

Attendance - Student Policy

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What to do as a parent / carer if your child is unable to attend school

Please see the attendance guidance document on the policies page of the relevant academy website for details of how to report a student absence.

1.0 Policy statement

Dixons Academies Trust is committed to ensuring that students and families understand the absolute importance of full attendance at school. Absence has a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress; indeed, it is the greatest determinant of under-achievement at all phases. Poor attendance or sporadic absences may also be an indicator of underlying issues that need resolving either inside or outside of the academy. Absence may also mean that a young person is more vulnerable to safeguarding risks, such as sexual and criminal exploitation, including county lines activity. As such, all our academies invest time and money in working with families to make student attendance a top priority. As a trust, we take our duty to safeguard children and our mission to challenge educational and social disadvantage seriously. Securing great attendance for all students is at the heart of our work. We work tirelessly to create a culture in our academies where students want to attend and we see great attendance as a benchmark of our positive culture. Throughout this document we have used the term 'families' to refer to our students' parents, carers or others that hold parental responsibility, or 'PR', including the Corporate Parent for those to whom that applies.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance:

- The Education Act 2002 (Non attendance prosecutions via the local authority also come under the Education Act 1996)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Working together to improve school attendance 2022
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and latest amendment 2016

This policy relates to many other trust policies and, in particular, the following:

- Anti-bullying
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Child Missing in Education
- Medical conditions
- Positive Behaviour

2.0 Scope and purpose

- To create an environment in which students are enabled to become mature and industrious, accepting responsibility for their own actions and preparing for future success.
- To form an active partnership with families to support the learning of their children.
- To ensure regular contact with students in order to safeguard their well-being.
- To provide every opportunity for our students to secure outstanding outcomes and reach their full potential.

3.0 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Our academies will:

- accept that outstanding attendance is everyone's responsibility
- formally recognise good attendance and punctuality (above 97%)
- challenge attendance that is less than good and set targets for students to improve
- intervene when poor attendance / punctuality becomes a problem and before it becomes a habit
- follow up on any non-attendance with no contact on the first day of absence with a phone call and / or home visit
- deal sympathetically with any problem a student may have which is causing attendance / punctuality to decline and always stay in regular contact with parents / carers
- act swiftly to reduce absence, in particular persistent absence, with a specific focus on immediate support for vulnerable learners
- work actively with children and families in nursery and reception classes to emphasise the benefits of high attendance; to instil and reinforce good habits of attendance from the start of their educational journey



- ensure every child of statutory school age has access to full time education
- communicate a clear and transparent process around the management of attendance to families following the listed process: prevention and reward / recognition; support and challenge with punitive measures where necessary; and legal action and / or external agencies when other measures have no impact
- not grant extended leave during term time and will automatically refer to the local authority to fine
- involve other external agencies if we believe there could be wider safeguarding issues surrounding the child

3.2 Families will:

- encourage their child to attend the academy daily, be punctual and inform the academy immediately if their child is absent
- inform the academy of any hospital appointment in advance unavoidably scheduled during school time via the 'Request for Medical Leave of Absence' form which is available from the attendance team
- inform the academy of any problems which might affect their child's attendance
- cooperate with the academy if their child's attendance / punctuality is unsatisfactory
- make requests for special leave of absence for their child during term time by completing in advance an 'Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances' form which is available from the attendance team

3.3 Students will:

- always attend the academy unless prevented by a specific illness or unavoidable circumstances
- always arrive to the academy and lessons on time

4.0 Targets, attendance and punctuality

The target for all students is to achieve 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. The minimum expectation for all students is attendance over the academic year of 97%.

Attendance during one academy year	Equivalent days	Equivalent session	Equivalent weeks	Equivalent lessons missed
95%	9 days	18 sessions	2 weeks	54 lessons
90%	19 days	38 sessions	4 weeks	114 lessons
85%	29 days	58 sessions	6 weeks	174 lessons
80%	38 days	72 sessions	8 weeks	228 lessons
75%	48 days	96 sessions	10 weeks	288 lessons
70%	57 days	114 sessions	11.5 weeks	342 lessons
65%	67 days	134 sessions	13.5 weeks	402 lessons

5.0 The impact of poor attendance on academic progress

If your child misses school on a regular basis, they are damaging their future life choices. Nationally, it has been proven that children with poor attendance in primary school miss out on making the expected progress in vital literacy and numeracy skills, and find it difficult to catch up. In secondary school, 19 days' absence correlates, on average, to a grade at GCSE in all subjects.

6.0 Procedures

- 6.1 All our academies have in place a coherent system of rigorously monitoring student attendance. Class teachers, subject tutors, form tutors / advisors, middle leaders, senior leaders, home link officers and the Education Welfare Officer all play key roles in this system and our MIS is used to manage this information.
- 6.2 If a telephone call is not forthcoming, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised. If no contact has been made by day 3 (at the very latest) of the absence, the Home Link Officer, the Education Welfare Officer or a member of staff will visit the home of the student. This will be an opportunity to explain the possible consequences of a fine if attendance does not improve. If there is a history of poor attendance, the visit may be earlier.
- 6.3 Social Services will be contacted by a member of the Safeguarding team on the first day of an unexplained absence for any child with a Child Protection Plan.
- 6.4 If a student is absent for three consecutive days (and contact has been made from home), contact will be made with home to gauge when the student will be returning to the academy and to arrange for missed work to be sent home, if appropriate.



- 6.5 At the end of the week, an unauthorised absence report is generated and a letter asking for an explanation is sent home. The list of students with unauthorised absences is also printed and passed to the staff member with responsibility for the cohort.
- 6.6 If there is a suspected pattern developing in the absences of a particular student, or group of students, then a registration certificate can be printed. This is a record of attendance for the whole year and it is sent home periodically in the student's annual report for parents' information. It is a confidential document and, therefore, should be kept carefully and only shown to the student and / or their family.

7.0 Medical and dental appointments

These should be made outside academy hours. Any urgent medical and dental appointments will only be authorised on sight of proof by completing the 'Request for Medical Leave of Absence' form which is available from the attendance team. If the absence is authorised, families must ensure they collect the student from visitors' reception as no student will be allowed out of the academy unaccompanied unless there is prior agreement with the academy. Families must also ensure that the student is aware of the appointment and is ready waiting at the authorised time. It is not the responsibility of the academy to inform students of appointments. In emergency situations, we will ensure the student is aware of the appointment. In any other circumstances, the student has to make their own way to reception at the authorised time. For students with long term illness / medical needs or those that suffer an illness for a period of time, please refer to the Medical Conditions policy.

8.0 Leave of absence during term time

Leave of absence during term time is no longer permitted. Any extended absence from the academy will be counted as unauthorised and will normally lead to a fixed penalty notice from the local authority. In order to avoid personal opinion and to ensure complete fairness for all, we refer all planned leave of absence to the authority.

9.0 Students who are late

- 9.1 Late to school is defined as students not being in registration when the register is taken. If a student arrives either 30 minutes after the session begins or after the form time or first lesson has taken place, then an unauthorised absence code of 'U' will be applied to the register. The cutoff time will be determined by the individual academy. We ask that all students are in the academy building no later than 10 minutes before the official start time so that they can get prepared and organised for the learning that day.
- 9.2 The attendance team will send a text message to parents / carers informing them when their child is late. In our secondary schools, lateness results in a same-day correction in line with the Positive Behaviour policy.
- 9.3 100% attendance is recognised in celebration assemblies and through certificates, letters and, in some academies, by positive behaviour points.

10.0 Persistent absence (PA)

- 10.1 Any student who has an overall attendance of **below 90%** is considered to be in the persistent absence category.
- 10.2 Any student who is PA will be monitored and put on an action plan. The education welfare officer / attendance team will meet with students, and their families whose attendance cause concern. Where necessary, home visits are made. In situations of persistent unauthorised absence a referral will be made to the local authority to consider a penalty notice fine or legal proceedings for a prosecution under s.444 of the 1996 Education Act.

11.0 Religious leave of absence

For a day set aside exclusively for religious observance, students will be granted one day for each occasion of religious observance with a maximum of 3 days over one academic year. These absences, if granted, will be recorded as authorised using the 'R' code. These are the codes as stipulated by the Department for Education and whilst absence is authorised, it does count against the child's attendance. This is the DfE national policy.

12.0 Registers

- 12.1 The Register is a legal document which must be completed fully and on time at AM and PM registration and then for every lesson throughout the day. Should a student not be in registration, they should be marked absent; however, if form tutors are aware of any appointments elsewhere, in or out of academy, these should be recorded using the relevant code. All academies follow the Department for Education guidance on the use of attendance codes and do not deviate from this.
- 12.2 There is very little post-registration truancy in any of our academies; however, staff must take a register in every lesson. If a member of staff suspects that a student is missing from the lesson, then they should notify the Attendance Team and DSL immediately. The absence register is emailed out to all key staff.

13.0 Strategies for promoting high attendance

Academy Leaders promote a variety of strategies for high attendance. Strategies referred to in the DfE recently published papers are also



used in order to maximise attendance and improve the life chances of all children:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities

- 13.1 Outstanding achievement can only be achieved if it is recognised to be everyone's shared responsibility.
- 13.2 Trustees will:
- scrutinise attendance key performance indicators at their Board meeting four times a year (including elective home education, managed moves in and out, fixed term exclusion and the use of alternative provision)
 - hold the Executive to account for explaining patterns of attendance within and between academies
- 13.3 The executive will:
- scrutinise the use of attendance codes in academies
 - oversee decisions regarding elective home education and permanent exclusion
- 13.4 The academy leadership team will:
- form positive relationships with students and families
 - ensure that there is a whole academy approach which reinforces good attendance
 - monitor the implementation of the Attendance policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
 - ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006, and other attendance related legislation is complied with
 - ensure that there is a named member of the academy leadership team to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resources
 - return academy attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
 - ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site, are implemented (see academy expectations)
 - ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence and is then interpreted to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
 - develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families
- 13.5 Class teachers will:
- rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually
 - emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
 - promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate pupils to be in the classroom
 - promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions
 - apply rewards and sanctions consistently
 - follow up on absence and lateness with pupils to identify barriers and reasons for absence
 - contact parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality
 - review form or tutor group attendance weekly to share data, identify issues, intervene early and help set targets
 - periodically review practice and consistency both across and between departments
 - proactively promote attendance practice as part of staff induction
 - consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of students
 - actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their families
 - form positive relationships with students and families
 - comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006, and other attendance related legislation
 - contribute to the evaluation of academy strategies and interventions
 - work with other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families



14.0 Attendance monitoring

- 14.1 The attendance officer monitors child absence on a daily basis.
- 14.2 Families are expected to call the academy in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see above).
- 14.3 If a student's absence goes below 90%, the student will be formally monitored with family involvement.
- 14.4 The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall attendance rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the child will be classified as a persistent absentee.
- 14.5 Our trust and academies will monitor persistent absence and 'low attendance', (this is defined as overall absence being greater than or equal to 5%).
- 14.6 Student-level absence data is collected each cycle by our trust. The underlying academy-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with trustees.

15.0 Legal sanctions

- 15.1 Our academies will work hard to engage with all our families to ensure that, where attendance of a student is a concern, appropriate support is identified and implemented, where appropriate and where possible. We expect that all families will engage positively with support and that attendance will improve as a result. However, as a last resort, the academy will refer to the local authority who can issue a fixed penalty notice. If the unauthorised absence exceeds the local authority threshold for a fixed term penalty notice the LEA may instigate legal proceedings for an offence under s.444 of the 1996 Education Act. In exceptional cases this can lead to a custodial sentence of up to 3 months and / or a fine up to £2,500. (Where the child is of compulsory school age).
- 15.2 If issued with a penalty notice, families must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.
- 15.3 The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:
 - a 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 child is found in a public place during academy hours without a justifiable reason

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



Appendix 1 - Attendance codes

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

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

Authorised absence

C	Authorised leave of absence	Child has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Child has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Child has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	Academy has been notified that a child will be absent due to illness
M	Medical / dental appointment	Child is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Child is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 child is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Child from a Traveller community whose parents are travelling for occupational purposes and have been granted leave of absence by the academy

Unauthorised absence

G	Unauthorised holiday	Child is on a holiday that was not approved by the academy
N	Reason not provided	Child 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	The academy is not satisfied with reason for child's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Child arrived at the academy after the register closed



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

