is identified and within the placement agreement's timescale.
5. Tell the DSL immediately where the absence is out of character, contact cannot be made, information conflicts, or there are existing vulnerabilities.
6. Agree who will continue enquiries so that action is coordinated and no agency assumes another is responding.

6.3 Safeguarding escalation

The DSL will consider the learner's age, SEND, communication needs, previous attendance, travel arrangements, known risks, social-care involvement and any information received. A home visit or police welfare request is not automatic and must follow a recorded risk assessment, local procedures and coordination with the commissioning school or local authority.

- Call 999 where there is an immediate risk to life or a crime is in progress.
- Use 101 for a non-emergency police matter when advised by the DSL or relevant agency.
- Make or support a referral to children's social care where the threshold is met; do not delay because attendance enquiries are continuing.
- Follow the missing-child or child-missing-education process where applicable.

6.4 Illness and medical evidence

A parent's notification will normally be sufficient to explain illness. PBCF will not operate a blanket requirement for medical evidence after three days or any other fixed period. The commissioning school may seek reasonable evidence only in a minority of cases, for example where there is genuine and reasonable doubt or where prolonged or repeated illness requires a better understanding of need and support. Evidence should be flexible and proportionate; it may include appointment information, prescriptions, medication or relevant professional letters.

6.5 Planned absence and appointments

Routine appointments should, where reasonably possible, be outside scheduled education. When this is not possible, the learner should attend before or after the appointment where practicable. Requests for leave, including holidays and exceptional circumstances, must be directed to the commissioning school or local authority. PBCF will share relevant timetable information but cannot grant statutory leave.

7. Monitoring and graduated support

PBCF reviews attendance weekly and responds to patterns early. The 90% persistent-absence and 50% severe-absence thresholds relate to overall school attendance, but they are important warning points. PBCF will not wait for a threshold before offering help, and will also monitor farm-specific patterns such as repeated lateness, particular days, transport failures, non-attendance after weekends or holidays, and declining engagement.

Stage	Indicator	PBCF response	Commissioner / partner action
Universal	All learners	Clear expectations, welcoming routines, accurate records and positive relationships.	Maintain legal register and communicate placement expectations.
Early concern	Emerging decline, lateness or repeated isolated absence	Listen to learner/family; check transport, timetable, environment and farm-specific barriers; agree immediate actions.	Review overall data and coordinate early support.

Stage	Indicator	PBCF response	Commissioner / partner action
Targeted	Pattern persists or overall attendance approaches/passes 90%	Written PBCF attendance-support plan, named lead, review dates and agreed adjustments; contribute to multi-agency planning.	Coordinate attendance plan, EHCP/early help and Targeting Support Meeting as relevant.
Intensive	Severe or rapidly deteriorating attendance; safeguarding risk	Immediate DSL involvement; frequent reporting; participate in intensive support and safety planning.	Lead statutory safeguarding, social-care and attendance response; consider formal support or legal routes.

7.1 Attendance-support plan

Where farm attendance causes concern, the plan should record the learner's voice, strengths, barriers, agreed actions, reasonable adjustments, responsible person, measures of improvement, review date and how information will be shared. It should align with the commissioner's wider plan and be reviewed with the learner and parent/carer.

7.2 No punitive or discriminatory practice

PBCF will not use attendance difficulties to shame a learner, remove support automatically, create an informal exclusion or discriminate because of disability, health, caring responsibilities or another protected characteristic. Incentives, if used, will recognise effort and improvement sensitively and will not penalise pupils whose absence is related to disability or other circumstances outside their control.

8. SEND, health and complex barriers

- Maintain the same ambition for attendance while recognising that some learners need additional support to achieve it.
- Seek the learner's views using communication methods suited to their age, disability and needs.
- Agree and review reasonable adjustments with the learner, parent/carer, commissioner and relevant professionals. Examples may include predictable arrival routines, sensory regulation, a trusted adult, adapted transitions, transport support or a phased increase in PBCF sessions.
- Tell the commissioner promptly where barriers may relate to provision in an EHCP or indicate that the plan or placement needs review.
- Work with social workers, Virtual School Heads and youth justice professionals where involved, and report unexplained absence to the agreed professional.
- Recognise young carers and family circumstances as potential barriers and support referral for a young-carer or family-help assessment where appropriate.

8.1 Part-time timetables and phased arrangements

PBCF's part-time placement is normally one element of the learner's overall education package. Any separate decision to provide less than full-time education to a child of compulsory school age must be made by the responsible school/local authority in very exceptional circumstances, in the learner's best interests, with parent agreement, clear objectives, regular reviews and an intended end date. It must not be used to manage behaviour or as an informal exclusion. PBCF will provide attendance and progress information for each review.

8.2 Remote education

Remote education is not a substitute for attendance at a scheduled PBCF session. If the commissioner uses remote education, it should be a last resort, normally within a reintegration plan. Engagement may be recorded separately but does not make the learner present at PBCF or determine the school's attendance code.

9. Safeguarding and children missing education

Repeated or prolonged absence can be a warning sign of neglect, abuse, exploitation, criminal or sexual harm, bullying, mental ill health, radicalisation, transport risk or family crisis. Severe unauthorised absence may itself become a neglect concern after suitable education and support have been made available. Staff must follow the safeguarding policy and report concerns to the DSL immediately.

- Never assume a child is safe because a parent has sent a message.
- Consider the learner's pattern across all education settings, not only PBCF.
- Record facts, actions, decisions and professional consultations contemporaneously.
- Share information without consent where necessary and proportionate to safeguard a child, recording the lawful rationale.
- Escalate professional disagreement through the safeguarding escalation procedure.

10. Formal attendance action

PBCF's role is supportive and evidential. It may attend meetings, provide accurate records and help deliver agreed support. It does not issue attendance contracts under the Anti-social Behaviour Act, Notices to Improve, penalty notices, education supervision orders or prosecutions unless it later acquires a specific legal status and authority that permits this. Such decisions rest with the responsible school and/or local authority and must follow the National Framework and individual consideration of support, equality and safeguarding factors.

11. Information sharing, records and confidentiality

- Use the approved attendance system and restrict access to staff who need it.
- Share same-day attendance information through the secure route named in the placement agreement; do not rely on a child to relay a message.
- Keep only information that is adequate, relevant and necessary, while recording sufficient detail to explain actions and decisions.
- Retain PBCF session records for the period set by the retention schedule and commissioning agreement. The commissioning school remains responsible for retaining its statutory register entries for six years under the 2024 Regulations.
- Report data errors or breaches immediately under PBCF's data-protection procedure.
- Respond lawfully to requests from commissioners, local authorities, social care, police, inspectors and other authorised bodies.

12. Training, quality assurance and review

- All staff receive attendance induction covering accurate marking, same-day response, safeguarding, SEND and the provider/commissioner responsibility boundary.
- Staff with attendance duties receive role-specific refresher training when guidance or local processes change.
- The Senior Attendance Lead checks records weekly and samples timeliness, amendments, unanswered absences and commissioner notifications.
- The Business Manager reviews trends, serious incidents, complaints and the impact of support at least termly.
- Learner and parent/carer views are sought when reviewing attendance practice.
- This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner after statutory, guidance, commissioning or operational change.

13. Staff quick-response guide

> **If a learner is missing:** Check the timetable and transport; verify the mark; contact agreed adults; notify the commissioner; involve the DSL if anything is unexpected or contact fails; record every action and agree who is continuing the response.

- Do not wait until the end of the day to report an unexplained absence.
- Do not mark present because transport was expected, a parent says the learner is coming, or remote work was set.
- Do not promise that an absence will be authorised or select the commissioner's statutory code.
- Do not demand a doctor's note automatically after three days.
- Do not arrange a home visit or police welfare check as a routine administrative step; involve the DSL and assess risk.
- Do call 999 for immediate danger and follow the safeguarding procedure without delay.

14. Contacts

Field	Details
Manager / Supervisor	Rachael Pilgrim I Rachael@peopletonbrookfarm.co.uk
Business Manager	Jake Payne | jake@peopletonbrookfarm.co.uk
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Use the current PBCF safeguarding policy and displayed safeguarding contact card.
Emergency	999 for immediate danger; 101 for non-emergency police matters when appropriate.

15. Sources and related guidance

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Arranging Alternative Provision (DfE, February 2025)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

16. Revision and approval record

Field	Details
Approved by	Jake Payne
Role	Business Manager
Signature	Jake Payne
Approval date	05/08/2026
Next review	August 2027