



This review: **April 2021**

**Next review:** **April 2023**

# SENDAT STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy is reviewed biennially by the  
Provision, Standards & Attainment (PSA) Committee.

To be read in conjunction with but not limited to:

SENDAT Safeguarding and Child Protection policy

SENDAT Student Behaviour policy

and other relevant policies and procedures

## History of Document

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## **Introduction**

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend school regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

## **Why regular attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and also may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a prosecution.

## **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Education Welfare Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never properly been explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed;
- holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the headteacher.

For those children who are struggling to attend school full time due to their complex needs, school and the parents/carers may discuss flexible hours. When a parent seeks a reduction in hours or days, the school and other professionals will look at the individual child and their needs and work with the parents to provide appropriate education for their child. The child's needs will be the priority, rather than achieving full time attendance figures. Absence from school in these circumstances will be authorised.

## **Absence procedures:**

If your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on each day of absence and provide written evidence on their return to school;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;



- Invite you in to discuss the situation, if absences persist;
- If appropriate, we will refer the matter to the Attendance Officer linked with school if attendance moves below 85% as per Local Authority protocol.

If your child has a prolonged absence due to medical reasons, we will:

- Keep in regular contact with the family;
- Provide educational activities at home/hospital if appropriate.

### **Telephone Numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents, so we need to have your **up to date** contact numbers at all times. If we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **In school Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and or/punctuality. This includes:

- Celebrating full attendance with pupils through certificates and awards,
- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, class staff, health professionals and Headteacher,
- Recognising the needs of individual pupils when planning a return to school following significant periods of absence,
- Parenting contracts,
- Use of Early Help and for Suffolk the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), for Norfolk CADS (Children's Advice and Duty Service)
- and/or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Attendance Officer).
- Penalty notices.

### **The Local Authority Attendance officer:**

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the School or the Local Authority.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher finding out what is happening that day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

### **How do we manage lateness:**

With the exception of children on reduced hours the school expects all students to be here to attend by the published start of day.



Registers are marked by 9.15 am, and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Holidays in Term Time:**

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday as of right.

Under new Government amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, our school is unable to authorise holidays in term time. Parents can request 'leave of absence' during term time but this can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. This legislation came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013.

All requests for leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis. The pupils' record of school attendance will be considered when deciding the outcome of this request for leave of absence.

Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time both educationally and for other school activities. Before completing this request parents/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

Please note that permission for holidays in term time for KS4 and KS5 would not normally be granted.

Any absence for a leave of absence which does not meet the criteria of being 'an exceptional circumstance' will be marked as unauthorised absence. It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

If your child has absence marked as unauthorised, you may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for this period. It should be noted that BOTH parents would be at risk of a FPN for each child of the family with a period of unauthorised absence from school.

### **Extended Leave in Term Time:**

Only in exceptional circumstances will 'leave' of over 10 days (but less than 20) be authorised by the school.

Parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss educational opportunities for their child whilst on extended leave.

**Religious Absence:**

The school will authorise one day 'leave' per religious festival e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

**Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in our school:****Parents:**

- Ensure children attend school regularly and punctually;
- Contact school on each day of absence and provide written evidence on their return to school;
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance in writing;
- Attendance at meetings in school;
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and co-operate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies;
- Ensure children go to bed on time;
- Ensure their child has their breakfast before coming to school.

**Pupils:**

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school e.g. early bedtime;
- Attend school/registration punctually;
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on their school attendance.
- Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by the school or other agencies.

**Head of School /Headteacher/School Attendance Lead:**

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school;
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters;
- Ensure adequate protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities;
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance;
- Ensure there are designated staff to oversee educational provision for children who are too poorly to attend school (class teacher and Assistant Headteacher).

**Designated Staff:**

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided;
- Input and update the attendance registers on Arbor system;
- Regularly identify and monitor school attendance and punctuality levels;
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance using parenting contracts where appropriate.
- Ensure, if appropriate, children who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons have opportunities to access educational activities".

**All staff:**

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment;
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns;
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance;
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff;
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures.



- Be pro-active in providing learning opportunities for children who are too poorly to attend school.

#### **CEO**

- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy;
- Agree statutory targets for each School in the Trust;
- Be supportive of the high staffing levels required to:
  - i) support the return to school of a child who has been absent for a significant length of time due to medical reasons;
  - ii) ensure that appropriate learning opportunities can be delivered and reviewed for children who are too poorly to attend school.

#### **Local Academy Board**

- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy;
- Monitor the attendance data on a termly basis at the LAB meetings

#### **SENDAT Board:**

- Adopt the whole Trust policy and review regularly;

#### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

**The minimum level of attendance for our school is 93%. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.**

Through the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality. We work very closely with families whose child has complex needs to ensure that learning continues, as appropriate, even if their child is unable to attend school.

#### **Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

#### **Summary:**

Our school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are



committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

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Governors:	<b>This document was accepted at The Trust Board</b>



## Appendix 1 Leave of Absence Request

### **APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME**

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and at least 7 days before the first date of the period of absence being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission before making any bookings for holidays in term time.

#### **No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday as of right.**

Under new Government amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, our school is unable to authorise holidays in term time. Parents can request 'leave of absence' during term time but this can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. This legislation came into effect from 1st September 2013.

All requests for leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis. The pupils' record of school attendance will be considered when deciding the outcome of this request for leave of absence.

Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time both educationally and for other school activities. Before completing this request parents/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education. There are 190 school days in a year – this leaves 175 days for holidays, cultural activities and family time.

Please note that permission for holidays in term time for KS4 & KS5 (years 10,11,12+13) would not normally be granted.

Any absence for a leave of absence which does not meet the criteria of being 'an exceptional circumstance' will be marked as unauthorised absence. If your child has absence marked as unauthorised, you may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for this period. It should be noted that BOTH parents would be at risk of a FPN for each child of the family with a period of unauthorised absence from school.

If you feel that absence from school in term time is absolutely unavoidable, complete this form and return it to the headteacher. **Please be advised that holidays in term time are not a right and will only be granted under exceptional circumstances.**





**Leave of Absence Request**

Name of pupil..... Form .....

I request permission for my child(ren) to be absent from school

From ..... returning to school on .....

Total school days .....

Reason for Absence

I understand that your decision will be taken after considering:

- The impact the absence will have on his/her education
- The child's/ren's previous attendance record
- The absence meets the criteria of being 'an exceptional circumstance'

Signature of Parent/Carer ..... Date .....

I will ensure my child makes up for missed school work by:- (Please give details)

**For school use only**

Seen by Head Teacher/ HoS (signature) ..... Date .....

Decision reached ..... Other outcome .....

Date reply returned .....



## Appendix 2 Sample Letter to parents / carers

Dear Parent/ Carer

Regarding the school attendance of “student Name”

The attendance of “name” is now XX% which falls well below our expectations of at least 94%  
If “name” is not in school they are not learning and this will have impact on them later in life.

I would like to meet with you so that we can look at ways to improve attendance for “name”. We need to consider the barriers to his/her attendance and the ways in which we can work together to resolve these.

I would like to suggest a meeting at “give meeting time”

### Sample Letter 2

Please find attached a copy of xxxxxx registration certificate for the first half of the Spring Term which shows that his attendance has fallen to xxxxx% and we are growing concerned about the impact this will have on his progress.

In light of this we ask you to encourage excellent attendance from this point forward so that xxxx rate rises for the rest of the school year. We will monitor his attendance as we wish to make certain it does not fall any lower.

The school will seek advice from the Attendance Service if xxxx attendance does not improve and we will have to consider Attendance Service or Penalty Notice where absences have not been authorised.

As you know given his/her special needs, it is vital that xxxxxx attends school regularly. We are asking for your cooperation in making sure his school attendance improves and please let us know if there is anything more that we can do to support you with this.

Yours sincerely