

Attendance Policy

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All Members of the Board of Directors are also Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Director' used in this Policy also means Trustee. This Policy applies to all pupils in Academies within the Link Academy Trust.

All Academies within the Link Academy Trust are committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all pupils. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage. As a Multi Academy Trust we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible in line with procedures agreed by the Trustees.

It is the policy of our Trust to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career and establishes a good pattern for later life. We will actively promote, encourage and reward 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

Objectives

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance through the Academy's rewards system
- to ensure a consistent approach in line with all Academies within the Trust

Statutory Duty of Academies and Parents

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive effective full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Academies are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. This extends to ensuring that pupils arrive at School on time, properly attired, and in a condition to learn. All Academies will make every effort to promote good attendance, giving advice and support where needed.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and School Attendance

The EWS is a part of the Devon Local Authority. Its aim is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to benefit from a full-time education by attending school regularly. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) can help and advise parents/carers who may be experiencing difficulties that prevent this. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and the EWS expects parents/carers to do all that is necessary to make sure this happens.

What is authorised/ unauthorised absence?

Authorised Absence is when the Academy has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.

Unauthorised Absence is when the Academy has not received a reason for absence or is unsatisfied with the reason given. The Academy can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

On matters relating to term-time pupil absences, the Education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) Regulations 2013, made it clear that Executive/Academy Heads may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless 'exceptional circumstances' prevail. The regulations also state that Executive/Academy Heads should determine the number of Academy days a pupil can be away from school in the event that leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

What happens if your child does not attend school regularly (and their absence is not authorised)?

It is a criminal offence for a child not to attend school regularly and, as a parent/carer, this is your responsibility. A Penalty Notice may therefore be issued by the Devon LA Education Welfare Officer, requiring you to pay a fine of up to £60 per parent/carer, per child (if paid within 21 days) or £120 (if paid with 28 days) if their attendance is below an acceptable level. In certain circumstances you may be prosecuted and be required to attend the Magistrates Court where you could face up to 3 months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £2500.

You will be given every opportunity to improve your child's attendance and you will receive a written warning before any legal action is taken.

Statutory Attendance

There is a legal requirement to have a morning (am) and an afternoon (pm) registration.

Morning (am): Pupils will be registered at the beginning of each morning (08.50am) by the teacher. Registration closes at 9.05am; any arrivals between 08.50am and 9.05am will be classified as late (Code L).

Arrival after 9.05am is recorded as an **unauthorised absence** (Code U).

Afternoon (pm): Registration takes place at the beginning of the afternoon session by the class teacher.

All registration will be recorded on the School Information Management System (SIMS) at the end of each week by the administrator.

Class registers must be taken at the beginning of all sessions by the teacher.

Accurate registration is very important and registration details can be used as evidence where parents/carers are prosecuted for school attendance offences.

The attendance register will be kept for three years by all Academies.

Request for absence during term time

All requests must be made using the Absence Request form (S2), available from the office, at the earliest convenience before the request for absence. The Academies within the Trust do not encourage any absence during term time and the Executive/ Academy Head ***may no longer authorise absences unless for exceptional circumstances.***

- No absence will be authorised in the first two weeks of any term or during May when SATs for Years 2 and 6 take place

If a parent/carer is refused an absence request and the pupil is still taken out of a school by the parent/carer, the School / Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed.

Reporting Absences

It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the Academy of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first and each day of absence.

If no contact has been made the Academy will operate a First Day Calling system and the parents/carers of every absent pupil will be contacted by the Administrator.

If no contact is established one of the alternative emergency contacts registered with the Academy will be contacted and may be used to gain access to the property to check all is in order.

On the second day of absence if there has been no contact, the Academy would have a Safeguarding concern. and will attempt to arrange a possible home visit.

If the Academy has serious safeguarding concerns, then a telephone call to the Police and the Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be made and/or make contact with any other contacts listed on the pupil's record.

In any case of absence, parents/carers should contact the Academy by one of the following methods:

- By phone or email to the Administrator.
- Personal contact with Administrator at school, where a note will be passed to the teacher.

In the case of long term illness the Academy should be notified.

If it is known that the pupil will be absent for more than 12 sessions, the EWO may be notified.

Truancy

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends all lessons as required. Parents/carers will be informed by the Administrator if their child has been identified as truanting from the Academy. Persistent cases may be referred to the EWO who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

Punctuality

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends full time education and arrives at Academy on time. Punctuality is monitored by the Academy and parents will be contacted if their child is not arriving on time. Persistent cases will be referred to the EWO who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

Staff guidance and procedures.

Reporting to Parents

Annual Report to parents/carers includes summative information on attendance as well as comment on punctuality

Distribution of Data

The Administrator will produce for Executive/ Academy Head:

- a) printout of all attendances for previous week
- b) Reports on persistent lateness to school in the mornings (6 or more).
- c) all pupils below 95% attendance
- d) % attendance figures for all pupil's half termly.

The Executive/ Academy Head will report attendance data to the Governors via the Local Board and the Trustees via the Academy Trust Improvement Lead (ATIL) termly and against targets annually.

Absence from School

Authorisation of absences from school:

- Parent/carer provide a written note signed by them, on pupil's return, unless parent/carer has contacted the Academy by another acceptable means. (see above)
- Teacher to record on registration system using appropriate code.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Trustees: Receive all attendance information and support or challenge as appropriate, holding the CEO to account.

Role of Local Board: Understands and monitors the implementation of the policy, receives a termly report via Executive/Academy Heads. The Local Boards report to the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

Executive/Academy Heads: Monitor overall Academy attendance and update Local Board.

Administrator: Administration of attendance and punctuality data within the framework of this policy, first day contacts.

Teachers:

Keep an accurate register and follow up of absences and lateness within the systems and procedures of this policy.

Education Welfare Officer: Implementation of LA procedures in enforcing attendance and assisting year teams with advising pupils and parents of the legal consequences of failing to meet these obligations. The EWO is the attendance enforcement arm of the LA. The EWO for our Academies will be fully informed of all absences giving cause for concern and will have full access to the electronic registration system.

This Policy is reviewed by the Standards & Curriculum Committee on an annual cycle.

Approved by the Board of Trustees: 08/02/2021

THE LINK ACADEMY TRUST School Absence

