



Harleston CE Primary Academy

Attendance Policy

Policy Type:	Trust Core Policy
Approved By:	Trust Board (Standards & Performance Committee)
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Person Responsible:	Chief Executive Officer

Summary of Changes

Page Ref.	Section	Amendment	Date of Change

1. Introduction

Roles and Accountabilities

The Diocese of Norwich St. Benet's Multi School Trust (the "Trust") is accountable for all policies across its Academies. All policies, whether relating to an individual school or the whole Trust, will be written and implemented in line with our ethos and values as articulated in our prospectus. We are committed to the provision of high quality education in the context of the Christian values of responsibility, respect and dignity where individuals are valued, aspirations are high, hope is nurtured and talents released.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance on a daily basis and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated safeguarding arrangements.

A Scheme of Delegation for each school sets out the responsibilities of the Local Governing Body and Head Teacher. The Head Teacher of each school is responsible for the implementation of all policies of the School Trust.

All employees of the School Trust are subject to the Trust's policies.

Mission Statement

In St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust we strive for excellence and enjoyment in education by providing a safe, secure, caring family environment, where all are valued and respected as individuals.

In St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust we believe that regular school attendance enables children both to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become responsible, organised and motivated adults. We value all students. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community.

We will endeavour to enable our pupils to reach their full potential, whilst growing in their love and understanding of the Christian Faith.

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. We aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to pupils, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality. Our attendance target is to achieve attendance above the national average.

2. Types of Absence

The parent/carer of a pupil of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the pupil attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her pupil attends that school then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a pupil of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller pupil travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- family bereavement;
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis);

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the pupil's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual pupil is therefore deemed to be a persistent absentee if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

Home Visits

If necessary, staff may make home visits without notification, when a pupil is a persistent absentee or there is a failure to contact school on the first day of absence.

Approved Educational Activity

Pupils who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those pupils physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

Registers

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. At Harleston CE Primary Academy we expect parents/carers to ensure that pupils are on the school premises by 8.55 am. The morning register closes at 9.05 am so pupils arriving between those times will be marked with an L indicating they are late for school.

However, pupils arriving after the register has closed will be registered with a U showing they are present in school but were late enough to affect their learning. In considering attendance levels, the form register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on academies with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half-)termly and yearly basis;
- identify individual pupils and particular groups of pupils who are or may be at risk of becoming
- persistent absentees;
- facilitate and encourage early intervention;
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy;
- report attendance matters to parents/carers.

First Day Response

As a vigilant and caring school, we apply first-day response to pupil absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a telephone call.

Punctuality

In addressing punctuality at Harleston CE Primary Academy we:

- have clear procedures - registers close at 9.05 am
- publicise this policy in School and communicate it to parents/carers/carers;
- balance any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality;
- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons; follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to monitor attendance and punctuality. The Local Governing Body set attendance targets annually and are kept informed on attendance figures.

Leave of Absence

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that Head Teachers can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole purpose of a holiday (unless in exceptional circumstances). All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution where the trigger of 5 days is met.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for child due to 'exceptional circumstances.'

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Leave Request' form and any request can only be authorised where School accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Head Teacher to explain the circumstances.

Parents/carers risk losing their pupil's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to the school on the agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation: The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (iiii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013).

Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised:

- during the first term, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the pupil to settle into their new class;
- during statutory assessment (GCSE's) or summative test period
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence or is below 90%

Penalty Notices

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their pupil's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a pupil fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

Penalty notices are issued per parent per pupil at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the pupil's absences and give parents/carers 15 days to bring about an improvement. In that time the pupil should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised holidays warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

Absence for Religious Reasons

St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the student absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carers is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be

authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Recording and Reporting

Absence concerns/issues, parent contracts and Penalty notices are all recorded. All data/information relating to absence is secure and confidential and accessible only by appropriate members of staff.

Support Systems

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and students.
- Student Voice Activities.
- Friendship groups.
- 1 to 1 mentoring.
- Reward systems.
- Additional learning support.
- Behaviour support.
- Reintegration support packages.
- Attendance meetings.
- Home School Agreement
- Engaging the support of other agencies.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and students. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Head Teacher will consider the use of legal sanctions following consultation with the Local Authority.