

Trainee Attendance & Engagement Policy

Audience:	Trainees on REAch Teach Primary Partnership Initial Teacher Training course REAch2 Staff
Ratified:	SCITT Executive Board July 2026
Other related policies:	REAch Teach Disciplinary policy REAch Teach Trainee Progress and Assessment REAch2 Safeguarding REAch2 Health and Safety REAch2 Complaints REAch Teach Admissions
Policy owner:	Gill Ellyard, Director of Education
Review:	Every 3 years (or earlier in line with programme requirements)

At REAch2, our actions and our intentions as school leaders are guided by our Touchstones.



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Policy Overview

The REAch Teach Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programme is designed to enable trainees to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) within one academic year. Given the intensive nature of the programme and the professional expectations of the teaching profession (Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards), high levels of attendance and punctuality are essential to ensure that trainees can sufficiently demonstrate their proficiency against the REAch Teach Assessment Framework throughout the year, and against the Teachers' Standards at the end of the training year in order to be recommended for Qualified Teacher Status in line with programme design.

This process should be read in conjunction with REAch2 policies including:

- Safeguarding, including Safer Recruitment
- Health and Safety
- Complaints

And other REAch Teach policies:

- Admissions
- Disciplinary
- Trainee Progress and Assessment

Trainees must agree to adhere to the professional requirements of the course prior to commencement, outlined in the Trainee Contract and the Code of Conduct, which are agreed and signed by the trainee on commencement of their training.

Policy in Detail

General Attendance Principles

The guiding principle behind REAch Teach expectations on attendance is that trainees must maintain an exemplary attendance record during all school placements and training sessions, as this is essential for their professional development. By design, the training programme allows for trainees to be in school placements for over and above the minimum 120 days stipulated in the Initial Teacher Training Advice: Criteria and Accompanying Guidance (DFE) regulatory document, and trainees will be expected to complete 120 days in school as a minimum expectation to demonstrate evidence of their progress over time. To enable this to be possible, trainees must ensure that they familiarise themselves with course dates and structure of training, and placement school and programme expectations around absence. In addition, it is advisable to be transparent about any health needs and possible reasonable adjustments at the earliest possible point in the recruitment and onboarding process. Trainees will undertake rigorous suitability checks as part of onboarding, as well as a period of comprehensive induction before commencing on the programme; it is imperative that trainees make any health disclosures necessary to the Occupational Health partner for reasonable adjustments to be considered and put in place. Trainees are expected to pay due care and attention to joining instructions for ALL training, including bringing appropriate identification documentation and DBS to in-person training, and any necessary learning resources.

REAch Teach expects trainees to be in school as per their placement school's term-times, including any INSET days, from the start to the end of the academic year. If a trainee misses

sufficient days that they do not complete 120 days in school, they are likely to be required to complete additional days at the end of the training, delaying the award of QTS. By design, after May half-term, REAch Teach have identified 6 weeks where trainees will teach an 80% timetable in line with DFE regulations. If trainees are absent for more than two weeks of this teaching block, it is possible that they will need an extension into the following academic year (see Trainee Transfer, Extension, Deferral and Withdrawal policy), depending on whether they can be assessed having met the Teachers' Standards consistently with the evidence they have.

Punctuality is a professional expectation and therefore trainees are expected to arrive promptly for all training (whether in placement or taught sessions) with all associated learning materials, and to engage fully with learning in line with the engagement expectations outlined below. For online sessions, 'attendance' is defined as being present in the session and full engagement in the training (defined below).

The Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act 2010 defines a person with a disability as a person with a physical impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effect on their ability to undertake normal daily activities. As a provider, REAch Teach primary partnership is committed to making reasonable adjustments to support trainees through all aspects of the training. If the recommended or requested adjustments are not considered reasonable, this will be discussed with the trainee and an explanation provided. Alternatives for the trainee, if adjustments cannot be accommodated, may include an alternative placement school, and/or an agreed temporary readjustment or re-prioritisation of workload and requirements. On occasions, this may impact a trainee's pace of development and timeline for the award of QTS, resulting in an extension into the next academic year. This will be discussed with individual trainees as and when needed.

Professional Expectations: Engagement and punctuality

Engagement

During all training (online and in-person), trainees are expected to be respectful, presentable, and not hinder others' learning or safety. At all times, trainees are representing both REAch Teach and the teaching profession so are expected to uphold professional conduct, honesty, integrity, and ethical standards in line with the teaching profession and the Trainee Code of Conduct.

In line with the professional expectations of the programme and Trainee Code of Conduct, full engagement in online sessions is defined in the learning agreement outlined at the start of the year and periodically through the year. For clarity, full online engagement is characterised by:

- full and active participation in the training session (e.g., responding to facilitator questions, contributing actively to discussions and chat, working collaboratively with peers in breakout room activities, making notes to support learning, completing directed tasks etc.)
- The use of fully-functioning technology to support active session engagement (e.g. functioning camera and microphone which is consistently available throughout the session as per the learning agreement and facilitator expectations).
- joining from a suitable study setting

Where issues with technology affect full engagement, the trainee will be expected to take steps for this issue to be resolved as soon as possible to return to full and active engagement in sessions.

A suitable study setting for online training is defined by REAch Teach as an environment conducive for full attention and engagement – not distracting for peers and facilitators (e.g., sitting upright in a learning space that supports the device to remain upright to allow visibility of the trainee's full face without manual assistance; the ability to take full notes; the ability to participate fully in the session). Where there are exceptional extenuating circumstances that might prevent this, trainees are expected to be proactive in contacting the facilitator of the session to alert them to the issue and the expected resolutions. These are expected to be short-term issues that are rectified quickly to return to full and active engagement as soon as possible.

Punctuality

Punctuality for all aspects of training is of utmost importance as it reflects a trainee's professional commitment and supports their preparation and organisation for the day. Furthermore, arriving late to school can have safeguarding implications for the children under the trainee's supervision.

If a trainee anticipates lateness for either their placement school or training, they should make reasonable efforts to inform both their placement school or the REAch Teach team as per notification guidelines in this policy, as early as possible.

Minimum core hours for school placement are outlined in the Trainee Code of Conduct and are a minimum of 8am–4pm on site. This will need to be flexible to meet the requirements of the role, including attending mentor meetings, appropriate school meetings or CPD, meeting colleagues, or to complete teaching tasks at school. Online training starts at 9.15am and finishes at 4pm, and in-person training starts at 9.30am and finishes at 4pm. Trainees are expected to make all necessary arrangements to attend for the full training session, including any caring arrangements.

Persistent lateness (defined as more than twice) will be viewed as a matter of concern and will prompt a discussion with the trainee as to the reasons and intended resolutions. The Reach Teach team will determine the appropriate course of action, which may include the initiation of support or disciplinary measures.

Absence from the training programme

Absence definitions and expectations

For any absence, it is the expectation that a trainee makes up the lost learning in whatever way is appropriate, making use of relevant support structures.

REAch Teach acknowledges that there are occasional, unavoidable instances of exceptional absence. For the purposes of managing these absences consistently, REAch Teach categorises absence as:

- Unexpected (e.g. illness, caring responsibilities)
- Approved requests for other exceptional leave
- Unauthorised absences

An absence for illness supported by self-certification (for 7 days in a row or fewer) or a medical fit note (for more than 7 days in a row) is automatically authorised.

A trainee must notify REACh Teach in advance of any appointments that necessitate taking leave and provide additional supporting documentation (see Appendix 1). REACh Teach recognises the challenges in scheduling GP and hospital appointments and these will be accommodated wherever feasible and in agreement with the placement school. However, in a similar way to qualified teachers, trainees are encouraged to arrange appointments in a way that minimises disruption to their training and attendance in school placements, utilising school holidays or after-school hours wherever possible.

Other Exceptional Leave

Trainees may request authorisation in advance for absence for other exceptional reasons e.g., to attend a wedding or other significant life event (as outlined below). The REACh Teach stance on approving these requests absence is designed to support trainees in meeting the rigorous standards of attendance for qualified teachers, and all absence requests will be considered with this principle in mind. The process for requesting absence is detailed later in this document and in Appendix 1.

There are a small number of permitted reasons for exceptional absence. These need to be requested in advance at the earliest possible opportunity and at the latest by 7 working days before the intended absence. No absence request should be considered authorised until this decision has been communicated by REACh Teach, and no travel or other arrangements should be made until the trainee has received a response to their request. The REACh Teach team will endeavour to respond to the request within 48 hours.

Reason for requested absence	Maximum time to be approved
Religious observation	1 day
Graduation Day	Up to 2 days (2 days only permitted if long travel – over 2 hours one way – is needed) – confirmation of attendance at graduation and any necessary travel must be attached as evidence for this request
Significant personal event e.g., direct family wedding, funeral, baptism	Up to 2 days (2 days only permitted if long travel – over 2 hours one way – is needed) – confirmation of attendance any necessary travel must be attached as part of this request
Specific essential caring responsibilities (not childcare)	1 day – details needed as part of the request.
School visits and interviews for ECT positions	As and when needed. Evidence of invitation to visit or interview to be included in the request as appropriate.
Pre-booked holidays	To approve this, evidence must be presented that the holiday was booked prior to acceptance on the course.

Requests that are likely not to be authorised include (not limited to):

- Birthdays – self/others
- Family get-togethers
- Other outside work commitments

- Festival attendance (where booked after acceptance onto the programme)
- Hen/stag do (where booked after acceptance onto the programme)
- Booked holidays (where booked after acceptance onto the programme)
- Attendance at school trips for own child

The timetable for the year includes additional ring-fenced time out of school in term-time in the form of Wellbeing Time, and REAch Teach would encourage trainees to schedule other events such as above within that time rather than seek additional time off the programme to complete them as this will not be authorised.

Absence indicators that may prompt review

Whilst each case of absence is considered individually and may not result in formal action, to provide a consistent approach to attendance and absence management, the following absence indicators will prompt an attendance review and a discussion with the trainee:

- a) Three or more separate episodes of absence within three calendar months
- b) a continuous sickness absence lasting twenty working days or more over four continuous weeks;
- c) patterns of repeated absence (e.g. certain days or following certain patterns)

After review (including possible discussions with the trainee), if it is deemed that the absence reasons are unauthorised, the process by which these absences are requested have not met the REAch Teach attendance expectations, or the nature of absence is impacting the trainee's progress through the REAch Teach curriculum, REAch Teach may initiate disciplinary or fitness to practise proceedings.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are considered a breach of the professional expectations of trainees as outlined in the Trainee Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with the programme's attendance requirements (including dishonest practices, such as falsifying attendance records or reasons for absence) will lead to disciplinary action in line with the Disciplinary policy.

Absence impacting recommendation for QTS

If a trainee expects to have frequent or long absences, they must consult with their Regional ITT Lead to assess the potential impact on their training and discuss any reasonable adjustments to their training that may be required. In these circumstances, a Management Referral to Occupational Health may be completed to understand more about the reasons for absence and assess any new adjustments that may be necessary.

Should a trainee's authorised absence mean that they do not complete 120 days in placement, or miss more than 10% of training, it may be necessary for them to repeat the missed period, which may result in extension of the training programme timeline into a second academic year. This decision will be made by the National and Regional ITT Lead who will together evaluate the trainee's specific circumstances and progress on the programme in consultation with the Lead Mentor, in order to decide whether the trainee is able to catch up on missed learning without detrimentally jeopardising their recommendation for QTS and readiness to teach by the end of the training year.

Reporting Absences

In line with usual school practice, trainees must notify all appropriate parties as soon as possible (and by 8am at the latest) of any unplanned absences. Trainees are expected to commit to catching up on any missed learning, proactively drawing on available support.

Absence Request Process

All absence requests should be submitted to the Microsoft Forms link which is shared with trainees at the start of the year and linked on the Mosaic dashboard. Trainees will have training on this process during induction and it is the trainee's responsibility to ensure full understanding of the process to ensure that it is followed accurately and without delay. Supporting evidence will be expected in all cases (except short-term self-certified illness or caring-related absence if evidence is not possible) and it will not be possible to authorise an absence if this is not provided where it could reasonably be expected. School mentors will be copied into the response from REAch Teach regarding authorisation of the absence.

This should be done on the first day of absence and any subsequent days. Calculations of days absent will also be recorded in the trainee's online portfolio on the weekly mentor meeting record and the impact of absence on professional development may be discussed at Progress Review points.

Short-term unavoidable absence from placement

Trainees must follow their **placement school's absence policy**, which usually includes informing school colleagues by a specified time each day, using a communication method specified by the school. This is essential for the safe and smooth running of schools, and breaches of school policy will be classed as a breach of professional behaviours on the REAch Teach programme. It is good practice for absent trainees to also let their mentor know directly (even if they are not noted within the school policy). Trainees are expected to ensure they make themselves aware of their placement school's absence policy as part of induction, and partnership schools are asked to facilitate this in line with the trainee's induction checklist.

Any absence without communication

Unless there are legitimate extenuating circumstances, any absence without communication by the trainee will be considered automatically unauthorised. For safety reasons, if REAch Teach or placement school colleagues are not informed of trainee absence as per the policy and are unable to get in contact with the trainee directly, a member of the team may contact the trainee's designated Emergency Contact/s for a welfare check.

Should there be no communication from the trainee within 10 working days, REAch Teach SCITT will pause the trainee's studies and may notify Student Finance England of a Change of Circumstances, which may impact the Student Loan payment. A failure to re-establish contact within another 15 days may lead to being considered as having withdrawn from the programme (see Trainee Transfer, Extension, Deferral and Withdrawal policy).

Management of Ongoing Sickness Absences

Trainees dealing with ongoing illnesses or chronic conditions (such as depression, arthritis, unstable diabetes, ME, etc) are strongly encouraged to disclose this at the outset of the

programme so that reasonable adjustments can be made to the programme as appropriate, in line with Occupational Health advice.

Trainees are able to self-certify absences up to 7 days in a row (5 working days). If a trainee is absent for more than 5 days, they are required to provide REAch Teach with a fit note from a healthcare professional, as soon as possible. If the absence continues, the trainee will be required to supply a Fit Note that covers the full period of ongoing absence.

For significant absences that impact a trainee's progress and development on the programme (and the breadth and depth of evidence for QTS), the REAch Teach support team will monitor indicators in line with the absence management protocols; part of this review may be to determine whether the trainee needs to consider an Extension or Deferral from that point of the programme. This will be suggested in situations where it is felt by the REAch Teach team that the trainee is unable to make the necessary progress or provide the necessary evidence by the point of final recommendation for QTS. In these cases, Student Finance England will be informed, which may impact student loan payments to the trainee.

As part of the ongoing Fitness to Practice processes, the REAch Teach SCITT utilises Occupational Health referrals to support the physical and mental health of trainees, ensuring expert medical advice on health and/or disability issues that may affect a trainee on the programme. Occupational Health referrals are typically made where a trainee discloses a health condition (either at the start or mid-programme) or when it is deemed by the programme team that a trainee's health or disability is impacting their performance or attendance. The aim of these referrals is to facilitate the trainee's return to the programme with suitable support, where the Occupational Health provider assesses that the trainee is fit to undertake the programme, with or without adjustments. On rare occasions, the Occupational Health process may determine that the trainee is no longer fit to undertake the programme. This recommendation will be dealt with in line with the REAch Teach Fitness to Practice policy

Most periods of sickness absence result in the trainee being able to return to their training. However, there are some occasions when the level and duration of an absence is such that this may ultimately result in the termination of a trainee's place on the programme due to them being unable to fulfil the demands and expectations of the programme despite reasonable adjustments and adjusted timelines. This would be considered as a last resort and after reasonable alternatives have been considered.

Compassionate Leave

In cases of unexpected emergencies like bereavement or severe accidents or illness affecting immediate family members or dependents, REAch Teach acknowledges the need for compassion and support.

Requests for compassionate leave that are likely to impact on timely completion of the programme and may result in an extension or deferral will be reviewed and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Carer and Parental Leave

REAch Teach recognises that trainees may have responsibilities as carers for family members or dependents. Trainees are encouraged to discuss their caring responsibilities with their Lead

Mentor, who will work with the trainee to find suitable solutions that allow the trainee to fulfil their caregiving responsibilities while minimising disruption to their training and education. In exceptional cases, trainees may request carer's leave to fulfil these responsibilities where they are the sole carer available. Carer's leave requested for a date in the future will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances of the trainee, including attendance history, and the REAch Teach guidelines on exceptional leave. Trainees seeking carer's leave should follow the process for requesting leave, which includes notifying REAch Teach as far in advance as possible, and providing relevant evidence. If it is 'on the day' carer's leave on a placement day then the school should also be informed based on their policy. The duration of authorised carer's leave will be determined based on the specific situation, the needs of the trainee's caregiving responsibilities and the impact on the trainee's progress towards QTS. It is important to note that carer's leave is subject to the same cumulative leave limits as other types of leave and may impact the completion time of the programme.

Return To Work

In the case of long-term absences from the programme (10 working days or more), REAch Teach commit to keeping in touch with trainees to ensure that those away from the programme do not feel disconnected or isolated. Lead Mentors or Regional ITT Leads will allocate a specific time to meet with a trainee returning from a longer period of absence in order to cover several key areas such as welcoming the trainee back, updating them on any developments that occurred during their absence, verifying the suitability of their return to the educational setting, considering any medical advice from the GP noted on the medical certificate, addressing any personal or educational challenges affecting the trainee's health and attendance, and establishing the tasks and priorities upon their return. This meeting should take place before the trainee returns to school. It is good practice for this meeting to also include the trainee's mentor so all are informed, but if this is not possible, REAch Teach will liaise with the school to support a smooth transition back to school for the trainee with a clear plan.

Maternity / Paternity Leave

REAch Teach offers a one-year course during which paid maternity leave is not available, but REAch Teach will strive to provide as much flexibility as possible within the course structure to enable trainees to achieve Qualified Teacher Status once their evidence is ready. Should the expected duration of absence necessitate it, the course may need to be extended into the following year, provided there is no substantial change in QTS compliance requirements. A trainee who becomes pregnant after being offered a place and before enrolling on the programme may request to defer the course for one year only, contingent upon no changes to QTS requirements during the deferment period. This may affect the financial support from Student Finance England (SFE) and it is the trainee's responsibility to investigate financial implications of any course decision.

Where it can be facilitated, the preferred approach is for a trainee to return from their deferred study in the academic year following their leave, at a start time agreed between trainee and REAch Teach staff. This start time should allow trainees to join at a point whereby they can access any missed curriculum or trainee programme activity. Trainees must notify Reach Teach as soon as practicable, but no later than 14 weeks prior to the expected week of childbirth, of their intention to take maternity leave. Absences due to pregnancy-related illness or loss outside the maternity leave period are treated as sick or compassionate leave, subject to usual conditions.

Maternity leave should not normally start more than 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. Upon the start of maternity leave, REAch Teach will formally suspend the trainee's studies and notify SFE. The trainee must inform REAch Teach of the child's birth date and must not resume studies less than two weeks post-birth. Subsequently, the trainee should discuss their return and course completion timeline with REAch Teach. If the trainee does not make contact, REAch Teach may contact the trainee no earlier than 21 days before the maternity leave anniversary to confirm the birth date and return intentions. A response is required within 14 days; failure to respond may lead to withdrawal from the course.

Any trainee requesting maternity leave ***must complete the course within six terms***. One of those terms must be the final term of an academic year. If this does not take place, REAch Teach may request 25% of the total tuition fees directly from the trainee.

Paid paternity leave is similarly unavailable on this one-year training course, but REAch Teach aims to allow brief absences to facilitate a period of unpaid paternity leave of 1–2 weeks depending on the point in the year and course requirements met to that point. Extended absences may necessitate extending the course into a second year, which will have financial implications. Trainees are advised to consult with their Regional ITT Lead regarding any maternity or paternity leave plans, so that personalised advice can be given based on the time of year and the trainee's evidence for QTS at that point in time.

Attendance at placement school In-Service Training ('INSET') days

On school INSET days, trainees are expected to attend school to take part in the INSET session alongside school colleagues, with the agreement of the head teacher, or to work independently in the classroom on planning, preparation or assessment tasks on the rare occasion that permission is not given to join the INSET. If the school is closed on an INSET day, trainees may work from home.

Trainees are generally expected to join in after-school staff meetings. Where it is felt, with the advice of the school mentor, that the content of some meetings may not be relevant to the trainee, they will be permitted to agree with their mentor which meetings are most suitable for their attendance on those occasions.

Industrial action

Strike action is taken against an employer; as the REAch Teach training programme is unsalaried, there is no right to strike for trainees. Therefore, in the event of industrial action, all trainee teachers are expected to continue to engage fully in their training programme, including full attendance in schools (where they are open).

In the event of a school closure due to industrial action, trainee teachers should work from home, utilising this time for placement work (e.g. planning, preparation and assessment) or if that is not necessary, then professional study (e.g. reading for their academic assignments, subject knowledge enhancement, professional record keeping).

Record Keeping

Records are kept within the REAch Teach team which log all absence requests, days absent and any lateness for taught sessions. In addition, records on attendance in school are kept by placement schools and submitted through mentor meeting notes each week. These records are essential for monitoring attendance patterns and identifying any concerns that may require intervention.

Any fraudulent activities concerning attendance, whether it involves the falsification of signatures or any other deceptive practices, would be considered a breach of the Trainee Code of Conduct and will incur disciplinary measures in line with the Disciplinary policy.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed **every 3 years** or sooner, taking into account any legislative changes. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – ABSENCE REPORTING / REQUEST PROCESS

Trainees will report or request absence using a link to a 'REAch Teach – Trainee Absence Reporting and Requests' Microsoft Form shared with them at several easily accessed points:

- Mosaic landing page
- Programme Handbook
- Email which they can 'pin' to the top of their email inbox

The REAch Teach – Trainee Absence Reporting and Requests form uses branching questions to collect information while also reminding trainees about the attendance expectations of the programme and their responsibilities for reporting and requesting absence.

The form asks trainees to upload evidence to support the reasons for their absence or request.

The spreadsheet generated by the form will be used as evidence of trainees' attendance and their adherence to the Trainee Code of Conduct.

Reporting an unexpected, unavoidable absence			Requesting leave of absence for a planned appointment or event		
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Reporting a self-certified day of absence because you are unwell (up to 7 calendar days including weekends)	Reporting continuation of a period of absence because you are still unwell and have a sick note / fit note (because you have been absent for more than 7 calendar days)	Reporting an unexpected, unavoidable absence for a reason other than <u>your own</u> sickness	Requesting leave of absence for a medical appointment for yourself or a dependent (<i>a dependent = your own children or others for whom you have caring responsibilities</i>)	Requesting leave of absence to attend a school visit or interview for an ECT post	Requesting 'exceptional' leave of absence for reasons other than medical appointments or for ECT visits and interviews (request made at least 7 calendar days in advance)