

Attendance policy



Approved by:	Trust Board	Date: 21 st September 2021
Last reviewed on:	July 2020 New Policy to reflect the changes in the Admission Code	
Next review due by:	September 2022	

1. Rationale

The Eastern Multi-Academy Trust is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. This Policy has been developed in order to give a consistent response to all students and families in our care.

The Trust wants to do its best for all its young people and believes that regular attendance at the Academy is vital for children as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships. Students should be at the Academy on time every day the Academy is open unless the reason is unavoidable. Permitting absence from the Academy without a good reason is an offence by a parent. The Trust will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach his/her full educational achievement, a high level of education attendance is essential. The Trust will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Attendance is subject to various education laws and this Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Each year the Trust academies will examine their attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets which will reflect both national and Trust attendance targets. The Trust and its academies will discuss their attendance figures and the success of this Policy on an annual basis and will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

2. Procedures

Any student who is absent from the Academy at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Principal or a member of staff acting on his/her behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department for Education.

3. Lateness

The Trust academies set their own registration times. Morning registration will take place at the start of the (Name of Academy) day at (insert time) am. The registers will remain open for (30) minutes. Any child arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation such as delayed 'school' transport. In cases, for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

Students arriving after the start of 'school' but before the end of the registration period will be treated, for statistical purposes, as present but will be coded as late before registers close.

4. First Day Absence

On the first day of an absence, parents/carers should contact their child's academy before the registration period closes. If no contact has been made, the Academy will endeavour to contact parents/carers as quickly

as possible during the 'school' day and will transfer information to the registers, alerting the Principal or other key staff to any wellbeing issues.

If no contact is received from parents by the end of the morning of absence, the Academy will phone or text them. The Academy will continue to make daily contact until a response is received and will also make general enquires during this time and try other contact numbers.

5. Ten Days' Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days will be notified to the relevant Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance staff for the local area. This is a legal requirement. The Academy will include details of the action they have taken.

6. Absence Notes

Notes of telephone calls received and written notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the child which may require further investigation the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

If there are attendance concerns about the child, further medical evidence must be produced (e.g. doctor's note, prescription, medicine label). Principals retain the right to un-authorise absence without medical evidence.

7. Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of all staff in each academy to be aware of, and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the Academy will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. Attendance is monitored periodically. When a pupil's attendance falls lower than the national average or causes concern, parents will be contacted by the Academy. The Academy will look for patterns and reasons for absence, making parents aware of the number of absences and the importance of attendance etc. Additional support may be available from outside agencies and in some cases the Academy will seek advice from the Attendance Improvement Officer. Action may include the use of the Fast Track system and/or Fixed Penalty Notices. Monitoring will continue and a Common Assessment Framework meeting could be considered.

8. Persistent Absence [PA]

All pupils whose attendance level falls below **96%** will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. These action plans will be set up by the Academy's Attendance Officer. The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the child's attendance and details of systems such as Fast Track, Attendance Panels, and Family Support Processes utilised by the Academy.

PA is currently set at **90% (10 sessions in a six-week period)** therefore intervention should be happening well before attendance falls to this level.

9. A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil receives help to catch up on missed work and is updated on any information which has been passed to other children.

10. Safeguarding

Attendance is an important element of Safeguarding and schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. Schools should hold more than one contact number; this goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides schools with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Academies should always follow-up any absences to ensure that the proper safeguarding action is taken.

DSLs should check the absence list on a daily basis to ensure that appropriate follow-up action can be taken where required.

11. Promoting Attendance

The Eastern Multi-Academy Trust family of academies work actively together to improve attendance in our area and give consistent messages about the importance of good attendance. Each academy will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers of their responsibility to ensure that their children receive education and will make clear the links between attendance and attainment. Information about attendance, procedures and attendance rates is published in the Academy Prospectus. The Home/School Agreement mentions the importance of good attendance and the parents/carers' responsibility. A promotional leaflet is also used.

12. Attendance Awards

Academies will reward pupils who have good or improving attendance, in particular through praising the individual child and, for example, by awarding certificates for 100% attendance on a termly basis.

13. Holidays and absences (other than medical) in Term Time

Holidays during term time are not permitted **and will not be authorised**. Most other absences, unless medical in nature, are not permitted (see below, under Authorised Absences for possible exceptions). Parents will be reminded of the effect absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. **Absences in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances and parents must apply in writing in advance for permission using the agreed form here (<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/education-learning/application-for-pupil-leave-of-absence-from-school-during-term-time.pdf?la=en&hash=043B1FA7653F6C352C42A4E7FE6D2D5EB30BE78B>).**

Exceptional circumstances must exist for authorisation to be given for all types of personal leave. There must be a very strong case for why it would be impossible or unfeasible for the pupil to attend school, and why it is impossible for the parent(s) to take holiday in any of the available school vacations. Unfortunately, requesting absence for a holiday in term time because the costs are too high in the summer break is not an exceptional circumstance: other vacation periods are available.

There is no complete definition of 'exceptional circumstances'. Each case is different and must be treated as such. Each application is individual to the pupil and it is for the Principal of the academy to come to a decision. The law tells us that even though a family may have one set of exceptional circumstances to be considered, the circumstances of each child must also be considered. Examples of exceptional circumstances could include a

sudden **immediate** family bereavement, a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is unable to take leave at other times or a parent is employed by the emergency services and is required to work for a national event leading to leave being cancelled.

“Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher’s discretion.”

DfE School Attendance Guidance 2016

Should you request leave of absence for more than one child, at different schools,

Principals/Headteachers are likely to discuss the application together and will attempt to reach one decision.

In some Year groups, due to teacher and statutory assessments and controlled assignments, no absences will be authorised during certain periods, e.g. SATs and exam periods.

The academy will seek to respond to applications within five working days, though this is not always possible. Please remember that we must have sufficient advanced notice to consider applications. All absences taken without prior authorisation cannot be authorised after the event.

Should you not wish to accept the decision of the Principal, you may appeal to the governors in writing care of The Clerk to the Governors at your child’s school. You should do this within 10 days of receipt of the school’s decision.

14. Categorisation of Absence

Any child who is on roll but not present in the Academy must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence

Children where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised Absence

Children who are away from the Academy for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

Authorised absences include illness, religious observance, exclusions from school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence. Medical or dental appointments may be authorised should there be no alternative times available, as may be the case with hospital appointments. However, routine check-ups or GP visits should take place outside school hours where possible. Illness must be notified to the school on the first morning. Medical notes may be requested if the absence is prolonged or recurring.

3. Approved Educational Activity

Supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the Academy. Children recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site

If a child is receiving education off site or is attending at a school/academy where they are dual registered, the Academy will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

15. The Registration System

Academies will use a computerised system for maintaining attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information. [For recording absence due to Covid please see the separate DfE guidance available here.](#)

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved education activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (Not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending another establishment)	Approved education activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved education activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved education activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers close)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved education activity
W	Work experience	Approved education activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for noncompulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

16. Record Preservation

Academies must ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years.

Computer registers will be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes or preserved as electronic back-ups.

17. Register Security

Registers or attendance marking sheets if used must be safely stored.

18. Attendance Targets

The Trust academies will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a Senior Leader will be responsible for overseeing this work. Academies will make use of the attendance data available on the ASP (Analysing School Performance) system when setting its target. Targets will relate to national averages.

19. Attendance Governor

Each academy will have a named governor for attendance.

20. Documents Used to Support this Policy:

- Template
- Medical form to support absence.

Appendices The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

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

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and [b] To any special needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

Absences during Term Time

Parents/carers are required under the Education Act (2006) to ensure their child attends the Academy regularly.

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments make clear that Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Academies will not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of a child's education or if the absences are during Academy exam periods and SATs.

Before applying parents/carers are advised to consider very seriously how the absences will affect their child's education. Academies are not obliged to provide work for children taking leave of absence, however some may choose to do this.

The Government states that any excessive absence or any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised on the child's records. Parents/carers need to be aware an accumulation of unauthorised absences will result in Penalty Notices or legal proceedings being taken.

Penalty Notices.

Penalty Notices are fines of £60 to £120 imposed on parents per pupil. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child, of compulsory school age, regularly attends the school/academy where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

They can only be issued by the Principal or someone authorised by and through the Local Authority Officer or the police. All schools/academies in Norfolk must send penalty notices to be issued to the Local Authority, and the police must send copies of penalties to the Local Authority.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalties can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the Academy.

Penalties may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during Academy hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the Academy at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Parents are advised to discuss with the Academy any request for leave of absence prior to making any bookings. Our Academy's designated person is ultimately the Principal. It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure confirmation is received from the Academy before the trip is taken and they do not assume permission is granted if written confirmation has not been received.

Fast Track Process

What is the purpose of the Fast Track to Attendance Panel Meeting?

The purpose of the Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting is for you and your child to meet with teachers, school governors and Attendance Improvement Officers to identify the reasons for absence and to work together to improve attendance.

What will happen at the Fast Track to Attendance Panel Meeting?

The reasons for absence will be identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered. A supportive action plan will be agreed. An attendance target will be set. Whilst the intention of the Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting is that attendance will improve, consideration will be made to legal action if attendance targets are not met. This could include prosecution in the magistrates' court, education supervision orders or parenting orders.

What happens next?

A Review Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting will be arranged and at this meeting the action plan and attendance will be reviewed. A new action plan will be agreed. If the attendance target is met, the Review Panel can recommend that no further action is required. However, the school will continue to monitor the attendance of your child and will notify the Local Education Authority if attendance deteriorates. This could still result in legal action being taken. If the attendance target is not met, the Review Panel will recommend to the Local Education Authority that legal action is taken as specified above: i.e. prosecution in the magistrate's court, an Education Supervision Order or Parenting Order.

Who is responsible for compliance of this policy?

The Academy Council/Interim Executive Board is responsible for each academy's compliance with this policy. Each Academy Council should provide appropriate challenge and support around the current attendance, absence data (especially Persistent Absence) and the academy's actions to support good attendance of all pupils. Academy Council Members should pay particular attention to the attendance of vulnerable groups, especially disadvantaged, Looked After Children and SEND.

The local academy lead for attendance is responsible for reporting on attendance to the Academy Council or IEB.

The Principal is responsible for reporting on attendance to their Academy Council *through the Principal's Report and at each Challenge & Support Meeting. The Regional Directors/Directors of Education are responsible for offering appropriate challenge and support around the attendance data and for monitoring the effectiveness of the work of the academy in improving attendance for all children.*

The Directors of Education are responsible for reporting on attendance to the relevant Education Sub Committee of the Board.

Local Annex A

Academies should provide local information to include:

- Name and contact details of the person responsible for attendance within the academy
- Name and contact details of the DSL
- Opening times of the academy
- Local arrangements for parents/carers to report absences
- Local arrangements for following up absences, including First Day Calling arrangements
- Copy of the annual letter informing parents of the academy's use of Fixed Penalty Notices and Fast Track to Attendance processes.
- Link to the annual letter on the academy's website
- Link to Norfolk/Suffolk attendance website page
- Links to other relevant policies

Local Annex B

Academies should provide an attendance annex in line with their reopening plans after the return from lockdown for Covid 19. The Annex should be reviewed at every Academy Council meeting whilst a threat of a closure remains. This annex should also include how attendance of the following pupils are monitored:

- Those officially categorised as vulnerable children
- Pupils who the academy feel are close to vulnerable status
- All pupils that are working remotely

The annex should include how a substitute for first day calling will be implemented in case of return to lockdown and the academy actions in case of a concern.