



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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This policy is based on the Department for Education documents *Working together to improve school attendance* (September 2022) and *Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance* (September 2022).

## 1. EXPECTATIONS

Keystone Academy Trust aspires to high standards of attendance from all pupils, building a culture where all can, and want to, be in school being ready to learn. Improving attendance is a priority for all – school and families.

Attendance %	Description
96 to 100%	Expected attendance
91 to 95%	At risk of persistent absence
80 to 90%	Persistent absence
51 to 79%	At risk of severe absence
50% or below	Severe absence

Every School Day Counts		
Attendance during the school year	Equates to days absent	Which is approximately
97%	6 days	1 week
94%	10 days	2 weeks
90%	19 days	4 weeks
85%	29 days	6 weeks
80%	38 days	8 weeks
75%	48 days	10 weeks
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks
65%	67 days	13.5 weeks

### Pupils will:

- Attend school every day
- Arrive on time and be in the classroom by the allocated start of the school day

### Parents will:

- Ensure their child attends school every day that it is open.
- Ensure your child arrives at school on time (8:45am).
- Let the school know as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (for example, sickness). (See Appendix 1)
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. (See Appendix 2)
- Book any medical appointments outside of the school day where possible.
- Ensure the school holds up to date contact details.

**Each school will:**

- Ensure that this policy is shared with and understood by all staff, pupils and parents via the school website.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Ensure contact details for parents are regularly updated.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Recognise 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.

**Local Governing Boards will:**

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.

**Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance****Parents will:**

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.

**Schools will:**

- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure communication with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities

**Local Governing Boards will:**

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

**Support for pupils with a social worker****Parents will:**

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.

**Schools will:**

- Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register

**Local Governing Boards will:**

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

## **2. INCENTIVES AND REWARDS**

In building a culture of good school attendance, all schools are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include displays, assemblies or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form and individual level.
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced.

## **3. MONITORING**

Schools within Keystone Academy Trust will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance. They will:

- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Work with the Trust Attendance Officer to ensure processes are in place to monitor attendance and advice on working with families to improve attendance of specific pupils.

## **4. LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

If, when monitoring, a pattern is spotted, schools will discuss with pupils and parents in order to understand barriers to attendance and agree how families and school can work together to resolve them.

## **5. FACILITATE SUPPORT**

By listening and understanding, schools aim to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an Early Help or whole Family Plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

In communicating with parents, schools should discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family and wherever possible the person should be kept consistent.

## **Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (between 91 and 95%)**

### **Parents will:**

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.

### **Schools will:**

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners.
- Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service.
- Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

### **Local Governing Boards will:**

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

## **Persistently absent pupils (80% to 90%)**

### **Parents will:**

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

### **Schools will:**

- Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers.
- Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care. Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

### **Local Governing Boards will:**

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

## **6. FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, professional partners beyond the school should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

## **Pupils at risk of becoming severely absent (51% to 79%)**

### **Parents will:**

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary Early Help Plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

### **Schools will:**

- Agree a joint approach for all pupils at risk of severely absenteeism with the local authority, via the Emotionally Based School Avoidance Ladder..

### **Local Governing Boards will:**

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

## **Severely absent pupils (50% and below)**

### **Parents will:**

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

### **Schools will:**

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

### **Local Governing Boards will:**

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

## **7. ENFORCE**

When all avenues of support have been exhausted, where support is not working or not being engaged with The Trust will **enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.**

This will include:

- Understand and make use of formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders and use them fairly and consistently.
- Set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used where voluntary support is not appropriate, or where absence was not for legitimate reasons and support has not been engaged with and/or been successful.
- Secure effective joint working between the School Attendance Officer and statutory children's social care services to work together where there are safeguarding concerns or absence becomes severe. This should include building attendance expectations into children in need and child protection plans where appropriate or considering developing a plan as an intensification of support where formalised attendance support (such as an education supervision order) is no longer sufficient or has not been effective.
- Issue fixed penalty notices in line with local codes of conduct where absence was unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

- Take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.



## APPENDIX 1

### REPORTING ABSENCE

#### First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent, parents must contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence **by telephone** or in writing (e.g. e-mail to designated school attendance email account, year group accounts or by letter) with an explanation of the absence. Alternatively, parents can call into school and report to reception in person.

If a child is absent, the school will:

- contact parents on the first day of absence if school has not received a message – schools have a duty to ensure every child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. Schools must remind parents to provide up to date contact details.
- invite parents in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer/pastoral leaders or a member SLT team if absences persist.

Where a child has an allocated social worker, contact will be made with the relevant social worker on day 1.

The above process will follow for day 2 absences where no message has been received.

#### Third day absence

**Please note:** If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence, the school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family. At this point school staff may carry out a home visit to ensure the well-being of the child.

#### Tenth day absence

Schools have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is **at risk of missing education**.

#### Continued or ongoing absence

If a child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, The Trust monitors all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Department for Education. Any pupil who is persistently absent will be monitored and put on an action plan, if required. The Trust Attendance Officer, SLT or an Education Welfare Officer will meet with pupils, and their families whose attendance cause concern. Where necessary, home visits are made to discuss ways attendance could be improved and the barriers that may need removing:

This could include:

- Agreeing an attendance support plan
- Signing a home/school contract
- Signposting to outside agencies
- Attending attendance matters clinics

In situations of persistent absence,, a parent / carer may be fined.

### **A welcome back**

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Include details of how catch-up work will be organised.

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
  - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

If the authenticity of an illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carers 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 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.

## **EXAMPLES OF AUTHORISED ABSENCES- other than illness or medical/dental**

### **Religious observance**

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

### **Removal of a Child from School**

If a child is leaving the school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

1. Give the school comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and new address and telephone numbers, the child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to the school in writing.
2. Arrange a meeting to discuss home education. We strongly discourage parents from this option and would aim to work with parents to keep their child in school.

If pupils leave and the school do not have the above information, the child is considered to be a **child missing in education**. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child. These investigations can be avoided by parents providing the above information.

### **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling**

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

### **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, and Showman families**

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

## Absence Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

<b>X</b>	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school	
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil 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)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
<b>Z</b>	Prospective pupil not on admission register	To enable schools to set up registers of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens
<b>#</b>	Planned whole or partial school closure	

## Appendix 2

### REQUESTING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, **no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.** Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds the parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.