


Attendance Policy

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1. Aim

The aim of the attendance policy is to ensure that academies in Voyage Education Partnership have a consistent approach that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason academies are dedicated to ensuring this attendance policy is adhered to.

All academies within the Trust take an academy-wide approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that pupils are attending 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 are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This document is supported by the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Academy Behaviour Policies
- Children Missing in Education
- Supporting Learners with Medical Conditions
- Supporting learners who cannot attend due to medical conditions
- Alternative Provision Policy
- Exclusion Policy

This document is supported by the following DFE guidance: Working together to improve school attendance, statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities; published Feb 2024, applies from August 2024.

2. Legal framework

Section 7 of the *Education Act 1996* states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 8 of the *Education Act 1996* states that:

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

Voyage Education Partnership is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this document accordingly.

3. Roles and Responsibilities.

The Board of Trustees

The Trustees focus on three core functions:

1. ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance of staff
3. overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance.

The trustees have a range of obligations under current legislation and statutory guidance.

Executive Team

The executive team will:

- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, pupils and staff
- ensure that academy attendance data forms a part of regular meetings and hold leaders to account for this
- ensure that academies are implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for pupils who are educated off-site
- ensure that senior leaders make the necessary referrals to the local authority and other relevant agencies in individual cases of non-attendance
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future

Headteachers

The headteachers will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that their academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- provide accurate and up to date information for Trust assurance processes
- ensure that all staff are up to date with their academy's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior leader to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job. They will be named as the Attendance Champion for the academy
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- notify the relevant LA and provide all necessary information when a pupil name is to be removed from the admission register or when a pupil name is added to the admission register other than at the usual point of transition.

- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including the termly absence data the department collects.

Teachers and support staff

Teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that their academy's teaching and learning experiences are positive and encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the academy's attendance process, legislation and government guidance. Staff will speak to the academy Attendance Champion or headteacher in the first instance if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

Parents/ carers will:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- ensure that their children arrive at their academy on time, appropriately dressed and with the necessary equipment
- follow the set academy procedure for reporting the absence of their child from an academy and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside academy hours
- use their academy as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with their academy so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep their academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and their academy day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the pupil receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- not take their children out of their academy for holidays during term time. Where parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the headteacher.
- inform their 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.

Pupils

Pupils will :

- be aware of their academy's attendance rules, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the academy staff, parents and the academy timetable
- speak to a member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- follow the correct set academy procedure if they arrive late

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to an academy. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff will make it clear on an academy register when taking attendance whether a pupil's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have concerns regarding absences, they should follow academy safeguarding procedures.

When a pupil is to be absent from an academy without prior permission, parents should inform their academy on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return.

4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make a phone call to alert their academy on each day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide an academy with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, GPs, an appointment card or a prescription paper. If these are not provided on request it may result in the absence continuing to be classed as unauthorised.

For those pupils who are identified as being persistently absent, pupils who attend less than 90% of the time, evidence of absence may be requested for shorter term absence due to illness.

4.2 Medical or dental appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside academy hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend their academy for as much of that day as possible, providing evidence of appointments.

For those pupils who are identified as being persistently absent, pupils who attend less than 90% of the time, evidence of absence due to appointments will be requested.

4.3 Authorised absences

There may be some exceptional instances where an academy will authorise absence such as for a family funeral. These must be discussed, wherever possible, with the headteacher in advance.

4.4 Exclusion

Exclusion and suspensions are treated as an authorised absence.

4.5 Family holidays and extended leave

Parents should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of academy term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the headteacher.

The headteacher may only grant such requests in exceptional circumstances and the headteacher's decision is final on whether the request is approved, and the length of absence approved.

Parents should contact their academy immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

It remains the headteacher's decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time.

If permission is not granted, but the pupil is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised, and parents may be subject to further action by their academy or prosecution by the local authority.

4.6 Religious observance

Voyage Education Partnership recognises that there may be times where pupils of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of academy holidays and weekends, and within reason will allow authorised absence for these times.

Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give their academy written notification in advance.

4.7 Late arrival

Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended should go straight to the office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action being taken against the pupil and/or criminal action being taken against parents/carers.

5. Academy Action: Following up absences.

Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, academies will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, academies will make contact with parents/ carers to discuss these and appropriate support may be offered.

Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the excuse.

Where pupils have been away for either short or long term, academies will support them when they re-enter to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

Where a pupil has been continuously absent from an academy for a period of 20 school days or more, and where the absence was unauthorised and academies and the relevant LA have been unable to establish the whereabouts of a pupil after jointly making reasonable enquiries, academies may remove a pupil from the roll. Academies will notify the relevant local authority when such action is taken.

Academies may take disciplinary action against any pupil who are discovered to be persistently truanting and parents or carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and support systems that could help. Academies

may take further action against parents/carers, including the issuing of fixed penalty notices and/or referral to the relevant local authority to begin criminal proceedings. See below for further information.

6. Poor attendance

When a pupil has not been attending school regularly, the LA have the options of:

- Issuing a fixed penalty notice in respect of the parents of a child
- Bringing proceedings before the family courts for an Education Supervision Order or
- Prosecuting the parents under section 444 before the Magistrates Court

Non school attendance includes any day when a child should be in attendance at school, and they are absent without the authorisation of the school, this includes:

1. When a child is persistently absent and the unauthorised absence reaches 15% or more. This also includes lateness after the close of register where the U code is being used.
2. Where a child is present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of an exclusion/suspension.
3. Unauthorised holiday during term time.

In the above cases a penalty notice can be issued to the parent/s who have 28 days to make the payment. Further information and detail on fining costs this can be found in **Appendix A**.

7. Reduction/Partial Timetables

A reduced timetable is a provision made for individual pupils who require this specific short-term provision to meet their individual needs. This is usually due to pupils returning from a long-term absence following illness or injury or where a pupil has specific social, emotional or mental health needs.

In order to implement a reduced timetable, the academy will hold a meeting with the parent/ carer and relevant professionals to discuss the timetable, set specific targets for the intervention and set a review date within 4 weeks of the initial meeting.

If a parent/ carer has not provided written consent, a reduced timetable cannot be implemented.

Once the reduced timetable has been agreed this will be logged with the local authority. Any pupil attending less than the full-time hours as their peers, is classed as accessing a part-time timetable.

The record of the reduced timetable will be uploaded to the pupil file.

8. Equal Opportunities

Voyage Education Partnership is committed to a policy of celebrating diversity, promoting equality of opportunity, providing an inclusive workplace, and eliminating any unfair treatment or unlawful discrimination. This overriding objective applies to all policies and procedures relating to staff and pupils. The Trust will always comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Appendix A – Additional Information relating to Poor Attendance

Non school attendance includes any day when a child should be in attendance at school, and they are absent without the authorisation of the school, this includes:

1. When a child is persistently absent and the unauthorised absence reaches 10% or more. This also includes lateness after the close of register where the U code is being used.
2. Where a child is present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of an exclusion/suspension.
3. Unauthorised holiday during term time.

In the above cases a penalty notice can be issued to the parent/s who have 28 days to make the payment. Further information on this can be found on the Lincolnshire County Council website.

Unauthorised absence

These could be situations where a learner is absent without valid reason or permission. This could include being absent without notifying the school of the reason, taking term time holidays, arriving late to school, leaving early without a valid reason or truanting. Occasionally, we may request evidence to validate an absence. For instance, providing a medical appointment letter can change an absence from unauthorised to authorised.

Penalty notices and prosecution.

It is important to be aware that poor attendance may result in the issuing of penalty notices to parents. These notices can apply to term-time holidays, any unauthorised absences, or a combination of both.

The national threshold for issuing a penalty notice in England is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 10-week period. This typically equates to 5 school days. (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

A Penalty Notice can be issued under the following legislation:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise**
- **Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Penalty**

Please note: A Penalty Notice can also be issued if your child is seen in a public place within the first 5 days of an exclusion from their school.

- **Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent**

may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Penalty Notice.

See below for further information:

Penalty Notice	Details
First Notice in a 3 year period:	Issued to each parent. Charged at £80 if paid within 21 days £160 if paid within 28 days.
Second Notice in a 3 year period:	Issued to each parent. Charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
Third Notice in a 3 year period:	Alternative action should be taken, for example prosecution or other attendance legal interventions. Fines per parent are capped at two within any three-year period. If a parent is prosecuted for their child's non-attendance, they could face a fine of up to £2,500.

It is important to note that fines are a last resort, and parents are offered support from the academy on many occasions to improve their child's attendance first.