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# Attendance Policy (Primary)



**Accord**

MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

## Document Detail

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<b><u>Approvals</u></b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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## Document History

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1	December 2024	S Gibbs J Tucker	Full re-write of Attendance Policy to reflect DfE changes in guidance for schools. Reference to Managed Placements protocols.

## 1. Context and Aims of the Policy

The Academy and Trust Values underpin the fundamental reasons for our policies and processes. This Attendance Policy should be read in conjunction with the academy's Rewards and Consequences Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Managed Placement protocols. This policy is informed by the DFE guidance for schools and academies and in regard to the statutory guidance documents on parental responsibility measures and children missing in education (CME).



The academy culture of success promotes high standards of behaviours, attendance and engagement. The Trust believes all pupils have the right to the best education possible and in ensuring this, we adopt an inclusive approach for all.

We believe that every day counts in pupil's education. Regular attendance is essential for young people to achieve their maximum potential.

Pupils should attend the academy each day and on time in order to ensure that they have a regular routine to support their learning. This focus also prepares pupils for the world of work, where attendance and punctuality are crucial. We want all pupils to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the academy.

Evidence shows that there is a link between poor attendance and underachievement. We want all pupils to fulfil their individual potential and in order for this to happen, we need parent /carer co-operation and support in ensuring that we have full attendance and excellent levels of punctuality. This is best achieved by:

- Ensuring effective communication via the pupil planner, the My Child at School App (MCAS) and other sources individual to each academy;
- Ensuring parents / carers read and respect the Home / Academy agreement, in support of the academy's high expectations;
- Involvement in regular events, Parents' Evenings and contact with teachers and staff;
- Working effectively with the academy to support any interventions provided;
- Ensuring pupils attend daily and on time.

All staff across the Trust will work with young people and their families to ensure each pupil attends the academy regularly and punctually, to minimise absence of all kinds. This will be done through:

- Raising awareness of the effects of absence and lateness.
- Ensuring effective systems to monitor absence and to address any underlying barriers that pupils may face.
- Establishing effective systems for incentives and rewards that acknowledges the efforts of young people to improve their attendance and time keeping.
- Securing appropriate levels of challenge where there is a lack of priority given by young people and parents / carers leading to poor levels of attendance and punctuality.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) works as a link between home, the academy, other agencies and the Local Authority, in order to address attendance issues and ensure that all young people are receiving a full-time education. This involves explaining to parents / carers their legal responsibilities referring to other agencies, encouraging families to build good relationships with the academy and helping with academy transfers and admissions. The EWO may conduct home visits, get in contact via telephone or in writing and will work with other agencies such as Social Services and police.

## **2. Attendance Registering and Absence Procedures**

Registration takes place at the beginning of the day and at the start of the afternoon session. All Trust establishments use national attendance and absence codes to record and monitor attendance. Morning registration closes 30 minutes after the start of the day after which time the pupil will be marked as absent.

Inform the academy on the first day of your child's absence from school, and again on any subsequent days. To safeguard your child, we need parental confirmation for **every day** of absence.

Parents should call the school office before the start of the school day to inform us if their child is going to be absent and provide the reason for this absence. If this call takes place before the office is open, parents should leave a voicemail message with all information required.

We send out a message to parents / carers when the register closes who can then reply by text message, MCAS message or voice message whichever is appropriate. This is followed up by telephone calls to ensure children are safe and well. This 'First Day Response' is done for any pupil expected to be in the academy but has not been marked as present.

This approach is NOT an alternative to parents advising the academy that their child will be absent. All parents / carers are still required to inform the academy of pupil absences on the first day by ringing the absence line.

Parents should ensure that they do not take their children out of school on holiday during term time. If this is unavoidable then a "special leave of absence agreement" must be obtained in advance from the school – please see our 'Holidays in Term Time' page on the academy website for full information.

### **3. Signing In / Out Procedure**

For health and safety and safeguarding reasons, all pupils who need to leave site during the day need to be collected by a parent or carer who should sign them out at the school office. Where possible, evidence should be provided of medical appointments so that these absences can be authorised.

If pupils arrive late for school for any reason (even if authorised / pre-agreed) the pupil must be signed in at reception.

We ask that where possible, appointments are arranged outside of school hours but understand that this is not always possible. We will allow pupils to attend appointments but ask that they attend school before or after the appointment. Please notify the school office of any upcoming appointments and provide a note or an appointment letter / card to confirm the appointment.

### **4. Authorised or Unauthorised Absence.**

Authorised absence is where the academy has agreed the reason for the absence and approved it. This approval can be in advance or agreed after the absence, where a satisfactory reason has been given and evidenced where appropriate. This authorisation is at the discretion of the Headteacher, based on the information provided.

Absences that may be authorised:

- Genuine illness or unavoidable medical or dental appointment
- Exceptional family circumstances
- Genuine religious observance
- Suspension
- Involvement in public or significant event approved by the academy.

Absences that may be unauthorised:

- To look after or visit a family member.
- Birthdays, weddings, anniversaries or holidays
- Days out for shopping, events or trips
- Arriving late, after registration has closed.

Absences which have not been appropriately explained or where the reason is not valid, will be treated as unauthorised.

### **5. Step-Outs, Managed Placements and Directed Learning.**

Directing the education of the pupil, for a period of time, to a partner or local academy may include (although this list is not exhaustive):

- 1 or 2 days in a designated area;
- 6 or 12 weeks on an agreed timetable;
- A trial placement for a full transfer.

On these occasions, parents / carers will be informed and it is then the parents / carers and pupil's responsibility for the pupil to arrive at the designated academy on time, dressed in full academy uniform, equipped for learning and follow the expectations of the provider of the placement / Step-Out.

Following the successful completion of a period of time out of the academy, parents / carers will be asked to meet with Headteacher on return to the academy to discuss a re-integration.

## **6. Partial Timetable**

As a re-integration tool to enable pupils to return to the academy following absence, a partial timetable may be appropriate. This will be agreed with parents / carers and be time limited to no more than a half-term per agreement in line with Local Authority guidance. This will be reviewed as the partial timetable progresses.

## **7. Rewards and Consequences for Attendance, Absence and Truancy.**

### **7.1 Praise and Positive Recognition for good and improving attendance.**

Good attendance and punctuality are part of the regular discussions between teachers, leaders and pupils, and they play a significant role in our Positive Recognition and Attitude to Learning strategies. A full overview of our incentives and positive recognition can be found in our Behaviour Policy.

We have high expectations, and we support our pupils to meet those expectations; helping young people to develop personal strengths through our character education virtues so their hard work is recognised and that they achieve success. The Trust recognises the importance of rewarding excellent attendance and improved attendance.

Examples of praise and positive recognition for good attendance and punctuality include:

- End of term reward trip or event
- Golden Ticket events
- Ticket Swap
- Positive phone call home
- Above & Beyond MCAS message
- Attendance League Prizes
- Certificate
- Postcard
- Stamp
- Gold Star
- Queue Jump Pass
- Parental meeting
- Special mention in newsletter
- Praise Breakfast
- Afternoon Tea

### **7.2 What happens when we are concerned about your child's attendance?**

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis with proactive actions taken to address instances of poor attendance before a student becomes persistently or severely absent. This forms part of our graduated approach to attendance with the aim of working in partnership to provide the support needed to remove barriers to attendance before the need to apply more formal measures.

Where we notice patterns of persistent poor behaviours in terms of attendance, this is to be brought to the attention of the Attendance Team who will then take timely steps to address. This may involve teachers having informal discussions with children or parents/carers to share concerns and encourage improvement.

Attendance and punctuality letters will be sent out to parents / carers when patterns of poor attendance or punctuality occur and attempts at informal interventions have had little or no impact. This can include warning letters and notifications of action the academy would be required to take if improvements are not made. Each communication with home would escalate where poor punctuality and / or attendance persists.

### **7.3 Persistent Absence – Fast Track Meetings**

If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% this would trigger the classification of 'Persistently Absent'. A pattern of attendance approaching or below 90% would trigger an opportunity for parents / carers to meet with appropriate academy staff to discuss the matter and look at strategies, and any support that the academy can provide to help improve attendance. Where concerns exist, parents / carers would also be made aware of possible actions if the pupil were to remain 'Persistently Absent'. It is important to note that the academy does take into consideration the fact that there are sometimes genuine reasons for absence such as ill health, family bereavement or other pastoral issues that may lead to attendance approaching or falling below 90%.

### **7.4 Persistent Absence – Penalty Notice**

The academy may take the decision to follow a route of prosecution where there is prolonged 'Persistent Absence'. This process can involve an initial Penalty Notice arising from any of the following circumstances:

- No improvement following a Fast Track review meeting.
- Attendance falls below 90%.
- Inappropriate condoned parental absence.
- Unauthorised or excessive term time holidays.
- Persistent late arrivals to the academy.
- Truancy or failure to attend lessons.
- Being out in a public place or being in sight of the academy while suspended.
- A minimum of 10 academy sessions lost due to unauthorised absence.

The cost of the Penalty Notice is the same per parent / carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to a higher amount if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the Local Authority do not receive payment, they may then progress the matter to the Magistrates' Court. The academy does not receive any monies attributed to the penalty notice.

### **7.5 Persistent Absence - Parental Prosecution**

Parents / carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child receives a full-time education. Failure to do so may lead to a Parental Prosecution in the Magistrates Court and the possibility of receiving a Parenting Order or a fine up to £2,500 or a prison sentence for each parent / carer.

Prosecutions at this level would only be sought in exceptional circumstances, where the academy felt that all strategies had been used in seeking to improve attendance and that parents / carers were failing to co-operate.

### **7.6 Persistent Absence – Education Supervision Order**

An Education Supervision Order can be used to work with families and schools, often with the support of external agencies, to secure a return to regular attendance. An application to secure an Education Supervision Order is heard by the Family Proceedings Court where Magistrates have the power to grant the order.

### **8. Holidays in Term Time**

Families who would like to take their child on holiday during term time should be aware that the law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Whilst it may be considered by parents / carers that a holiday will be educational, the pupil will still miss the teaching that they would normally have received during the holiday.

The Department for Education allows a Principal / Head Teacher the discretion to consider authorising a holiday in term time only in “exceptional circumstances” If you consider that your request for a holiday is exceptional you will need to complete a request form that is available from the academy. Following receipt of the form the circumstances would be given strong consideration with a response provided as soon as possible. If the holiday is not considered to meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, and the holiday is still taken in term time, the absence would be recorded as unauthorised, and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

All holiday requests must be completed by the parents / carers who reside with the pupil / pupil and submitted to the academy at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the holiday.

As guidance for parents / carers it is important to note that holidays would not be authorised for the following reasons:

- Availability of cheap holidays.
- Availability of the desired accommodation.
- Holidays booked as surprises by family members.
- Overlap with beginning or end of term.
- Only time available due to work.
- Holidays would not be authorised under any circumstances during formal examination periods.

Any exceptional request for holiday absence will be considered very carefully.

### **9. Children Missing in Education (CME)**



Should a pupil leave the academy without the parents / carers advising the academy which new school or academy the pupil is moving to, the academy will take action to trace the pupil within 10 working days.

The Trust works closely with Local Authorities and will escalate a concern of CME using the relevant reporting procedures. If families move away from the area or wish to transfer their child to another school or academy, they must inform us. Pupils can not and will not be removed from roll until we receive notification that the pupil has another school place or where the Local Authority has been unable to trace the child and notify the academy to remove the pupil from roll.

## **10. Roles and Responsibilities**

Attendance is everyone's responsibility. The Trust has adopted a consistent approach to monitoring attendance to intervene and offer support to pupils and families at the earliest opportunity.

### **10.1 Parents / Carers Responsibilities**

- Ensuring their child attends the academy each day it is open, dressed in full uniform and ready for learning;
- Contacting the academy if their child is unable to attend;
- Providing their most up to date contact details;
- Only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and well in advance;
- Booking any medical appointments around the academy day where possible;
- Proactively engaging with the academy with regards to any support that is offered to improve attendance;

### **10.2 The Academy Responsibilities**

- Establishing and promoting a culture whereby pupils want to attend the academy, helping all stakeholders understand the benefits that good attendance brings;
- Ensuring that the academy has a clear attendance policy, with the attendance policy and procedures applied and monitored constantly;
- Having a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance;
- Promoting that attendance is everyone's responsibility and keeping the concept of academy attendance high profile within the academy community;
- Having robust daily processes to follow up absence;
- Supporting all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, to attend the academy regularly;
- Helping to identify, overcome and remove barriers for good attendance and signpost support where needed. Where there is a lack of engagement and / or where support is not working, work with parents in a more formal capacity, involving the Local Authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.

### **10.3 The Trust Responsibilities**

- Ensuring academy leaders and staff receive training on attendance;
- Making certain that academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
- Reviewing the Attendance Policy in accordance with its own internal procedures;

- Taking an active role in attendance improvement by monitoring attendance across the Trust, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils and intervening systematically where appropriate;