

Attendance policy

September 2023

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1 Policy statement

1.1 Mission, vision and values

We are fully committed to ensuring that all students reach their full potential and can achieve their career of choice 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 and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

We are committed to creating a positive culture where all pupils 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

We articulate this policy in accordance with the statutory guidance on attendance in the DfE document, [‘Working together to improve school attendance’](#)

To ensure that every child attends, on time, every day possible so that they:

- Establish positive routines and attitudes towards their education from the earliest point
- Progress well academically and socially.
- Develop excellent habits for their next steps in education and their careers.

1.3 Roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities follow the [‘guidance for academies’](#) – May 2022’.

All staff:

- develop and maintain a positive culture where all pupils are effectively supported
- uphold and reinforce expectations for good attendance and punctuality
- complete registers on time and accurately
- monitor, and remain aware of, the attendance of children under social care or other vulnerable pupils

- communicate effectively with parents/carers regarding concerns at the earliest point, working together to eliminate barriers
- raise concerns with the designated leader for attendance, as set out in the local appendix

Principals (supported by their executive principal):

- ensure all children access their full entitlement to high quality education
- develop and maintain a positive culture across the academy where all staff understand the link between behaviour, attendance, and inclusion
- ensure parents are fully informed of the academy expectations and requirements
- ensure attendance is recorded accurately and promptly in the SMS and where absence is recorded as unexplained in the academy attendance register, the correct code is inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session
- establish and implement robust systems for tracking attendance and punctuality of all pupils, ensuring that children at risk or missing education are closely monitored with appropriate action taken in line with operating guidelines and policy set out below in particular those at risk of persistent absence (<90%) and/or severe absence (<50%)
- manage staffing resource to effectively promote, support and monitor high levels of attendance through pastoral teams and delegation of responsibility to attendance officers for specific activity
- evaluate and report attendance and punctuality, using this to improve robust strategic plans for improvement, reporting actions and impact to executive leaders and the local academy committee as required
- implement the Trust policy, determining local processes and systems appropriate to context
- publish a local policy appendix setting out times of day, nominated contacts for parents with support mechanisms ensuring key information is also published on the academy website
- will determine, in any cases where there is doubt, whether an absence may be authorised
- work proactively in partnership with the local authority [School Attendance Support](#) Team accessing the four core functions (communication and advice, targeting support meetings, multi-disciplinary support for families and legal intervention) as and when necessary to support good attendance
- ensure that the academy follows the [local authority procedures](#) for managing and referring children missing in education (CME)
- ensure that for those children educated in alternative provision, robust safeguarding and attendance monitoring procedures are followed in accordance with the [guidance](#) and [Trust policy](#)

- ensure that the above applies to those children in Care (CLA) and those previously looked after (PLAC) in accordance with the [respective guidance](#)
- ensure that suitable provision and support is given to those students with SEND, specific medical and / or mental health conditions which *may* be barriers to achieving regular attendance
- ensure that academy staff receive effective, targeted attendance training dependent on role – in accordance with para 61 of the guidance
- support pupils back into the academy following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps
- acknowledge that in accordance with KCSIE 2023, children ‘absent from education’ pose an additional safeguarding risk and should be prioritised by academy attendance teams
- work with parents in accordance with [the toolkit for schools, Sept 2023](#), to promote and encourage good attendance of their child(ren)

Parents/Carers, we expect to:

- ensure their child attends every day the academy is open except when a statutory reason applies
- ensure their child arrives in the academy on time and prepared for the academy day
- support their child in maintaining at least the Trust expectation for attendance for the duration of the academic year, unless medical or exceptional circumstances affect their attending school
- contact the academy as soon as possible to notify of absence
- contact the academy to discuss any emerging concerns/barriers that might prevent their child from maintaining good attendance or arriving promptly at the academy
- proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support when applicable
- provide the academy with a minimum of TWO up to date home and emergency contact details. *Our academy leadership teams will ensure that each child has two contacts recorded on SIMS, unless there are exceptional / individual circumstances that preclude this*
- submit, in writing, requests for exceptional leave of absence in good time to the academy principal prior to making any arrangements
- provide medical evidence for an absence when requested by the academy. *We accept appointment cards or letters and prescribed medication with the child’s name clearly labelled*

Pupils, we expect to:

- attend every day unless there are reasons such as illness, specific family circumstances or other extenuating factors which preclude this
- arrive on time at the start of the school day
- be punctual to lessons within the school day

Trust strategic lead for attendance 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 and the data lead, ensuring this is implemented appropriately and consistently at a local level in accordance with operational guidance and as set out in the respective local academy appendix
- 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 and punctuality across all academies providing targeted support and guidance where need is identified
- ensure that the Trust has an operational network group for attendance, led by operational and business staff – identifying and facilitating the sharing of best practice and the provision of high quality CPD across the Trust
- 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

Local academy committees will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, support their academies(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures
- ensure academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- support academy leaders to drive improvements in attendance
- seek assurance that the academy leaders take appropriate steps to ensure that all students are receiving a high quality of education through positive attendance, enabling them to be the best they can

- ensure there is a clear and sustainable focus on enabling staff and pupils to learn and improve, within the context of attendance management and behaviours
- ensure all academy staff receive role appropriate training on attendance
- regularly review attendance data and help academy leaders focus support on the pupils who need it

The Trustee Board will:

- ensure our clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction in the context of attendance management
- approve the mission, vision and values for the Trust in collaboration with the executives
- promote and demonstrate our values and core goals
- ensure that self-evaluation in attendance priorities will effectively achieve these goals and will drive performance
- monitor progress in attendance indicators and our commitment to consistent practice ensuring these are embedded across the organisation
- hold executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, including attendance indicators as part of behaviour and attitudes as outlined in the EIF
- take steps to ensure the quality of education provision by overseeing standards and outcomes in attendance indicators across all academies within the Trust
- monitor attendance in the context of the intent, implementation, and impact of the quality of education
- seek assurance that the Trust engages with stakeholders; parents/carers, staff and students and wider community
- understand and consider the view of stakeholders within the Trust ensuring that the vision, core goals, values and culture aligns to the needs of the communities the Trust serves

2 Scope and purpose

Commitment to working together. We do this through:

a) EXPECTATIONS - we aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents to build a culture where all want to be in our academies. We ensure our pupils are ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement when required.

- b) MONITORING - we will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- c) LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING - when a pattern is spotted, we discuss with pupils and parents to understand any barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- d) FACILITATING SUPPORT – we commit to removing barriers and to help pupils and parents access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of our academies.
- e) FORMALISING SUPPORT - where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we work with partners to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.
- f) ENFORCEMENT - where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. We adhere to the Nottinghamshire guidance on enforcement triggers (i.e., parents can be fined if their child has more than 3 days unauthorised absence over a 6-week period).

Legal requirements

- a) Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive full time education (the [Education Act 1996](#)). Legal action may be instigated against parents/carers whose child's attendance is at an unacceptably low level and where parents/carers are failing to fulfil their responsibility (section 444(1) and 1(a)).
- b) In delivering this policy, we consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- c) We must keep an admission register (the academy roll) in accordance with section 7 of the guidance. This must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the academy along with the date of admission or re-admission to the academy, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.
- d) In accordance with section 7 of the Working Together guidance; we recognise that a pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.
- e) Each academy is required to maintain an accurate register as a legal document on a session-by-session basis. A hard copy of the legal register must be processed.

- f) We must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each academy day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion we must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- g) Our academies must preserve every entry in their attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry.
- h) Our academies code attendance in accordance with 'Attendance and absence codes' as set out in the guidance paras 203 – 276.
- i) Our registers are only amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it was taken and it was subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, our academies must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name and title of the person who made the amendment.
- j) It is the parent/carer's responsibility to contact the academy on the first and each subsequent day of absence unless a definite date of return is known. The academy will reach a decision whether the absence is authorised or not.
- k) The academy will seek legal action through the local authority for continued poor attendance in accordance with the clear guidance and expectations as laid out in section 6 of the 2022 guidance, and as part of their wider safeguarding duty outlined in KCSIE. This could result in a penalty notice (PN), or other sanctions being issued.
- l) From the third day of **unauthorised absence** depending on the circumstances of the absence designated members of staff *may* carry out a home visit. Vulnerable children, who present a safeguarding risk, are prioritised. **Home visits should not be carried out alone by any of our staff.**
- m) The academy *may* request medical evidence for an absence. We accept appointment cards or letters and prescribed medication with the child's name clearly labelled. These will be requested using discretionary approaches and where the academy has reasonable cause to insist on proof. It will not be used as the default. No data will be kept by the academy where such proof is provided.

3 Authorised and unauthorised absences

We follow the guidance on [persistent and severe absence as outlined in section 5 of Working Together](#). Authorised absence is where the academy accepts there is good reason for an absence. Consideration for an authorised absence requires a written or telephone communication, from the parent. Parents are asked to notify the academy as soon as possible. Children who return

to school following an absence without an explanation will be deemed to have had an 'unauthorised absence' until a suitable explanation has been given. Absence is then coded according to the cause (appendix 1).

Examples of absence that might be authorised are:

- an absence caused by genuine illness or other unavoidable cause
- an absence for an agreed religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong
- family bereavement
- situations where the academy authorises absence e.g. study leave, work experience, interviews, and special occasions such as theatre/sporting/musical performance
- medical appointments where proof is available
- fixed term exclusion

Where explanations are not forthcoming, the explanations are deemed unacceptable, or unreliable; these will be explored by the academy and, where appropriate recorded as 'unauthorised'.

Examples might include:

This list is NOT exhaustive.

- minding the house / caring for younger siblings
- shopping
- no school uniform to wear
- to do homework / coursework
- lateness
- holidays
- short breaks
- day trips
- birthdays

If an absence is deemed as unauthorised this may result in the issuing of a penalty notice (FPN) or other legal interventions outlined in section 6 of 'Working together to improve school attendance', including parenting contracts, education supervision orders and parenting orders.

We recognise that attendance below 90% is poor and a child below this figure is treated as a persistent absentee (PA) by all academies and the DfE (Department for Education).

Severe absence

Focused monitoring and intervention will be given to pupils who are absent from our academies for more time than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These are classed as severely absent pupils. We recognise that these children 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 across a range of partners. Our family support advisors or designated staff teams will make this group a top priority for support and interventions – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school. These children (and their families) may be subject to early help, and targeted support from outside agencies.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g., an education, health, and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, we recognise that it is likely to constitute neglect and would therefore be treated as a safeguarding issue.

In all cases, we expect our academies to make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible.

Family holidays

Parents/carers are not entitled to remove children from our academies for holidays during term time. Where parents consider that there may be exceptional circumstances, this should be submitted in writing, outlining the circumstances, to the principal of the academy **prior to booking** to seek authorisation.

We do not authorise holiday absences unless the request meets the exceptional circumstances outlined below, the exceptional circumstances will only be granted at the discretion of the principal:

These exceptional circumstances are:

- Where families are service personnel.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
- Other compassionate circumstances that can be confidentially shared with the academy.

The application letter must outline precisely what the exceptional circumstances are:

If you take your child on holiday during term time you may be liable for a penalty notice being issued with or without prior notice by parents/carers.

4 Addressing attendance and punctuality concerns

Through working closely in partnership with parents/carers, we aim to establish positive routines for attendance and punctuality from the earliest age. Due to the established impact of lost education on progress and achievement, we will always provide comprehensive support to children and families to endeavour to overcome barriers, but we have a robust response where concerns emerge. These are clearly set out in the local appendix for each academy.

It is important that children arrive at school on time to avoid missing key learning, information and the impact on routines and relationships. Punctuality is monitored and may be subject to PN (penalty notices) for persistent lateness to school. Further details of timings for the school day are clearly set out in the respective local academy appendix.

Considering all the above, and in circumstances where it is justified, failure to co-operate with an outside agency could lead to [the local authority](#) prosecuting parents of children with poor attendance. This could lead to the issue of a penalty notice or a 'fast track' to prosecution, (where parent(s) may be summoned to a magistrate's court in just 12 weeks).

Triggers for enforcement and/or referral are:

- 7 unauthorised session absences over a rolling 6-week period

5 Partnerships with outside agencies, the LA and early help

We work alongside other agencies, Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire local authorities to bring about the best resolutions for children with attendance issues. To this end, we:

- provide designated staff including where possible, a Family Support Advisor for liaison with Family Services and other agencies
- conduct initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral
- may complete an [early help referral](#) as part of the first steps in attendance enforcement - early help can be triggered by five unauthorised absences in a six week period
- may complete intensive support and intervention via the [ATTEND framework](#) with hard-to-reach / engage families / children displaying EBSA (emotional based school avoidance)
- record relevant information to assist support and intervention with relevant agencies
- refer cases to Family Services when a pupil continues to have excessive amounts of unauthorised absence and/or lateness, despite interventions made

- hold termly attendance reviews with key school staff and our Family Services link worker for school attendance
- arrange multi-agency liaison meetings as appropriate
- establish and maintain a list of named contacts within the local community police force
- actively encourage the involvement of other services and agencies in the daily routines of the academy
- expect the respective LA to rigorously track local attendance data and provide an attendance support team (including advice and protocols around children absent from education, children missing in education and elective home education)
- expect them to monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through the Virtual School

6 Rewards and recognition

We recognise the importance of acknowledging and celebrating good attendance however we also do not penalise children who have been unable to attend due to medical conditions, illness, or other exceptional circumstances. We also value where attendance has shown sustained improvement over time. Details are set out in the local appendix for each academy.

Individual attendance targets and rewards are agreed for some children working with designated staff in the respective academy.

Special recognition is usually given to good attendance (individually and by form) in class, house, year group or whole academy assemblies.

For students in year 11 (if applicable), invitation to the respective academy prom *may be* linked to attendance.

Full details are included in each academy local policy appendix.

7 Reduced timetables/reintegration package

We recognise that in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary reduced timetable, as part of a reintegration / re-engagement package to meet their 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), a response to specific social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and *only when other options have been explored.*

Statutory Guidance on the use of reduced timetables and exclusions is very clear:

In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual need. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package. A part-time timetable must not be a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time-limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

We recognise that a pupil should not be put on a reduced timetable purely *because* of their special educational need as this may constitute discrimination.

Reduced timetables will only be used in very limited circumstances for pupils not able to attend either our mainstream or special schools on a full-time basis, for example:

- 7.1 Where there are behaviour difficulties, and the academy is using a reduced timetable as an intervention to avoid exclusion, part of a pastoral support plan (PSP) or a planned reintegration package. This may be in agreement with the local authority, as part of an EHCP
- 7.2 Where a pupil has a short-term medical condition that prevents full time attendance for a time limited period

It does not refer to pupils whose curriculum has been modified but are still attending.

Reduced timetables are used to enable our academy leaders to address pupils' social emotional mental health needs with the goal of reintroducing them to full time learning. They are only in place for the shortest time necessary and must not be treated as a long-term solution. A clear time frame is identified on each plan. We work towards full **re-integration** at the earliest opportunity – depending on the circumstances and at the professional judgement of the principal, this may be done incrementally by increasing the contact over time.

Objectives of a reduced timetable should be clearly understood and agreed from the outset by all stakeholders and reviewed at least fortnightly in partnership with parents and pupils. A parent/carer must consent to the reduced timetable and be clear that they are taking responsibility for the child when they are not in school.

When considering or implementing a reduced timetable we take into consideration the wider safeguarding implications for the child.

We ensure that any pupil absent for sessions or part sessions, under these conditions, has their absence recorded as Authorised (C).

A Trust model reduced timetable consent form is used by principals in all cases.

Appendix A Contents of the attendance register/attendance codes used in our academies

The national codes enable our academies to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics through the school census system. The data helps our academies, the Trust, local authorities, and the government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reason for, absence and the delivery of education.

Present:

Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Authorised absence:

Code C: Leave of absence granted by the school - only exceptional circumstances warrant granting a leave of absence. We consider each application for a leave of absence individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. For example, this code will be used if the pupil is subject to a temporary part-time timetable or may be used where a pupil is taking part in a performance or sporting activity that is not organised by the academy.

Code H: Leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school – this is always at the principal's discretion. The Trust position is that this *must be the exception to the rule*. Our default is that we fine parents for taking holidays in term time.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment).

Code M: Medical or dental appointment.

Code R: Religious observance - we interpret this reason as 'a day exclusively set apart for religious observance' when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

Code S: Study leave – our academies *may* use this code sparingly and only granted to Year 11 or 13 pupils during public examinations. If our academies grant study leave, we ensure provision is still made available for those pupils who want to continue to attend the academy to revise.

Code T: Traveller absence - code is *only* applied when the pupil's parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes and the academy has granted a leave of absence *following a formal request* from the parent.

Unauthorised absence:

Code G: Holiday not granted by the academy, or more than the period determined by the school.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided - where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 working days after the session. If a reason for absence cannot be established after 5 working days, our academies will amend the pupil's record to Code O.

Code O: Absent without authorisation

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed - where a pupil has arrived late after the register has closed and the academy is not satisfied that the reason for lateness is an authorised absence.

Attending an approved educational activity:

Code D: Dual registered at another school - the law allows for a pupil to be registered at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the school in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school, or a special school on a *temporary basis*.

Code B: Off-site educational Activity - an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. Examples are:

- attending taster days at other schools.
- attending courses at college.
- attending longer term unregistered / registered alternative provision arranged or agreed by the academy.

The educational activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded. Our academies are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. By using code B, we are certifying that the education is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil. This code **is not used** for any unsupervised educational activity i.e., when a pupil is at home doing some schoolwork.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity.

Code V: Educational visit or trip.

Code W: Work experience.

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances:

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend school because:

- the school site or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause at a time when pupils are due to attend; or
- the transport provided by the school, or a local authority is not available, and the pupil's home is not within safe walking distance; or
- a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

Administrative codes:

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school – this code is no longer used to record Covid related absence.

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register - if a pupil fails to attend on the agreed starting day, the academy must establish the reason and record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure – when dates are known and planned:

- half terms.
- occasional days (for example, bank holidays).
- weekends (where it is required by the management information system).
- up to 5 non-educational days; and
- use of school as a polling station.

Partial school closures that are known and planned such as:

- 'staggered starts' or 'induction days' where different term dates have been agreed for different year groups - this code is used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend; and
- use of part of the school as a polling station.

Review of the policy

This policy is reviewed annually in the summer term.

Policy lead	Patrick Knight
Policy renewal date	July 24
Policy approving body	Standards and Outcomes
Date of approval	15 November 2023
Adopted on	28 November 2023