

Attendance policy

September 2024

Contents

Policy statement	3
1.1 Vision, mission and values	3
1.2 Purpose and intent	3
1.3 Key policy principles	3
1.4 Roles and responsibilities	3
2 Policy	6
2.1 Registration	6
2.2 Late arrival	7
2.3 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation	7
2.4 Reporting absence	7
2.5 Appointments	8
2.6 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)	8
2.7 Religious observance	9
2.8 Reduced timetable and reintegration packages	9
2.9 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality	9

Policy statement

1.1 Vision, mission and values

We are fully committed to ensuring that all students reach their full potential and go beyond their aspirations when they leave us. To achieve this, a high level of attendance is essential.

Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents, carers and all staff share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent attendance and punctuality for all.

We are committed to creating a positive culture where all our children and young people feel valued and welcome, supporting student learning and success. Underpinning this policy is our commitment to empowerment, respect and care for all students and staff.

1.2 Purpose and intent

This policy seeks to ensure that every child has excellent attendance, so that they:

- establish positive routines and attitudes towards their education from the earliest point;
- progress well academically and socially; and
- develop excellent habits for their next steps in education and their careers.

1.3 Key policy principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded, and these are outlined within academy processes and procedural documentation.'
- It is the responsibility of everybody in our academies to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Where attendance or punctuality fall short of expected standards, steps will be taken to address this and sanctions may be applied in accordance with the [behaviour policy](#).
- Some students find it harder than others to attend school. We will work with students, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents or students have, or where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents and students should discuss with the key contacts as outlined on the 'Contact us' section of the academy website.

1.4 Roles and responsibilities

1.4.1 The academy will:

- develop and maintain a whole academy culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance;

- work with students and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and understand any barriers to attendance;
- investigate unexplained or unjustified absence, applying sanctions where appropriate;
- take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the academy's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- share information, including returns information required to be shared in accordance with regulations¹ and the Department for Education's statutory attendance guidance, and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance;
- regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data including to identify students or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future;
- ensure that all students can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case;
- ensure that the Trust board, strategic development lead for attendance and the academy's leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy;
- ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the statutory attendance guidance issued by the Department for Education, '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)';
- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (please refer to our [safeguarding and child protection policy](#));
- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education;
- regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels;
- support students who are returning to education following long term absence;
- ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using an electronic management information system;
- assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the academy to a designated senior leader with responsibility for behaviour and attendance and

¹ School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

- observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education ([Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#)) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

1.4.2 We expect parents and carers to:

- ensure that their child arrives at the academy on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment;
- promote the importance of regular attendance at home;
- follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child from the academy (see section 2.4);
- avoid unnecessary absences;
- keep the academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance;
- not take their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 2.6);
- inform the academy in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live; and
- observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education ([Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#)).

1.4.3 We expect students to:

- attend the academy regularly and on time;
- be punctual to all lessons; and
- follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the academy late (see section 2.1 and 2.2).

1.4.4 Designated attendance lead

The designated attendance lead at each of our academies (see 'Contact us' section of the academy website) are responsible for the strategic approach to attendance, and will:

- offer a clear vision for attendance improvement;
- evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes;
- oversee attendance and absence data analysis;
- ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and students; and
- provide data and reports, as required, to support the work of the board of trustees (see below).

1.4.5 Strategic development lead

The trust strategic development lead will:

- maintain an up-to-date knowledge of national statutory requirements, ensuring that we are fully compliant across the Trust;
- develop and implement the Trust policy for attendance, alongside business managers, Senior attendance leads and the data lead in accordance with operational guidance;
- work with outside agencies and advisors (when applicable) to devise and implement Trust wide improvement plans, leading to secure practice and high standards of attendance, in line with or exceeding, national indicators of performance;
- maintain an overview of attendance across academies providing targeted support and guidance where need is identified;
- strategically lead the Family Support Advisor group in conjunction with business leads and a designated FSA chair;
- provide accurate and evaluative reports to the chief education officers half termly, reported into the Standards and Outcomes Committee for the Trust board.

1.4.6 The board of trustees along with local academy committees through delegated responsibility will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Trust's ethos and policies;
- ensure the academy's leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
- regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help academy leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual students or cohorts who need it most;
- ensure academy staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance;
- share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across its academies;
- require the academy to report to the trustees on the academy's attendance at regular intervals.

2 Policy

2.1 Registration

2.1.1 The academy maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each student's attendance at the start of the academy day and again in the afternoon. Session attendance is split by a designated break in the middle of the academy day. This is the lunch break. You can view

your academy's day, including start and finish times, within the 'Parents' section of the academy website.

2.1.2 Students who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session will be marked as late. Where students arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 2.2 applies.

2.1.3 The register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes which can be found in the Department for Education's guidance on attendance – [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

2.1.4 Where a student attends a registration session but does not attend subsequent lessons, we will treat this as a truancy and non-attendance matter in accordance with the [behaviour policy](#) and engage parents where necessary.

2.2 Late arrival

2.2.1 If a student arrives at the academy after the relevant registration period has ended, they must immediately go to the academy office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

2.2.2 Persistent unauthorised lateness will be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with in line with the [behaviour policy](#).

2.3 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

2.3.1 **Authorised absence** – absence will only be authorised where the academy has given approval in advance for a student to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the academy can authorise absence.

2.3.2 **Unauthorised absence** – absence will be marked as unauthorised where the academy is not satisfied with the reasons given or no reasons are provided for the absence.

2.4 Reporting absence

2.4.1 Where a student is to be absent from the academy without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the academy on the morning of the day of the first absence and let the academy know when they expect the student to return. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the academy on each day of absence.

2.4.2 On the day of return to the academy, parents/carers must also provide written confirmation of the reason(s) for the full period of absence.

2.4.3 In cases where the academy needs clarification to accurately record the absence in the attendance register, the parents/cares may be asked to provide the academy with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor to support an absence for illness. If satisfactory evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

2.5 Appointments

2.5.1 Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a student should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

2.5.2 Where an appointment must take place during school time, the student should attend the academy for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given to the academy office / attendance team.

2.6 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)

2.6.1 The academy will grant permission for a student to be absent from school in the circumstances described in paragraph 37 of the DfE's guidance [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90123/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) which can be summarised as follows:

- taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad;
- attendance at an interview for entry into another educational setting or future employment;
- study leave for public examinations;
- temporary, time-limited part-time timetable (see section 2.8);
- other exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers should make every effort to avoid taking students out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time.

2.6.2 To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the principal as soon as possible ahead of the planned leave.

2.6.3 Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the principal will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:

- will be confirmed in writing;
- is solely at the principal's discretion; and
- is final.

2.6.4 Where permission is granted, the principal will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.

2.6.5 If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of the academy, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see section 2.9).

2.7 Religious observance

2.7.1 We recognise that students of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time; and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers and student belongs

the absence from the academy will be authorised.

2.7.2 We ask that the parents/carers notify the academy by writing to the academy in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

2.8 Reduced timetable and reintegration packages

2.8.1 A reduced or part-time timetable may be implemented in very exceptional circumstances, on a temporary basis and following the agreement of both the academy and the parent.

2.8.2 Reduced timetables may be used as part of a reintegration / re-engagement package to meet individual needs. This will usually be because of an outcome of a SEND review, PEP review in the case of a Looked After Child, a Team Around the Child (TAC) or Early Help Assessment (EHA), and only when other options have been explored.

2.8.3 In deciding whether a reduced timetable is appropriate and in making arrangements for a reduced timetable, the academy will have regard to the DfE's guidance on part-time timetables [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) (publishing.service.gov.uk) and the Trust operational guidance on attendance.

2.9 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality

2.9.1 The academy will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the students or groups of students who need it most. In doing so, the academy will:

- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify students at risk of poor attendance;
- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and relevant leaders;

- identify students who need support from wider partners as soon as possible and deliver this support in a targeted manner;
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and fully year data to identify patterns and trends;
- benchmark academy attendance data at each level against local, regional and national level;
- monitor the impact of academy strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular pupils and particular groups;
- work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups; and
- hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the academy and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable.

2.9.2 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is:

- a pattern of unauthorised absence;
- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival; or
- persistent truancy or lateness

we will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality.

2.9.3 Failure to attend or arrive at lessons on time may also be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with the [behaviour policy](#).

2.9.4 Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90%, or severely absent where it falls below 50%, across the academic year. Absence at these levels is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental co-operation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies and/or seeking to put in place a parenting contract.

2.9.5 Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the academy will signpost and support access to any additional services.

2.9.6 Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending the academy and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate or effective, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a financial penalty (£80 if paid within 21 days, £160 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

2.9.7 When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, we will have regard to:

- the National Framework for penalty notices as set out in paragraphs 175 – 201 of the Department for Education’s guidance, [Working together to improve school attendance](#) – [Working together to improve school attendance](#); and
- the local authority’s code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

2.9.8 In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents/carers if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.