



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Last review	September 2026
Next review	September 2027 or sooner if guidance changes
Version	V3.0
Policy reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson
Senior Attendance Lead / Champion	Helen McGloughlin
Attendance contact	07754 315 387 info@thearksmallholding.co.uk
Standard expected arrival	9:30am unless a pupil's placement timetable states otherwise
Operational late threshold	10:00am for a 9:30am start; this is not a statutory school register-closing time
Applies to	All pupils attending The Ark, staff, volunteers and relevant placement arrangements

1. PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THIS POLICY

Attendance is a safeguarding matter. Regular attendance at agreed Ark sessions supports education, relationships, wellbeing and effective risk management. Unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence can be a warning sign of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental ill-health, substance misuse, family stress or other safeguarding concerns.

The Ark Smallholding Ltd is a non-school alternative provision. Pupils attending The Ark remain on the roll of their commissioning/host school unless a different written arrangement has been made. The Ark therefore keeps accurate operational session-attendance records and shares them with the commissioning school, but the commissioning school retains its statutory admission and attendance-register duties and decides the national attendance/absence code to be entered in its register.

2. CORE PRINCIPLES

- Every expected Ark session will be accounted for.
- Unexplained absence will be followed up promptly and proportionately on the first day.
- Attendance concerns will be considered through a safeguarding and barriers-to-attendance lens, not simply as non-compliance.
- Pupils with SEND, medical needs, anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance or other barriers will receive individualised, reasonable support in partnership with the commissioning school and family.
- The Ark will share factual attendance information promptly so the commissioning school can discharge its statutory attendance duties.
- Where absence or non-attendance indicates risk of harm, safeguarding action takes priority over routine attendance processes.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
The Ark / Senior Attendance Lead	Maintain the Ark session record; ensure first-day response; analyse patterns; liaise with DSL, families and commissioners; ensure actions are recorded; contribute to placement reviews.
Ark DSL / deputy DSL	Assess safeguarding implications of unexplained/repeated absence; decide referrals/escalation; ensure vulnerable pupils have individual response arrangements.
Commissioning school	Maintain statutory attendance/admission registers; determine national attendance codes; authorise leave where applicable; lead statutory attendance support/enforcement; keep overall accountability for the pupil on its roll and monitor the AP placement.
Parents/carers	Ensure the child attends agreed sessions and arrives punctually; notify both the school and/or Ark in accordance with the placement agreement if the child will be absent or late; provide updated contact information.
Pupil	Engage with agreed attendance arrangements and tell a trusted adult about barriers, worries or safety concerns.
Local authority / other agencies	Exercise statutory attendance, CME, safeguarding or social-care functions where applicable; support multi-agency plans.

4. EXPECTED ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Each placement must specify the pupil's expected days and sessions, arrival/departure arrangements and transport arrangements. The standard Ark expected arrival is 9:30am unless otherwise agreed. Departure time is the time specified in the individual placement timetable and collection/travel plan.

For a standard 9:30am start, arrival after 9:30am is recorded by The Ark as late. Arrival at or after 10:00am is recorded in the Ark operational record as a significantly late arrival. These Ark categories are for safeguarding and placement monitoring only; they are not national statutory school attendance codes.

5. THE ARK SESSION-ATTENDANCE RECORD

The Ark will make an operational record for each pupil for every session they are expected to attend. The record should use factual categories such as: Present; Late; Notified Absence; Unexplained Absence; Left Early by Agreement; Left Without Agreement; Session Cancelled by The Ark. The reason, source of information and relevant action must be recorded where known.

The Ark does not allocate statutory school attendance codes such as L, U, B, K or C. It provides timely factual information to the commissioning school, which decides and records the statutory code in accordance with its legal duties and the current DfE attendance guidance.

6. NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE OR LATENESS

At placement start, The Ark and the commissioning school must agree who parents/carers should contact and by what time if the pupil will be absent or late. Families should be given The Ark attendance contact details and the commissioning school's attendance contact details. Planned leave-of-absence requests remain a matter for the commissioning school unless otherwise agreed in writing.

7. FIRST-DAY RESPONSE TO UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

1. At the expected start time, record the pupil as not yet present and check whether an absence or transport message has already been received.
2. Where transport is arranged, check any readily available transport information without delaying safeguarding action.
3. Notify the commissioning school promptly that the pupil has not arrived. The Ark's normal expectation is that this information is shared as soon as possible and ideally within 30 minutes of the expected session start.
4. Contact the parent/carer where this is part of the agreed placement procedure. If the commissioning school has agreed to make the first parent contact, obtain confirmation of the outcome rather than duplicating calls unnecessarily.
5. Record every call, message, response, reason given and action taken.
6. If the reason remains unexplained, or the information received creates a safeguarding concern, refer immediately to the Ark DSL/deputy and the commissioning school DSL/attendance lead.
7. If there is reason to believe the child is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, safeguarding referrals must be made without waiting for routine attendance enquiries to finish. Call 999 where there is an immediate threat to life or serious danger.

8. WHEN THE COMMISSIONING SCHOOL SHOULD BE CONTACTED IMMEDIATELY

- The pupil is subject to a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan, looked-after arrangements, Early Help plan or another plan that specifies immediate notification.
- There is a known history of missing episodes, exploitation, trafficking, self-harm, suicidal behaviour, domestic abuse, criminal exploitation or sexual exploitation.
- The absence is unusual or out of character, follows a concerning disclosure/incident, or contact information/transport circumstances do not make sense.
- The pupil was expected to arrive following a handover or supervised journey but has not done so.
- The parent/carer cannot be contacted and there is an identified safeguarding vulnerability.
- The pupil's whereabouts are unknown and there is any reason to suspect immediate risk.

9. VULNERABLE PUPILS AND INDIVIDUAL ARRANGEMENTS

Before a placement starts, the commissioning school should share the safeguarding, SEND, medical and risk information The Ark needs to keep the pupil safe. The Ark will use that information to agree any enhanced attendance or missing response, including named contacts and reporting times. For looked-after children or children with a history of going missing, the Ark will ask whether there is a current missing reporting strategy, trigger plan or Philomena Protocol and will record the operational information relevant to the Ark session.

For pupils with SEND, medical conditions, anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance or other barriers, The Ark will work with the child, family, school and relevant professionals to understand barriers, make reasonable adjustments within the provision, support graded engagement where agreed, and avoid treating disability- or health-related absence as a simple disciplinary issue.

10. REPEATED, PERSISTENT OR PATTERNED NON-ATTENDANCE

- The Senior Attendance Lead will review repeated absence, lateness, early leaving and unexplained non-attendance for patterns and emerging safeguarding concerns.
- Concerns will be shared with the commissioning school promptly, not held until a routine review where risk is increasing.
- The Ark will contribute information to support meetings, Early Help, social-care planning, SEND review or attendance support led by the school/local authority.
- Placement arrangements, transport, curriculum/activity fit, relationships, sensory needs and other Ark-level barriers will be reviewed.
- Where non-attendance persists, The Ark and commissioner will agree next steps and whether the placement remains suitable. The Ark will not independently impose a reduced timetable, issue a Notice to Improve, seek a penalty notice or commence prosecution.

11. ATTENDANCE INFORMATION SHARING AND PLACEMENT REVIEWS

Attendance for each expected Ark session will be shared with the commissioning school promptly. Where practicable this should be within 30 minutes of session start for unexpected non-attendance. The Ark will retain evidence of the information shared and any follow-up action.

Attendance, punctuality, engagement, barriers and any safeguarding concerns will form part of placement review. As a minimum, attendance should be discussed with commissioners at least every six weeks, and more frequently where the placement agreement, safeguarding risk or individual plan requires it.

12. CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME)

Children Missing Education is a specific statutory term. A CME child is of compulsory school age, is not registered as a pupil at a school, and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. A pupil who remains registered at a commissioning school is not CME merely because they are persistently or severely absent from school or from The Ark.

If The Ark receives information suggesting that a child may no longer be on any school roll, has no suitable education in place, has moved with no known education destination, or may otherwise meet the CME definition, The Ark will inform the commissioning school (where one remains identified) and the Leeds Learning Access/CME service promptly and will share relevant safeguarding information. The Ark will not wait for a fixed four-week period before raising a genuine CME concern.

13. WHAT DOES NOT APPLY DIRECTLY TO THE ARK

Because The Ark is a non-school alternative provision and pupils normally remain on the roll of a commissioning school, the following are not The Ark's direct statutory attendance functions: maintaining the school admission register; applying national attendance codes; statutory school register-closing rules; the National Framework for Penalty Notices; Notices to Improve; education supervision orders; attendance prosecution; or other parental attendance enforcement. The Ark will cooperate fully by providing accurate factual evidence and attending support/review meetings when requested.

14. POSITIVE ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

The Ark will promote attendance proportionately through a safe, welcoming and predictable environment; positive relationships; meaningful outdoor, animal-care and forest-school activities; recognition of engagement and progress; and early problem-solving with pupils and families. Incentives will not disadvantage pupils whose attendance is affected by disability, medical need or other protected circumstances.

15. RECORDS, CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Attendance and safeguarding records will be factual, timely and stored securely. Information will be shared with the commissioning school and other agencies where necessary for education, safeguarding or legal functions. Safeguarding information will be shared without delay where this is necessary to protect a child.

16. RELATED POLICIES

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Missing Child, Unexplained Absence and Children Missing Education Procedure
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Physical Intervention / Restrictive Interventions Policy
- Health and Safety Policy and site/activity risk assessments
- Individual pupil risk assessments and support plans

17. REVIEW AND ACCESSIBILITY

This policy will be available to staff, commissioning schools, parents/carers and learners in an accessible form where appropriate. It will be provided or signposted at placement start and following material updates. It will be reviewed at least annually and sooner after a significant incident or change in statutory/local guidance.