



Diocese of Salisbury
Academy Trust

'Beyond expectations for all of God's children'

ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT (PUPILS) POLICY

Policy Date: May 2024

Review Date: May 2025

1. Introduction

Regular attendance at the Academies in the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT) is crucial in raising educational standards and in ensuring that every child meets his or her full potential. There is compelling and irrefutable evidence which suggests that children with poor attendance tend to fall behind their peers and under-achieve.

In view of the above, DSAT Academies are committed to maximising attendance for all pupils. This policy gives a detailed overview of the way in which attendance will be recorded and monitored and sets out what is expected from Academy staff, parents/carers and pupils.

2. Key Principles

The Academies will approach attendance issues taking into account the following key principles:

- i. Ensuring good attendance at all Academies is the responsibility of everyone in the Academy community including: parents and carers; school staff; Academy Standards and Ethos Committee (ASEC) members and pupils.
- ii. The default position is that every pupil should be at school whenever the Academies are open. Any instance of a pupil missing any Academy time should be regarded as wholly exceptional.
- iii. The academies will keep an accurate register of attendance and will monitor attendance figures.
- iv. Staff and pupils alike will be made aware of the registration process. Staff will receive training on registration and their underlying legal duties.
- v. Non-attendance will be identified. Efforts will be made to identify the reasons for it and to return the pupil in question to the Academy as speedily as possible;
- vi. Our Academies will recognise that there may be many different reasons why a pupil may be absent from the Academy. We will always approach issues of attendance sensitively, particularly in regard to our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Academies will at all times do their utmost to ensure that all pupils feel appropriately supported and valued.
- vii. The Academies will put in place procedures for returning absentees to catch up on missed learning without disrupting the learning of other pupils.
- viii. Good and/or improved attendance will be recognised and rewarded.
- ix. Attendance procedures will be regularly evaluated and reviewed at local Academy level by the ASECs and at Academy Trust level. The Academy attendance policy will be shared with all stakeholders.
- x. Parents/carers will be made aware of and expected to comply with their legal duties.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

As stated above, ensuring good attendance at the Academy is the responsibility of everyone in the community including: pupils; parents and carers; Academy staff and ASEC members.

The Academy and its staff will be expected to:

- Reduce absence including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Register and monitor attendance in accordance with procedures set out below;
- Act early to address patterns of absence;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example;
- Convey high expectations to pupils regarding attendance and punctuality;
- Promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents/carers;
- Respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently;
- Offer prompt support to pupils who experience difficulties.

Parents/Carers will be expected to:

- Comply with their legal duty to ensure that a child registered at the Academy attends regularly;
- Ensure that children attend punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn;
- Ensure that children are only absent in cases of genuine illness or other emergency;
- In the event that a child is prevented from attending, notify the Academy as soon as possible;
- Follow the leave of absence procedures set out below.

Pupils will be expected to:

- Attend the Academy and lessons regularly and punctually;
- Take the information home to their parents/carers about their attendance.

ASEC members will be expected to:

- Monitor attendance figures;
- Review the Academy's policy and performance as far as attendance goes.

4. Registration and Absence

4.1 By law, schools and Academies are required to record in the attendance register - once at the beginning of the morning session and once in the afternoon – whether pupils are present, absent, engaged in an approved, supervised educational activity off-site, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. The Academy will comply with this by adopting the procedure set out below.

- Registers will be called promptly at 8.40 am and at 12.45pm.
- The morning register will close at 8.45 am.
- If a pupil arrives late, and the register is still open, they will be marked late but present.
- If a pupil arrives after 8:45 am, with evidence of a medical/dental appointment they will be marked 'M' (medical). Where possible the school should be notified of medical appointments in advance. If this is not possible the school should be emailed or phoned first thing.
- If a pupil arrives after 8:45 am with no acceptable reason and/or no communication from parents/carers, they will be marked as a 'U' (late and arrived after the register closed).
- All pupils who arrive late after 8:45 am must sign the Academy late book. (Pupil or parent/carer)
- If a pupil is unable to attend school that day due to illness, their parent should contact the school prior to 8.30am either leaving a message on the school answer phone or via email. This should be repeated each and every morning that the pupil is unable to attend.
- The afternoon register closes at 12:50 pm.

- If teaching staff do not know why a pupil is absent, the pupil will be left blank with the office staff then putting in the appropriate mark. On the first day, the Academy absence procedure will be followed, and the registration mark amended as appropriate.
- All staff must record absence, using the agreed symbols. Consistent criteria should be applied.

5. Monitoring Absence

- Records of attendance will be reviewed by the Headteacher and the attendance lead on a regular basis.
- Weekly discussions will take place between the Headteacher and class teachers where individual pupils with high absence
- The Academy implements a 'Traffic Lights Approach to Attendance' under which attendance is considered over a fixed period, 4-6 weeks and at the end of the period
- Over 95% equates to green.
- Between 94% and 90% equates to amber and a letter will be sent to the parents/carers giving the exact attendance figure and the pupil's attendance will continue to be monitored.
- Under 90% results in a different letter being sent to the parents/carers inviting them to an Academy based meeting with the Headteacher to discuss how working together could improve the pupil's attendance. The Academy recognises that during this monitoring period, the absence may not be typical for the pupil and this will be taken into account. However, if there is no improvement in attendance a further meeting will be called. During this meeting it will be made clear that the Academy will proceed by involving the Education Welfare Service and ultimately legal action if no sustained improvement occurs.

6. Responding to Absence

Involvement of Parents/Carers

- 6.1 If no contact is received from the parent/carer of the pupil on the morning of the first absence, the Academy will contact the parent/carer by email and telephone on the morning of each absence, or if the parent/carer is unavailable, write a letter requesting information. If this action does not result in an explanation or the return of the pupil to the Academy, a further letter will be sent.
- 6.2 Continued absence will result in an Academy Attendance Meeting being arranged. This will involve the Headteacher and/or Family Liaison Officer contacting the parent or carer to discuss the matter. If the attendance does not improve, the Headteacher will invite the parents/carers to a meeting. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding Academy attendance.
- 6.3 Pupils whose attendance is below 90% are closely monitored by the Academy's leadership, including ASEC members. Regular meetings with the pupil and/or parent/carer will be held.
- 6.4 If the pupil's difficulties are not resolved and the attendance does not improve, a formal Common Assessment Framework referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. In consultation with the Education Welfare Service and the Chief Executive if necessary, a recommendation for issuing a fixed penalty fine will be considered.

Safeguarding

- 6.5 It is recognised that frequent absence from and lateness to the Academy could be an indication of abuse or/and an impact of abuse. Attendance reviews therefore consider all aspects of safeguarding as outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. Where concerns have been raised about a pupil, additional attendance monitoring/reviews will be carried out.

Reintegration

- 6.6 In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence, an individual re-integration programme will be implemented by the Headteacher and monitored by the class teacher.

Rewards

- 6.7 Every week, there is a reward for the class from each Key Stage with the best attendance: ownership of 'Attendance DSAT Ted' for the week.

7. Other Procedures

Notifying the Academy of Absence

- 7.1 Parents and carers should ring the Academy on **each and every day** of their child's absence by 8.30am giving reasons for the absence. An absence of more than 2 days may require the parent/carers to provide further medical evidence in the form of an appointment card, a copy of prescription medication or a letter from the GP.
- 7.2 Failure to notify the Academy of an absence will result in the absence counting as 'unauthorised'. Parents/carers are informed that it is an offence if they fail to ensure their child attends the Academy regularly, even if they are absent without the parent/carer's knowledge. Parents/carers should avoid, wherever possible, making medical/dental appointments during Academy hours. We are unable to sanction absences for reasons such as shopping, waiting in for a delivery, birthdays or holidays.
- 7.3 Staff are available to give advice from 8.30 am every Academy Day should parents/carers be uncertain whether their child should be at the Academy or not.

Requesting Leave of Absence

- 7.4 The Leave of Absence request form can be found on the Academy website (a model is provided at the back of this policy). We are not permitted to allow permission for holidays in term time on top of the 13 weeks holiday a year that students already have.
- 7.5 A leave of absence request will only be authorised if it is for exceptional circumstances (not a holiday) and the student has a 95% attendance or above. For guidance on exceptional circumstances, see the reverse of the model request form provided at the back of this policy.
- 7.6 If a leave of absence request is refused permission by the Academy, parents/carers will be issued a Penalty Notice if they still take their child on holiday. Penalty Notices are a fine of £60 per parent/carer per child, which rises to £120 if not paid within 21 days. If the £120 is not paid, the parents/carers could be taken to court and receive a much larger fine. This will be administered by the Education Welfare Service.

Deletion from Academy Roll

- 7.7 If the Academy receives notice from parents/carers that a pupil is moving to another school/Academy, we will notify the Local Authority (LA) as soon as we become aware.
- 7.8 If the Academy receives verbal notification that parents/carers are withdrawing their children from the Academy to home educate them, the Academy will not wait for the written confirmation before informing the LA via the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). The Academy will only delete the child from roll once they have received written confirmation from the parents/carers, and been contacted by the intake school and/or notification has had time to be received by the LA. The Academy will not wait until the LA acknowledges the notice nor seek the LA's approval of the deletion.

Children Missing From Education

- 7.9 A child missing from education is a child of compulsory school age who is not on an Academy/school roll, nor being educated elsewhere. If a pupil does not attend the Academy for 10 Academy days and there has been no response from the parent or carer to our request for information on the whereabouts of the pupil, the Academy will complete a Missing from Education form and send it to the Education Welfare Service. Reference should be made to the separate Children Missing from Education policy. We have a duty to keep a child on roll until we are given permission by the EWO to remove them.

8. Review

As noted above, this policy and the practices contained in it will be subject to constant review by both the ASEC and the Academy Trust Board. Part of the evaluation process will be to consider what interventions have been successful. For instance:

- Has the attendance and punctuality of individual pupils and/or attendance as a whole improved?
- How successful have pupil reintegration plans been?
- Has the Academy been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the Academy and the local community?
- How well informed are new pupils and their families about the importance of attendance and the policies and procedures operating within the Academy?
- Have attendance issues been included as topics in assemblies or collective worship, lessons or as a theme for any other curricular lessons?
- Have appropriate and timely referrals been made to the Education Welfare Service and advice sought as necessary?

Beyond Expectations – Attendance

Rationale

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.' *DfE School Attendance July 2019*

As a Trust, we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. All of our academies:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. None of our academies will authorise family holiday during term time.

Our expectations

- All DSAT academies have an attendance target that is in line with the national average (currently 95.8%). Academies are expected to have their own strategy to secure high levels of attendance by pupils and to take a proactive approach to supporting families where attendance falls below expectations.
- All academies follow the statutory guidance for the registration of pupils including the completion of attendance registers.
- Where a pupil is absent from school and no explanation has been given, administrative staff make every effort to ascertain the reason for absence by contacting parents/carers as soon as possible. Pupils who are known to be vulnerable are prioritised in this process.
- Academies have a designated member of staff who is responsible for attendance management. Parents/carers are made aware of the need for good attendance and punctuality, what the target for their child is and how this equates to days of absence. Academies ensure there are regular opportunities to remind parents/carers about this through school communications i.e. newsletters, email, social media.
- Attendance and punctuality for individual pupils are scrutinised at least monthly and action taken immediately a pupil's attendance falls below 96% or lateness becomes a concern. An agreed procedure is in place for this to provide a graduated response that is tailored to the needs of the family. This will include all or some of the following:
 - A letter of concern to be sent to parents/carers
 - Telephone contact to be made to discuss
 - Face to face meeting with parents/carers
 - Referral to parent support worker (if available)
 - Referral to Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority
 - Issue of penalty notice if local authority criteria is met

It is the aim in all our academies that no child becomes a persistent absentee (attendance of 90% or below). Where there is a risk of this happening, academies take immediate action to ascertain the reasons for this and put into place the necessary support to improve the child's attendance. This may take the form of family education, parenting support, practical intervention (e.g. arranging transport for the child) or in certain cases, a referral to an external agency or Children's Social Care.

Good attendance and punctuality are celebrated and rewarded. Examples of this might be;

- Certificates/stickers
- Class or year group rewards e.g. cup/special treat
- Attendance tracker display in central areas

Nationally, Pupil Premium eligible pupils have attendance that is lower than those not eligible for Pupil Premium. This is also the case within our Trust academies. Academy leaders utilise the Pupil Premium Grant to promote and encourage good attendance for eligible pupils where this is a barrier to their progress in school; this is a tailored approach for each individual. This is made explicit in the Pupil Premium strategy document.

REQUEST FOR ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

PLEASE REMEMBER

Absence from school can seriously disrupt your child's continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away; they are also less well prepared for lessons upon their return. Absence during term time will only be authorised under exceptional circumstances and may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine. Please read our Attendance Procedures for further details.

Child's Name Class

Dates from to

Number of days requested

This absence must be in term time because :

.....
.....

I understand that if this absence request is not authorised, I may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine.

Signed (parent/carer) Date

**This form must be returned to school no less than 2 weeks before the planned absence.
You may be asked to meet with the Headteacher or another member of staff.**

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL

Child: Class

Child's attendance:% Holiday already taken: Sessions

Leave of absence authorised between and

Please ensure that your child returns to school promptly following the absence as failure to do so will result in unauthorised absence.

Leave of absence refused.

Any absence from school between and will be marked as unauthorised and referred to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice of up to £120.

Reason:

Signed (Headteacher) Date

See overleaf for Request for Absence Guidance

REQUEST FOR ABSENCE GUIDANCE

Requests for Term-time Absence

- a. i) Parents should not normally take pupils out of school in term time, including taking term-time holidays. Parents must apply for the leave at least two weeks in advance of taking it, otherwise it will definitely not be authorised. Each request for absence should be considered individually, taking account of:
- the age of the child;
 - the time of year proposed for the trip;
 - the overall attendance pattern of the pupil;
 - the child's stage of education and progress;
 - and whether circumstances warrant it.
- ii) Absence will not be authorised during key assessment times (normally May / June) or key settling in and transition times (September).
- iii) School can invite parents to discuss any proposed absence in term time.
- iv) Absences of greater than 5 days within any one academic year will always be classified as unauthorised and parents will be informed accordingly. Term time absences will not be granted if it will bring the child's overall attendance below 95%. The granting of term-time absence is always at the Headteacher's discretion and the outcome of any request will vary from one situation to another.
- v) Absence will be marked as unauthorised if:
- No explanation is forthcoming;
 - The school is dissatisfied with the explanation;
 - The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday);
 - The pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday;
 - Sufficient notice has not been given.
- b. Requests for term-time absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances: these might include forces personnel on leave from foreign duties, parents' employment restrictions, significant family events or cultural or religious requirements. It may be necessary to ask for further information or employer confirmation of restricted annual leave in some circumstances. Authorisation will always be at the discretion of the Headteacher.
- c. Valid reasons for absence do not include: price / booked by others / already booked. Absence requests must be made BEFORE booking and with at least 2 weeks' notice.
- d. Parents of children with more than 10 sessions unauthorised (one day is two sessions), for holiday or any other reason, will be subject to a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent per child rising to £120 if not paid within the first 21 days. The school does not like having to use these but will not hesitate to do so in order to encourage good attendance.