



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

2026-2027

Approved by:	<i>Pastoral Committee</i>
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Review by:	Jo Davey

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Introduction and Rationale

Canonbury Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance and punctuality are essential for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Therefore, the aim of this policy is to enable the school to provide consistent practice that encourages and facilitates regular attendance and punctuality at school to ensure steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning for all pupils.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

At Canonbury Primary school, we take a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and punctuality and see it as the collective responsibility of parents/carers, pupils, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance and/or punctuality are given the right attention and appropriate support.

Our policy outlines the school's commitment to attendance and punctuality and aims to provide clear guidance to all staff, parents/carers, pupils and governors about the responsibilities and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance. It underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.
- Work with families to identify any reasons for poor attendance and resolve potential difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. This policy therefore reflects the requirements and principles of this guidance. In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance and punctuality by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance and punctuality are monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable (exceptional circumstances). **Please note it is only the headteacher, not the parent, who can determine exceptional circumstances and authorise any absence.**

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Canonbury Primary School, we believe in developing positive patterns of attendance and setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day-to-day life and as such, we recognise strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is a shared responsibility across the school community. To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance through our newsletters and noticeboards.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance and punctuality by displaying and reporting class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target.

School Attendance and the Law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 sets out the statutory requirements for schools and has introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable —
 - a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
 - b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age —
 - a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, as opposed to family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of **10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period**. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O, N and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a penalty notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second penalty notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child (with no reduction). If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school." All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed from The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances."

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The headteacher may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

If a leave of absence is authorised, the school will not necessarily provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Set high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded from harm.
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters and ensure that there is a named Senior Attendance Champion.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensure the school engages and works effectively with the Local Authority Attendance Team and wider local partners and services to address barriers to school attendance.
- Regularly review attendance and punctuality data, discussing, challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker or youth justice worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Ensure that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or DfE as required and on time.
- Review the Attendance and Punctuality Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.

The Senior Leadership Team (including Senior Attendance Champion)

The Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school - is: Jo Davey

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the senior leadership team, including the Senior Attendance Champion will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to all pupils and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers.
- Ensure that there is a whole-school approach which reinforces good attendance and punctuality; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend school on time and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Ensure that the regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named Senior Attendance Champion to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resources.
- Return attendance data to the Local Authority and the DfE as required and on time.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Report attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the governors termly.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

Teaching and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, all staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to all pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers.
- Contribute to a whole-school approach which reinforces good attendance and punctuality; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend school on time and to achieve.
- Comply with attendance regulations and other relevant legislation.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance and punctuality of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and punctuality and support pupils and their families.

The member of staff responsible for daily attendance (first day calling, coding registers etc) will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance and/or punctuality. This may involve seeking multi-agency support.

They will support good attendance and punctuality, respond to concerns, and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance and punctuality data.
- Undertaking weekly attendance meetings with the Senior Attendance Champion, Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENCO, and other relevant staff members.
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting excellent whole attendance and punctuality.
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality.
- Managing individual pupil casework files.
- Coordinating individual action plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of an early help assessment and plan and/or the implementation of an attendance contract.
- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to if a child is absent without contact from parents/carers.
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole-school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes.
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life so that we can offer support at the earliest opportunity.
- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance and punctuality.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours whenever possible.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

Parents and carers continued

- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship, and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance and punctuality.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance and/or punctuality issues.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- Be aware of the school's attendance and punctuality policy. This will be communicated to them by staff, parents/carers.
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance and/or punctuality.
- Attend school ready to learn, with the appropriate uniform and on time.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not the parent/carer), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session.' Absence will not be authorised unless parent/carers have provided a satisfactory explanation, and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the headteacher.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Pupils attending Alternative Provision (AP)

Pupils attending Alternative Provision (AP) should remain dual-registered at the school which has commissioned the AP throughout the period of attendance. Canonbury Primary School retains ultimate statutory responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils placed in an AP setting.

Before a placement is commissioned, the school will obtain, review, and record the AP provider's full written safeguarding policies and procedures. This includes obtaining explicit written verification that all appropriate safer recruitment and Enhanced DBS checks have been executed on all personnel working at the establishment (matching the strict standards the school performs on its own staff), alongside verifying their site safety, risk assessments, and daily attendance tracking protocols.

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

While not an exhaustive list, unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration and are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, it is counted as an absence for the session.
- Shopping trips.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Day trips.
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent (PA) and Severe Absence (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents/carers to resolve this. **All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.**

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent.' Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

The attendance of all pupils is monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in our policy. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all pupils' absences, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9am. Please be aware that if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call back from the school so that we may discuss the absence before deciding whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9am.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents/carers and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS guidance:-

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to contact parents/carers by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding.
 - We will also inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school in line with statutory requirements.
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents/carers by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered "missing from education." Islington's local protocol requires schools to notify the LA of any pupil who has been absent for 10 consecutive school days without permission using the Missing Pupil Alert. Pupils must not be deleted from the admission register until authorised by the LA.

If absence continues, we will:

- Contact you if your child's attendance is below 90% and/or where punctuality is a concern.
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Senior Attendance Champion or another key member of staff.
- Create a personalised plan, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child.
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Arriving on time builds and promotes important life skills that will support pupils as they progress through their education and eventually employment.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start of the school day for all pupils at Canonbury Primary School are:

- Gates open: **8:45**

We advise all parents/carers to ensure their child(ren) are on site prior to registration and to benefit from the soft start to the day and opportunity to check in with key school adults.

- Registration starts: **9:00**
- Registration closes: **9:10**

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8:45 when children can begin to come into school.
- Morning registers are taken at 9:00; afternoon registers are taken at 1:30pm.
- Children arriving after 9:00 are required to come into school via the school office. The school register will officially close at 9:10am. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after 9:30 am, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence.
- Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns.

Unauthorised lateness could result in a referral to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with staff but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents/carers and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Understanding Barriers to Attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. At Canonbury Primary School, we recognise that poor attendance and/or punctuality can sometimes be an indication of difficulties in a family's life or in school and therefore encourage parents to inform us of any difficulties or changes in circumstances. This will help us identify any additional support that may be required. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance and/or punctuality. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child. High expectations of attendance and punctuality remain in place for these pupils; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improvement. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

Part-Time Timetables

All schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils and we are committed to every child's right to a suitable, full-time education offer. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, reduced timetable where a pupil's individual needs indicate they cannot currently access a full-time education, and it would not be in their best interest to do so.

A part-time timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. We will never put a part-time timetable in place without agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil where it is safe to do so; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family.

Local Authority Attendance Support Services

- Attendance Access and Engagement Officers can offer strategic advice to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance and punctuality.
- Parents/carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. However, if difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, we may consider providing more formal support and/or referring the child to the Local Authority.
- Parents/carers are expected to work with the school and Local Authority to address any attendance and/or punctuality concerns.
- If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a penalty notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Deletion of Pupils from the Admission Register

Under The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#), all schools are legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register within five days of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, the Local Authority must be notified of every deletion from the school register as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

Islington's local protocol requires schools to obtain written confirmation of a pupil's safe arrival at their new school for any in-year transfer

Reason for deletion Supporting Documentation	
New School – The pupil is registered at another establishment and written confirmation has been received from the new school/academy.	• LA Notification Form. • Written confirmation from new school that the pupil is on roll. • (For pupils with an EHCP) - Authorisation from Home LA.
Elective Home Education – The parent/carers has confirmed in writing that they are educating their child outside of the school system.	• LA Notification Form. • Written confirmation from parent that they are educating their child outside the school system. • (For pupils with an EHCP) - Authorisation from Home LA. • Attendance Certificate. • Completed Elective Home Education Risk Assessment.

Custody – The pupil will be in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period.	• LA Notification Form. • Written confirmation from Youth Offending Service (YOS) regarding final court order.
Permanent Exclusion – The pupil has been permanently excluded. They must remain on roll until the exclusion and appeal process have expired.	• LA Notification Form.
Deceased – The pupil has died. Please notify the LA as soon as possible to ensure records are updated as a priority.	• LA Notification Form.

Absence Data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance and/or punctuality needs to improve, and schools are required to submit daily pupil attendance and punctuality data to the DfE as outlined in Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as we know that increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools/academies in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*, DfE (August 2024) [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)
- *The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024* [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- *School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures*, DfE (January 2015) *School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures*
- *Children Missing Education*, DfE (September 2016) [Children Missing Education Guidance](#)
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE): 2025/2026 update* [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children: March 2026 edition* [Working Together to](#)