SENDAT STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy is reviewed biennially by the SENDAT Provision Committee

To be read in conjunction with, but not limited to:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Relationships Policy

Document History

	SENDAT Student Attendance Policy
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Issued	June 2023
Reviewed by	CEO
Changes	
Approved by:	CEO
Next Review:	June 2025
Directors:	This document needs to be received by the full board

Contents

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1. Context

SENDAT is a growing multi-academy trust providing education for students and young people with a range of Special Educational Needs. The Trust encompasses a range of provisions, including special schools meeting a variety of special educational needs, Alternative Provision, and specialist units attached to mainstream schools. Our approach to student attendance is guided by a shared set of values across all the schools, settings and services within the Trust. These are informed by a trust-wide investment in Trauma Informed practice.

We believe that every member of the SENDAT community has the right:
- To be treated with dignity, respect and empathy
- To be themselves
- To be safe and healthy (physically, emotionally and psychologically)
- To learn without interruption

2. Aims

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

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

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child's attendance at school, and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

SENDAT is committed to meeting our obligations regarding school attendance through a culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

3. Legislation and guidance

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

- Part 6 of <u>The Education Act 1996</u>
- Part 3 of <u>The Education Act 2002</u>
- Part 7 of <u>The Education and Inspections Act 2006</u>
- <u>The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)</u>
- <u>The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013</u>
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day/timetabled session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before the published start of the school day on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Ensure that the school has their up-to-date phone and email contact details
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Work closely with the school/centre to resolve any attendance issues

4.2 Students

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school to support attendance and punctuality e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school every day/timetabled session on time
- Speak to parents/carers/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.

4.3 Trustees

The board of Trustees, through the CEO and Local Academy Boards, is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Executive team to account for the implementation of this policy

4.4 School Improvement Lead / Executive Headteachers

Accountable to the CEO, the School Improvement Lead for Behaviour and Attendance, working together with the Executive Headteachers, is responsible for:

- Support and challenge for school leaders in relation to improving attendance
- Monitoring school-level attendance data
- Providing advice and guidance, both strategic and operational
- Support with specific complex cases
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

4.5 The Head of School/Centre

Accountable to the Executive Headteacher and LAB, the Head of School/Centre is responsible for:
- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Local Academy Board - LAB
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

4.6 The School/Centre Attendance Lead

The designated Attendance Lead in each school (who may be the Head of School in smaller settings) is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families
- Providing regular attendance reports and reporting concerns about attendance to the Head of School/Centre

4.7 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer will be a member of administrative staff, responsible for ensuring the following:

- Monitoring the completion of the register every morning and afternoon session
- Correcting any errors
- Chasing up and rectifying any anomalies or omissions
- Checking the telephone absence line and emails from parents/carers, and updating the registers accordingly
- Contacting parents/carers of absent students, who have not contacted the school regarding their child's absence. To be done during the same session
- Contacting the named emergency contacts if no response is received from the parent/carer
- Passing any concerns to the senior leader responsible for attendance

4.8 All staff

All school staff are expected to:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive learning offer
- Provide a sympathetic response to any students' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see students' 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 unable to attend school

4.9 Class teachers

Unless other local procedures are in place, Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

5. Recording attendance

5.1 Attendance register

Each school/centre will keep an attendance register on Arbor, and place all students onto this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- [For students of compulsory school age] Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of the circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by the published start time on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at the start of the school day, and will be kept open until 30 minutes after the session begins. The register for the second session will be taken at the published start time and will be kept open for 30 minutes.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by the published start of the school day or as soon as practically possible. This should be done by either a) calling the school absence line, b) sending an email, or c) contacting the school office directly. Parents/carers are asked not to contact their child's class teacher, or to communicate via learning platforms such as Class Dojo, regarding absence.

The times of the school day are published on each school/centre website.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents/carers should use the form in Appendix 2, to request of absence. This can be sent by hand or email.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Each school/centre will have its own procedures to respond to persistent lateness. This will include contact with the parent/carer, and may also involve the student making up for lost learning time during breaks or after school.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call or email the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school does not receive a response from any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may make a home visit, contact social services, or contact the police, depending on the circumstances.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school/centre will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels, for example in the termly report.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head of School/Centre will only grant leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances". Leave of absence is granted at the Head's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

The school will consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form.

The Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

Any leave of absence taken without the agreement of the Head of School will be marked as unauthorised absence. It is important that parents/carers understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed:
- When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as students need to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.

6.2 Holidays in term time

By law, parent/carers have to get permission from the Head of School if they want to take their child out of school during term time. They can only do this if they make an application to the Head of School in advance (as a parent the child normally lives with), and the Head grants permission. As head teachers should only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances it is very unlikely that leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

6.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by an Executive Headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

Each School/centre will employ its own strategies for rewarding and improving attendance. For example, this may include celebrating good attendance through assemblies, reward schemes, displays or communications with parents/carers.

8. Attendance monitoring

Each school/centre will monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance. Their approach will be tailored to the particular needs and context of each student, mindful that every SENDAT student has Special Educational Needs, which can be complex and bring additional challenges to school attendance.

8.1 Monitoring attendance

Each school/centre will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Local Academy Board.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school/centre will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school/centre will use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school/centre will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Implement bespoke strategies such as reintegration timetables, alternative provision, off-site and remote learning as appropriate, to support a return to full-time face-to-face education

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and updated as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the School Improvement Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trustees.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

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 Government amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, our school is very unlikely 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.

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 head of school. **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 ………………… School……………………………

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 of School (signature) ……………………………….. Date ………………….

Decision reached …………………………… Other outcome ……………………………

Date reply returned ……………………………………….