

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Approved

CEO

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Last reviewed:

Autumn 23

Next review due by:

Autumn 24



Attendance Policy

1. Our Trust is committed to providing a high-quality education for all the children who attend any Unity Schools Partnership's schools and settings. By attending school every day and on time, children and young people can take full advantage of the educational and social development opportunities available to them.

2. The whole school community – children, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

3. This policy applies to all children registered at this school and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

4. We encourage all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly.

Aims & Objectives

5. This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our schools are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

6. Through this policy we aim to:
 - a. Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
 - b. Achieve a minimum of an average attendance rate of 96.5% for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.

- c. Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by our schools.
- d. Raise awareness of parents, carers, and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- e. Ensure that our policy applies to non-statutory school age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- f. Work in partnership with pupils, parents, carers, staff, and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- g. Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- h. Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- i. Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

School's responsibilities

7. All the staff at our schools will place a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality. They also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
8. School staff are responsible for ensuring that pupils have good attendance by: -
 - a. ensuring that attendance registers are kept accurately.
 - b. differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence – only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence).
 - c. responding to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care.
 - d. contacting parents when they are concerned about a pupil's absences and recording the contact.

- e. consulting with the Education Welfare Service if a pupil's attendance continues to give cause for concern.
- f. promoting regular school attendance (for example, by contacting parents on the first day of absence if parents have not contacted the school).
- g. acknowledging good or improved attendance of individual pupils and classes.

Responsibility of Parents/Carers

9. 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.
10. Parents/carers must not book term-time holidays

Punctuality

11. It is the parent/carers responsibility:
- a. To ensure that their children arrive at school on time.
 - b. To ensure children who arrive after the register has been called report to the school office to sign in.

Absences

12. It is the parent/carer's responsibility:
- a. To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9:30am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office, emailing or via Parentmail/SchoolsComm.
 - b. To provide medical evidence, if requested, on the child's return to school.
 - c. To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.

- d. To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g., a sick parent/carer.
- e. Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted.
- f. The school will do everything reasonable to make contact with parents/carers in the event of an absence from school without notification from parents/carers and carry out home visits for pupils not seen for a week as part of its safeguarding strategy

13. Parents/carers requesting a term time absence must complete a leave of absence request form in advance of the planned absence (ideally at least 4 weeks prior). These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher who will in turn liaise with Headteachers in any of the siblings' schools if the sibling attends a Trust school and endeavour to do the same for schools not in the Trust.

14. It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- a. To obtain a leave of absence form (see Appendix 1) from the school office.
- b. To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally 4 weeks prior).

Illness/Medical absences

15. In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to supply this evidence and the school may decide not to authorise the absence if the evidence is not forthcoming.

16. The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday or if the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.

17. Long absence for medical reasons will not be authorised unless supported by a consultant's letter. GP's medical notes are unlikely to be sufficient to authorise a significant period of absence.

Absence for Holidays

18. Parents/carers are expected to take their children on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education. **Parents/carers should be aware that it is the policy of the schools in this Trust not to approve term time holidays unless in exceptional circumstances.** The decision of the Headteacher is final.

19. If parents/carers decide to take a holiday, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised.

20. An immediate fixed penalty notice fine will be issued 8 or more unauthorised absence sessions have occurred (4 whole days in total). We will give a reminder/warning about attendance (Letter 1) when unauthorised sessions reach 4 or more (2 whole days in total) and then expect to see no further unauthorised absences.

21. Any additional absences will result in a second letter (Letter 2) being sent which will make clear that any further unauthorised absence will result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice fine. This fine will be applied to both parents (even if the child lives with only one parent).

22. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days; please note this is £60 for each child, for each parent/carer (i.e., 2 children, 2 parent/carers = £240 fine) increasing to £120 between 21 and 28 days.

23. A fixed penalty notice will be issued for the first unauthorised holiday taken during term time. Any further unauthorised holiday will be referred to the Local Authority for prosecution.

Absence for Other Reasons

24. It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- a. To inform the school, in writing, of the need for leave in circumstances which are known in advance.
- b. To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

Unexplained Absence

25. When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority.

26. Regular monitoring is carried out by the Education Welfare Officer. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer and may be invited to an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

Role of the Education Welfare Officer

27. To investigate absence which exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents/carers as required.

28. To investigate lateness which exceeds more than 5%.

29. To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 5 consecutive days.

30. To ensure parents/carers are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.

31. To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the school and Education Welfare Officer.

Children whose parents/carers decide to Electively Home Educate

32. Our schools do **not** support Elective Home Education (EHE) as it believes that education in a school setting benefits the child both academically, socially and emotionally. School based education allows a child to access additional learning in RSHE (relationships, sex and health education), careers education and can provide better opportunities for safeguarding.

33. A parent/carer who decides to EHE will be contacted by the school who will try to persuade the parent/carer to reconsider. This will be followed up with contact from the relevant Director of Education for USP who will seek to better understand the decision. Our schools will follow the Unity Schools Partnership protocol in response to the decision to electively home educate. Our schools will provide parent/ carer with a link to government advice to parents.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791528/EHE_guidance_for_parentsafterconsultationv2.2.pdf

34. All USP schools will complete a Form 1 to return to the LA and will make clear any concerns the school has about the decision to EHE.

35. Our schools will hold open the place for the child for as long as possible, however where doing so would deny another child access to education we will look to have further conversations with the Local Authority to determine the best possible course of action.

36. All our secondary schools will support the application to sit public examinations as a “Private Candidate” wherever possible.

Children Missing in Education

37. If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least 5 consecutive days, the Education Welfare Officer will be notified, and a home visit may be carried out.

Persistent Latecomers

38. Children who repeatedly attend school late (30 minutes after the register opens) will be brought to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer. The Education Welfare Officer will undertake unannounced gate checks.

39. Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after the register has closed are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence, and this will affect the child's attendance figures. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after this time.

Part Time Timetables

40. This school does not issue part-time timetables as a matter of course.

41. Part-time timetables may be used to support a pupil back into full time education following a medical or emotional issue. They should never be issued as a way of managing behaviour in the long term.

42. All part-time timetables should be offered for a period of six weeks and should be discussed, and approval sought from the EWO. The plan should allow for the percentage of time in school to rise each week with a view to returning to full time education on site within the six-week period.

43. Pupils on significantly reduced timetables should be a priority for any safeguarding and or attendance monitoring. Contact with the family should be by phone daily and a home visit should take place weekly.

Appendix 1

Leave of Absence Form

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, as amended 2013 - Request for authorisation of a Pupil Absence Request for Exceptional Circumstances

Please be aware that no term time holidays will be authorised. Pupils absent from school for the purposes of going on holiday will be fined. The Headteacher's decision will be final

I wish to apply for (child name):

Year/Class:

To be authorised as being absent from school from: _____ to
_____ (inclusive dates)

The exceptional reason why the absence needs to be taken in term time is: (continue on separate sheet if necessary)

_____ Please list below any siblings and schools they attend:

NB: Amendments to the 2006 regulations (2013) make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw pupils from school and, in law, must apply for permission in advance. The school will always want to discuss this with you personally. Please complete this form and send to the Headteacher. You are advised not to make any arrangements until your request has been considered by the school. This school will not authorise the request for absence from school if your child's attendance is below 90%. Any absence which has not been agreed in advance by the Headteacher is marked as 'Unauthorised Absence' and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued (see back of form for details of this)

SCHOOL USE ONLY

Specify dates unauthorised:

Specify dates authorised:

Signature of Headteacher:

Date: A personal discussion with you is requested - Please contact: _____

Last academic year attendance:

Current school attendance:

Exceptional circumstances are defined as:

- Forces Personnel on leave from a foreign posting

- Exceptional significant family events or circumstances – these will be considered on an individual basis with you.

The Headteacher will consider every above request individually, but the following will not meet the criteria set by the DfE:

- Relatives coming to visit
- Holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips
- Employers declining parents leave during school holidays.
- Visiting family/friends that have different half term holidays and may include refusal to attend family weddings and visits to see family abroad.

Authorised officers have the discretion to issue a penalty notice without warning where the parent has chosen to take the child on leave during term time without authorisation or evidence is subsequently found to suggest a child was away from school with the knowledge of the parent and does not meet the statutory defences mentioned below.

Penalty Notices

Through section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996, it has become possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices require each parent of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay a penalty, currently £60.00 if paid within 21 days or £120.00 if paid within 28 days. If you do not pay the Penalty Notice, such cases you will be automatically summonsed to appear in Court for an offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 and can result in a criminal conviction recorded against you. Courts have a wider range of sentencing options, which could include a maximum fine of up to £1000. The only statutory defences to the offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 are:

- The child was absent for medical reasons
- The LEA failed to provide transport when required to do so
- The absences were due to religious observance
- You had permission of the school or there was an unavoidable cause

