Attendance for Learning Policy

Document provenance

Summary of changes at last review:

- Review of Academy roles and responsibilities

- Review of attendance practice

- Additional of attendance practice for students in alternative provision

- Addition of deletion from roll guidance and good practice.

- Please note - this policy includes an additional update in Section 16 in relation to Covid 19 January 2021

Related documents:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy[1]

- Online Safety Policy[2]

Definitions:

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

A child who is classified as Persistently Absent (PA) has an absence rate of 10% or more (i.e. attends for 90% or less of the time) and will be defined as a persistent absentee.

Parental responsibility is defined in s.3(1) Children Act 1989 as:

'…all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property.'

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[1] Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
[2] Online Safety Policy

Attendance for Learning Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1. This Policy outlines a shared responsibility within each Academy, the Regional Team, The Extended Leadership Team and Trustees to encourage high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils. The values of the trust reflect the importance of attendance and belonging and the provision of a welcoming, caring environment where all members of the Academy community feel safe and secure.

1.2. Clearly defined roles and responsibility and the consistent implementation of procedures ensure that attendance and punctuality are promoted effectively to support successful learning.

1.3. Effective partnership and liaison with outside agencies provide support, advice and guidance for pupils and parents/carers.

1.4. Intervention is triggered by systematic approaches to the monitoring and analysis of attendance data. Patterns of good attendance and punctuality are celebrated and rewarded and pupils who make every effort to improve are encouraged and recognised. We are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and follow best practice procedures to ensure their safety.

1.5. This Policy ensures that all staff in our academies are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

1.6. Through this Policy we aim to:
   ▪ Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
   ▪ Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the Academy
   ▪ Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education
   ▪ Ensure that our policy applies to all education phases across the trust to promote good habits from an early age
   ▪ Work in partnership with pupils, parents, carers, staff and the Local Authority so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
   ▪ Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility
   ▪ Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties
   ▪ Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance
   ▪ Ensure that awareness of attendance is embedded within the curriculum, teaching and learning and behaviour for learning.

2. Scope

2.1. This Policy applies to all staff in every Academy and should be adopted as a whole Academy approach to reducing levels of absence. It is consistent with statutory and legal requirements and is significant to ensure that all pupils are safeguarded.

3. Legislation and Regulation

3.1. The Policy fully adheres to statutory and legal requirements regarding attendance and the registration of pupils. The Education Act and The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

3.2. Each Academy must follow all procedures set out in the Department of Education (DfE) document 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities August 2020', this includes guidance on keeping pupil registers, the correct use of attendance and absence codes including guidance for those pupils who attend alternative provision, guidance on the school day and school year. Specific guidance set out in https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year in relation to Covid 19 will also be followed.

3.3. Each Academy must follow the DfE guidance' 'Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities, September 2016',

3.4. Each Academy must follow The Education Act 1996 sections 434(1)(3)(4) & (6).

3.5. Each Academy must follow Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006 which state the reasons a child can be legally deleted from the Academy roll.

3.6. Other useful legislative and regulatory links:
   - DfE (September 2020) Keeping children safe in education
   - DfE (July 2018) Working Together to Safeguard Children

4. Policy Statement

4.1. Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. E-ACT Academy Trust fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils attend school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

4.2. The government expects all schools and academies to:
   - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
   - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
   - Act early to address patterns of absence;
   - Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their child of compulsory age who is registered at school attend regularly;
   - All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

4.3. This Policy applies to all pupils registered at an E-ACT Academy. This policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our academies and is included on each Academy website

4.4. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and members of the Regional Team, Extended Leadership Team and Trustees work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

4.5. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Attendance during one school year	Equals this number of days absent	Number of weeks absent
90%	19 days	4 weeks
80%	38 days	8 weeks
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks

4.6. Absence from school, whether authorised (valid reason) or unauthorised (no valid reason) affects an individual's ability to form positive peer and adult relationships and develop social skills. The habits of regular and punctual attendance are important in their own right: they enable individuals to participate in social organisations and shared arrangements, to take on commitments, and to contribute at work as well as at school.

5. Promoting Attendance

5.1. We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents, carers and pupils;
- Ensuring that parents and carers understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually;
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development;
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, carers, pupils, staff and the Regional Team on school attendance matter;
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness;
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance through the Early Help process;
- Developing and implementing robust procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

5.2. Expectations for good attendance

5.2.1. We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend the Academy every day
- Attend punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or form tutor any problems that may affect their school attendance.

5.2.2. We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Uphold the Academy/home agreement;
- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day;

- Ensure that they contact the Academy daily of absence or if known in advance whenever their child is unable to attend;
- Contact the Academy promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from attending;
- Notify the Academy of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child;
- Notify the Academy immediately of any changes to contact details;
- Attend meetings as requested;
- Provide medical evidence for absence as requested (this may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming the visit, prescription or medicine bottle or hospital letter);
- Not arrange any term time leave absence.

5.2.3. We expect that the Academy will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere;
- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent's/carer's concerns;
- Keep regular and accurate records or morning and afternoon attendance and punctuality and monitor each individual pupil's attendance and punctuality;
- Contact parents/carers each day when a student fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers, including first day calling and home visits in line with E-ACT improving attendance strategy;
- Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the Academy can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition;
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the percentage attendance of their child;
- Make initial inquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly;
- Contact alternative providers twice daily (AM and PM) to obtain the attendance of any pupil educated at another provision;
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority. Failure by the family to comply with planned support set by the Local Authority may result in further actions, e.g. a Parenting Contract, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.

Exceptional attendance	**100%**
Good attendance	**95 – 99%**
Attendance level is a cause for concern	**90 – 94%**
Poor attendance and is classified by the Government as Persistent Absence	**Less than 90%**

6. Registration

6.1. The attendance register must be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the Academy must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

6.2. The Academy must follow up on any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the Academy's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

7. Absence from the Academy

7.1. Absences are either authorised or unauthorised.

7.2. Authorised absence

7.2.1. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be out of the Academy or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence.

7.3. Unauthorised absence

7.3.1. An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from the Academy without their permission. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

7.4. Leaving during the Academy day

7.4.1. Academy staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the students are during the Academy day.

7.4.2. Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the Academy.

7.4.3. Whenever possible, parents/carers should try and arrange medical and other appointments outside of the Academy day.

7.4.4. Parents/carers are requested to confirm, by letter, email or telephone call, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.

7.4.5. Pupils must be signed out on leaving the Academy and be signed back in on their return

at the student reception.

7.4.6. Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the Academy reception before the pupil can leave the site.

7.4.7. If a pupil leaves the Academy site without permission and we are aware of it, their parents/carers will be contacted.

7.5. Parental Request for Term Time Leave

7.5.1. With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances existed.

7.5.2. Currently Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

7.5.3. If an Academy declines the request for term time leave then a request may be made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice to each parent, for each child. This is a £60.00 fine per parent if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

7.6. If the Penalty Notice is not paid the matter is usually referred to the Magistrate Court for prosecution under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 by the local authority.

8. Academy procedures to support good attendance

8.1. The Academy will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate and accurate registration processes;
- To maintain appropriate and accurate attendance data;
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, ambassadors, parents and pupils;
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness;
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the Academy;
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time;
- To work with parents and carers to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality using a variety of strategies including an Early Help Assessment;
- To refer to the Local Authority any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to Academy initiatives to improve;
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.

8.2. All staff should raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

9. Addressing Attendance Concerns

9.1. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their education career. It is the responsibility of the Academy and the Trust to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

9.2. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents/carers via letter or by telephone conversation. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence through meetings to identify any additional support to be given by the Academy with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time after support has been put in place, then the Academy may consider referring to the Local Authority.

10. Children Missing in Education[3]

10.1. All academies have a duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register, who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the student has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

10.2. A referral to the Local Authority Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) may be considered if there are any safeguarding concerns when a child is missing.

11. Punctuality

11.1. The Academy is instrumental in recognising and encouraging good attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is acknowledged and rewarded in many ways. Senior leaders should take responsibility for ensuring that all staff, pupils and parents understand the reward system.

12. Rewarding Attendance and Punctuality

12.1. Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, is the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. Each Academy will have appropriate sanctions in place where there is persistent lateness to lesson and at the start of the Academy day.

13. Training

13.1. Training for staff in applying attendance practice will be delivered throughout the year, including attendance training as part of the induction process for new staff.

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[3] Statutory Guidance on Children Missing in Education

14. Responsibilities

14.1. All members of Academy staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality and taking swift action with senior leaders to tackle any issues of concern. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

14.2. **Class teacher/tutors are responsible for:**

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by pupils and their parents/ carers;
- Informing the Attendance Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals;
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns;
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness;
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation in a purposeful and sensitive manner;
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings.

14.3. **Leads for attendance are responsible for:**

- Overall monitoring of whole Academy attendance and ensuring this is communicated with the relevant members of staff;
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence;
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues;
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised;
- Making referrals to the Local Authority;
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Local Authority;
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence such as Early Help.

14.4. **Attendance Team/Pastoral Team staff are responsible for:**

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information;
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence;
- Ensuring that lateness is accurately and promptly recorded;
- Contacting parents of absent children where no reason has been provided for absence;
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Attendance Lead;
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance on the direction of the Attendance Lead.

15. Monitoring and Compliance

15.1. Each Academy has the responsibility for ensuring that attendance data is accurately recorded. The Regional Lead for Safeguarding and the Regional Education Directors will work closely with the Attendance Leads in the Academy to assess compliance and there will be regular quality assurance checks. The Academy attendance is also scrutinised through the termly Governance Review Days meetings chaired by the Regional Education Director (RED). There is further quality assurance and scrutiny by the Extended Leadership Team at Regional Performance Boards (RPBs), which in turn report Trustees.

16. Attendance related to Covid 19

16.1. The Trust '**COVID-19 Safeguarding Addendum January 2021'** sets out the specific procedural changes in relation to this policy for the period of national lockdown from January 2021.

16.1.1. As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they will not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). We will encourage vulnerable children to attend but if the parent/carer of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent from school, the parent/carer should let the school know that the child will not be attending. We will grant such applications for leave given the exceptional circumstances. This will be recorded as Code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

16.1.2. As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents/carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending and, if not, we will grant a leave of absence (Code C) given the exceptional circumstances.

16.1.3. All children who are not expected to be in school will be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

16.1.4. Attendance recording and interventions will include:
- Recording attendance (both on site and virtually) through SIMS and remote learning academy log;
- All absences (both on site and virtually) will be followed up and communication with other professionals as appropriate;
- Daily live virtual AM registration session for each class/tutor group;
- First day absence checks for all children who are expected to attend on site;
- First day absence checks for all children who are expected to attend a virtual session;
- Emergency home visits for any child where appropriate contact cannot be made in a reasonable timeframe (if authorised by ELT with requests going via Regional Safeguarding Leads);
- Requests to Police for any emergency home visits due to lack of contact with a child;
- Children missing education referrals;
- Regularly reviewing any barriers to non-attendance for vulnerable children – This includes any risk assessment reviews;

- Continuing the trust priority around mental health and wellbeing
- All children accessing alternative provision will be regarded as vulnerable – They will also receive a rationale/justification on CPOMS.

16.2. Specific guidance set out in 'Recording Attendance in relation to COVID-19 during the 2020-21 Academic Year' in relation to Covid 19 will be followed by all Academies.

16.3. We will adhere to statutory updates in relation to interventions for absences (whether authorised under a national/local lockdown or unauthorised).

16.4. From January 2021, this includes the 'Coronavirus Act 2020 Disapplication of Section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996 (England) Notice 2021'.

16.5. Although school attendance is mandatory, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19) because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC);
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

16.6. If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), Academies will be able to immediately offer them access to remote education.