



# Attendance Policy

This is a Trust Policy – details specific to individual academies and their procedures are added by the Academy in *Appendix A*.

*(For a copy of the policy for a specific academy which includes Appendix A – see individual academy websites).*

Date	Revision & Amendment Details	By Whom
November 2023	Review and Approval	Central Executive
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## 1. Introduction

Peterborough Diocese Education Trust's (the Trust) vision is:

***'For every child, within our Trust, to experience an excellent education and to realise their God-given potential to flourish.'***

*'The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.'*

In order to achieve our vision, children need to be consistently and regularly attending their academy. Therefore, underpinned by our Christian values, the Trust is committed to creating a culture of calm, orderly, safe and supportive environments in our academies where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. It is also recognised that for the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Such a culture will ensure our pupils get the most out of their academy experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

For the purpose of this policy:

A **parent** means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person, and
- Any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

**Poor attendance:** is a generic term for attendance below 96%

**At risk in terms of absence means:** attendance 90.1% - 95.9% (inclusive)

**Persistent absence means:** attendance  $\leq$ 90%

**Severely absent means:** attendance  $\leq$  50%

**Irregular attendance:** a child's attendance will be deemed to be irregular if they are taken out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (83.33%) over a period of six weeks

Pupils can be both severely and persistently absent and both can constitute irregular attendance.

This policy also applies to children of non-statutory school age who are on the roll of the academy.

This policy will be published on each academy's website and parents will be sent a copy of it with any initial information when pupils join the academy and reminded of it at the beginning of each academy year and when it is updated.

## 2. Purpose

This policy sets out the Trust's expectations and approach in relation to attendance and the improving of attendance across the Trust. The individual academy's approach to specific elements is set out in Academy Specific Information - *Appendix A*.

## 2.1 Culture and Environment

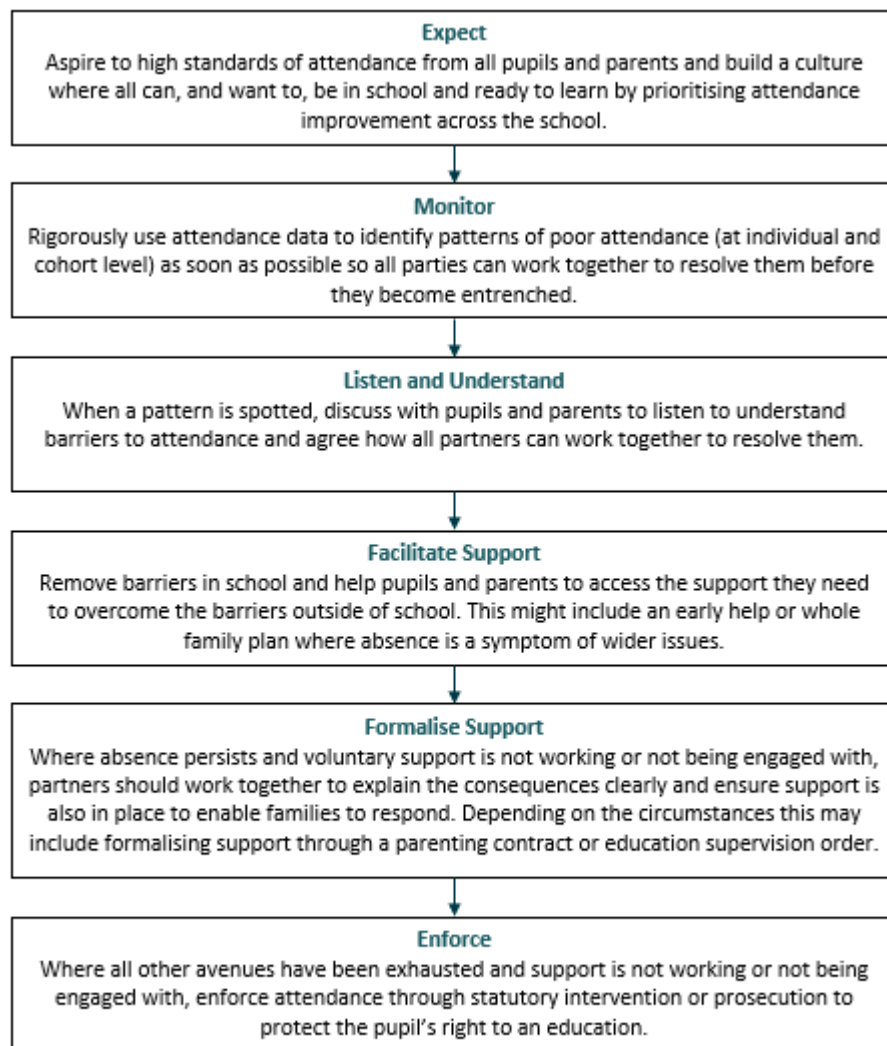
The policy is based on Prevention, Early Intervention, and Targeted Support as set out in '[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)' (see flow chart attached at *paragraph 6.1*) and aims to ensure that each academy in the Trust:

- Consistently promotes the benefits of good / high attendance
- Sets high expectations for every pupil
- Communicates expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents
- Systematically analyses data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts; and
- Works effectively with the local authority and other partners to overcome barriers to attendance.

## 2.2 Community

The Trust is committed to working together to improve attendance and this policy aims to ensure that the academy works collaboratively with local partners, pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

The academy will work with other partners as set out in the flow chart below:



Reference: [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) page 8, paragraph 13

### 3. Legislation and Statutory Requirements

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at an academy or by education otherwise than at an academy.

Where parents decide to have their child registered an academy, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that academy regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the academy is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the academy.

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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 / academy 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.

This policy complies with the Trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Academy Governance Committees (AGCs)

AGCs are responsible for reviewing and approving, [Appendix A](#) to this policy.

### 4.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Leading the creation and reinforcement of the culture set out in this policy, ensuring it permeates through every aspect of academy life
- Implementing measures to secure good levels of attendance. These measures should aim to:
  - recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the academy's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life
  - recognise the interplay between attendance and wider academy improvement efforts, building it into strategies for attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged pupils (including use of pupil premium)
  - recognise improving attendance is an academy leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in the academy including:
    - offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
    - evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
    - oversight of data analysis
    - communicating messages to pupils and parents
    - making sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need
    - making sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding
    - setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels. In doing so, helping parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It should also include clarity on the short and long-term consequences of poor attendance
    - visibly demonstrating the benefits of good attendance throughout academy life; this may include in displays, collective worship or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance – *see section 8*

- recognising that attendance is never ‘solved’ and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies; and
- recognising children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation
- Reviewing *Appendix A* of this policy to ensure it reflects their individual academy’s approach to attendance, and for recommending approval of *Appendix A* to the AGC.

### 4.3 Teachers and Staff

All staff should understand:

- The importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances
- The law and requirements of schools / academies including on the keeping of registers
- The academy’s / Trusts’ strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance
- The processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

Staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders should also:

- Have the necessary skills to:
  - interpret and analyse attendance data
  - support pupils to overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

### 4.4 Parents / Carers

Parents / Carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends on time every day the academy is open
- Notify the academy before the time stated in *Appendix A* when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness; unplanned absence) and on each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Book any medical appointments around the academy day where possible
- Provide the academy with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- If their child is at risk of becoming persistently absent:
  - work with the academy and local authority to help them understand their child’s barriers to attendance; and
  - proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support
- If their child is persistently / severely absent:
  - work with the academy and local authority to help them understand their child’s barriers to attendance; and

- proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

#### 4.5 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend the academy every day on time.

### 5. Attendance Expectations

**High standards of attendance and punctuality are expected from all pupils and it is the expectation that these are supported by parents.**

The academy will proactively manage (as set out below) and endeavour to improve attendance across the academy community.

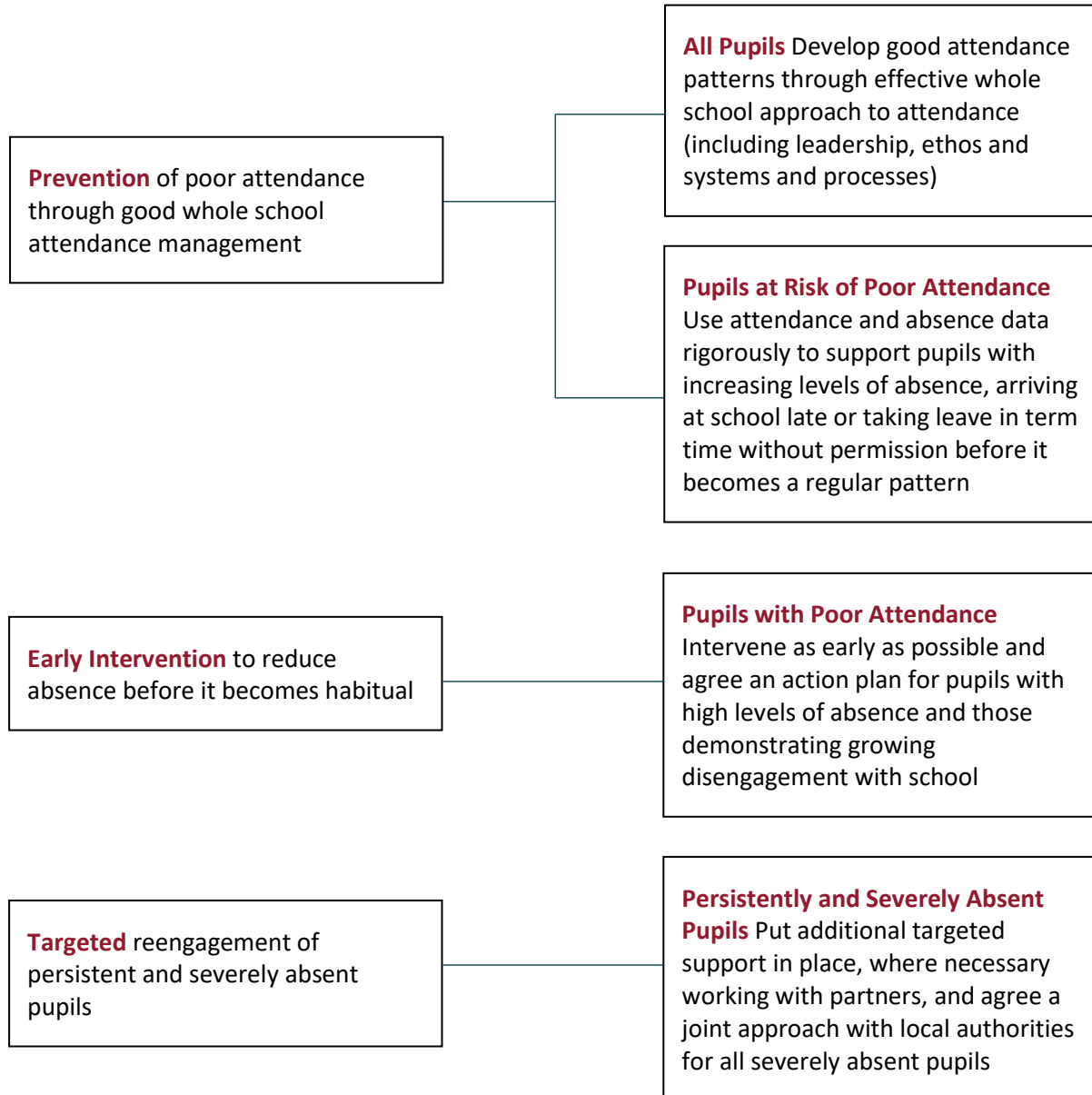
For details of what constitutes at risk in terms of absence, persistent absence, severe absence and irregular attendance– see the Introduction to this policy – paragraph 1. Pupils can be both severely and persistently absent and both can constitute irregular attendance.



## 6. Attendance Management and Improvement

### 6.1 Prevention, Early Intervention, and Targeted Support Flow Chart

The following flow chart provides a summary of effective attendance management and improvement.



## 6.2 Day to Day Process for Managing Attendance

- **Contact Details of Academy Staff in Relation to Attendance:**  
Information and contact details of the staff who:
  - Parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis
  - Parents should contact for more detailed support on attendance
  - In the academy is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance (*Appendix A*).
  
- **Admission and Attendance Registers:**
  - Academies must accurately complete admission and attendance registers. (*Full details on keeping admission registers and attendance registers can be found in [Working together to improve school attendance](#) – sections 7 and 8 respectively*)
  - Attendance registers will be taken at the start of each morning session of each day and once at the beginning of each afternoon session.
  
- **Punctuality and Lateness:**
  - The start of the academy’s morning session is as set out in *Appendix A*
  - The attendance register will close 30 minutes after the start of the academy’s morning session. Any pupil arriving during this 30 minute period will be recorded in the attendance register with code L
  - Any pupil attending after close of the register will be considered as unauthorised and marked in the attendance register with code U for that session (i.e. for the full morning session).

For details of the individual academy’s procedures for managing and reducing lateness – see *Appendix A*.

- **Unplanned Absence:**
  - Parents must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence (e.g. sickness) by the time specified in *Appendix A* or as soon as practically possible by calling the academy office. For details of specific procedures for an individual academy – See *Appendix A*
  - Absence due to illness will be marked as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness
  - If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask the parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor’s note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. They will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily
  - If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified.
  
- **Process for Dealing with Unexplained Absence:**
  - The academy’s day to day processes for managing unexplained absence, for example first day calling and follow up can be found in *Appendix A*.
  
- **Process for requesting leave of absence:**
  - Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Academies should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request
  - If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from the academy
  - As headteachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is very unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

For details of an individual academy's process for requesting leave of absence – see *Appendix A*.

- **Dentist / Medical appointments:**
  - The authorisation of dentist /medical appointments within the school day are at the Headteacher's discretion and the expectation is that evidence of such appointments is provided prior to the appointment except for those pupils where their attendance is below 90%, when evidence of appointments **must** be provided.
  
- **Flexi- Schooling:**
  - The responsibility for a child receiving a full-time education while they are of statutory school age lies with the parents. When parents educate a child partly at school and partly at home or elsewhere, as an expression of parental preference, this is called flexi-schooling. This can be a long-term arrangement or a short-term measure for a particular reason. Flexi-schooling is a legal option provided that the headteacher at the academy concerned agrees to the arrangement.

For further details – see the *Trust's Flexi-Schooling Policy*.

### 6.3 Process for Managing and Reducing Poor Attendance / Persistent Absence

- Attendance data will be monitored and rigorously scrutinised every short term to identify poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) so all parties can work together to resolve any issues before they become entrenched
- In the event of an individual pupil's absence falling below 96% (calculated cumulatively) the process set out in *Appendix B1* will be followed
- **In all cases** when a pattern of poor attendance / persistent absence is identified, the academy will:
  - discuss with pupils (if appropriate) and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them
  - endeavour to remove barriers and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome any barriers outside of the academy. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues
- **Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with:**
  - the academy will work with partners to explain to the parents the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond; and
  - depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order
- **Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with,** the academy will notify the local authority who may enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education
- For information on formal support and statutory intervention – see the chart at *Appendix B2*
- **Home visits** - If as part of managing attendance a home visit is deemed necessary, this will only be undertaken following an appropriate risk assessment and will never be conducted by a lone member of staff.

### 6.4 Process for Managing and Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence – Targeted and Formal Support

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school / academy (equivalent to one day or more a fortnight across a full academy year), the academy will work with the local authority to

put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, the academy should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of the academy as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus will be given to pupils who are absent from the academy more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school / academy). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in the academy or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. The academy will therefore work with all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in the academy.

## **7. Individual Pupils and Pupil Cohorts with Specific Needs**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. However, in working with their parents to improve attendance, the academy will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed
- Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed
- Working with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed
- Working with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day
- Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines and lunchtime arrangements
- Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed
- Considering whether a time-limited phased return to the academy would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about academy attendance
- Ensuring data is regularly monitored for these groups including at Trust Board / Committee meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority.

In all cases, academies should be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents. They should talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

## 8. Promoting and Incentivising Good Attendance

Good attendance is a learned behaviour. It is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the academy's ethos and culture. Therefore:

- The academy will visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, collective worship or in registration periods
- Where used sensitively and without discrimination, the academy will utilise praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group or class-based level (e.g. weekly rewards for best attendance). In order to avoid any possible discrimination, the expectation is that there will not be individual rewards.

Details of ways the academy promotes and incentivises good attendance can be found in *Appendix A*.

## 9. Legal Sanctions – Unauthorised Absence

It is an offence for a child to be absent from school without authorisation. Sanctions can include:

- Parents being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the local authority – this is a fine of £60 per parent if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 per parent if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice
- Prosecution under the Education Act 1996:
  - a fine of up to £1000 where a child is absent without authorisation (Section 441(1));
  - a fine of up to £2,500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months where a child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the absence and failed to act (Section 441 (1A))

If an academy deems a child's attendance to be irregular (see definition on page 3 – paragraph 1) it will consider referral to the local authority and this could result in one of the sanctions above.

## 10. Monitoring and Evaluating Attendance

### 10.1 Academy Level

The academy will:

- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance (including punctuality) and absence data to identify patterns and trends and individual pupils, cohorts and groups that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place

- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to identified pupils and families
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This should include analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes and days of poor attendance. The academy should decide which cohorts of pupils should be included in their data analysis based on their context and academy population. This may include: boys and girls, year groups, pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, pupils with a social worker or who are looked-after by the local authority, pupils eligible for free school meals, and any pupils from backgrounds (including ethnicities, religions or beliefs, or sexual orientations where applicable) in the academy community that have, or have historically had, lower attendance than their peers
- Benchmark their attendance data (at whole academy, year group and cohort level) against Trust, local/regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher-than-average absence or for pupils eligible for free school meals if their attendance falls behind that of their more advantaged peers
- Monitor in the data the impact of academy wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the Trust Board and to those with specific delegated responsibilities for monitoring attendance in the Trust i.e. Academy Improvement Officers.

## 10.2 Trust Level

The Trust recognises the importance of academy attendance and will:

- Promote it across the academies ethos and policies
- Ensure academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review and monitor attendance data, identify, discuss, and challenge trends (to identify common issues and barriers), and help academy leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- For academies that are struggling with their attendance, work with academy leaders to develop a comprehensive attendance action plan to improve attendance which is evaluated and reviewed regularly. This may form part of the academy's Academy Improvement Plan and may not need to be a separate document
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across academies.

## 11. Reintegration

- The academy will support pupils back into the academy following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps
- Following a period of prolonged absence, the academy may carry out a phased reintegration for a pupil, but this should not exceed two weeks.

## 12. Monitoring Arrangements of the Policy

This Attendance Policy will be reviewed by the Trust (and *Appendix A* by the Headteacher and AGC) every year.

## 13. Links with Other Policies

This attendance policy is linked to the following policies:

- [Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Exclusions Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy](#)
- [SEND Policy](#)
- [Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy](#)
- [Equalities Statement.](#)

## Appendix A - Academy Specific Information

<b>Name of Academy / School:</b>	
<b>Name of Person at the Academy with Responsibility for Strategic Approach to Attendance:</b>	
<b>Name of Member of Staff to Contact regarding Absence on a Day-to-Day Basis:</b>	Please contact school office.
<b>Name of Member of Staff to Contact for More Detailed Support on Attendance:</b>	Please contact school office.

### Vision and Values:

*[Insert details and include a positive statement about your academy's approach to attendance.]*

### Times:

<b>Registration session opens:</b>	
<b>Register closes:</b>	
<b>Afternoon Session start time:</b>	

### Promoting and Incentivising Good Attendance:

In our academy we *[Insert details]*

### Process for Notification of Unplanned Absence:

*[Insert details e.g. notify x by y time on first day etc.]*

### Procedure for Dealing with Unexplained Absence:

*[Insert details of your procedures.]*

### Procedure for Lateness:

*[Insert details of your procedures.]*

### Procedure for Requesting Leave of Absence:

*[Insert details of your procedures.]*



## **Appendix B1 – Process to be Followed When Attendance Falls Below Certain Levels**

**NB** – the DfE guidance refers to ‘severely absent’ as pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). Consequently, pupils can be both severely and persistently absent therefore the same process will apply as below.

### **At Risk Support: Attendance 90.1% - 95.9%**

- At the Headteacher’s discretion notification (via a letter or through an app / text) to be sent to parents / carers informing them of concerns regarding level of absence and impact on learning.
- At the Headteacher’s discretion request a meeting with the parent.

### **Persistent Absenteeism Support: Attendance ≤90%**

At the Headteacher’s discretion to action all or some of the following as appropriate:

- Letter to be sent to parents / carers informing them of a high level of absence accompanied by a request for a meeting
- Attendance targets to be set at meeting for the next five weeks from the date of the meeting
- Parents / carers to be informed that the School Attendance Support Team at the LA will be informed if no improvement
- Consideration to be given to a possible EHA
- All further absences to be reported as unauthorised unless accompanied by evidence (e.g. a doctor’s note). This is to inform the next step of a referral to Education Inclusion Partnership Team (EIPT) / Schools Attendance Support Team (SAST)
- Academy parent contract to put in place
- In the event of non-attendance – targets to be set in absence and parent informed.

### **Continued Persistent Absenteeism Support**

- Letter to be sent to parents / carers informing them of no improvement / targets have not been met / sustained accompanied by a request for a meeting
- Referral to SAST
- Invitation for SAST to attend meeting
- Reconsideration of EHA, as appropriate
- Academy parent contract to be put in place for 6 weeks (signed by child in addition, if appropriate).

### **If academy parenting contract does not sufficiently improve attendance, or there is non-engagement and all other avenues have been exhausted:**

- Proceed to Education Supervision Order, Statutory Children’s Social Care Involvement, Attendance Prosecution, as appropriate – see flow chart at Appendix B2.

## Appendix B2 - Formal Support and Legal Intervention Flow Chart

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

