



**SOUTH ESSEX
ACADEMY TRUST**

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SEAT Attendance POLICY

Original policy ratified by the Directors: 4th July 2018

Amended: March 2019

Review Date: September 2019

A paper copy of this policy is available at the Academy office.

Statement of Intent

South Essex Academy Trust is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all its pupils. We believe there are benefits to pupils throughout their lives from teaching them good attendance and punctuality are crucial life skills. As an Academy, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

Each Academy will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong Home/School links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance.

If there are problems that affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve these problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. Parents are expected to attend meetings with School/Local Authority where attendance is of concern. Contact via telephone or Intervention letters will be sent to parents/carers when attendance falls below 97% as part of the school's attendance procedure.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken by the Local Authority. Parent/Carers are committing an offence if they fail to make sure their child attends school regularly even if they are missing school without their knowledge. Parents who are found guilty of being in breach of the Education Act with regards to irregular school attendance may be taken to court and face fines of up to £2,500 and/or imprisonment. A penalty notice of £60 may be issued by the Local Authority as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if unpaid after 28 days. Failure to pay will lead to further investigation by the Local Authority which may result in prosecution. In addition to a financial penalty, the magistrate may also impose a Parenting Order, which includes the requirement for parents/carers to attend structured parenting Sessions.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, take a register at the start of the morning session, and again for the afternoon session. Schools have been required to use statutory registration codes since September 2006.

Schools, after making appropriate checks, are to report all children missing from education to the Local Authority. This is in line with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 part 6). The Local Authority will investigate the whereabouts of such children and will help and support their prompt return to suitable education.

Important Information related to Attendance

- If a child misses two weeks of school they have missed, on average, 50 hours of education.
- If an Academy can improve attendance by 1%, attainment will also improve by 5-6%.
- 90% attendance is equal to half a day missed every week.
- If your child has one week off per term for their entire academic life they will have missed one whole year of education.
- One school year at 90% attendance equals four weeks of missed lessons.

Staff Responsible for Processes

The Headteacher is responsible for attendance issues and will be provided with attendance reports on a regular basis to identify any attendance/punctuality concerns. The Headteacher will meet regularly with the Attendance and/or Student Support Officer to discuss any attendance/punctuality concerns.

The School Office is responsible for ensuring that registers are kept safely and are available for inspection to relevant professionals, and is responsible for logging attendance information onto the computerised system.

The class teacher is responsible for taking the register daily, once for the AM session and once for the PM session. The class teacher is also responsible for register maintenance of his or her own class register. These include the following:

- using the correct codes;
- ensuring that symbols used are appropriate;
- ensuring all mistakes are amended;
- ensuring the registers are completed promptly for use in an emergency situation – i.e. during a fire procedure.

The Academy will ensure that all staff are aware of the registration process and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law as required. Each pupil should be called by name when the register is being taken.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Academy expects pupils to attend school regularly, be on time, and properly equipped, ready to learn.
- The Academy will encourage good attendance and will communicate with parents if there is a problem with attendance or punctuality.
- The Academy staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
- The Academy will work in partnership with parents/carers and pupils to resolve issues that affect attendance or punctuality as quickly as possible.
- The Academy will include in reports to parents/carers on achievement, pupil's attendance at least annually.
- Pupils will be listened to and respected.
- Pupils will have individual records of attendance/punctuality acknowledged by the Academy.
- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child regularly and punctually attends school, properly dressed, equipped and in an appropriate condition to learn.
- Parents/carers are responsible for immediately informing the Academy of the reason for any absence by telephone, e-mail (or text message if applicable to the Academy) on the first morning of any absence **before 9.15am** and every subsequent day of absence thereafter. Failure to do so could result in an unauthorised absence.
- If attendance problems do develop, the Academy expects parents/carers to work actively with Academy staff and the Attendance & Student Support Officer to solve them.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and the DFEE Circular No.10/99 states that parents/carers may not authorise absence, only schools can do this.

EXAMPLES (this is **not** an exhaustive list)

Absence for the following reasons could be **authorised** where parents have confirmed the absence by telephone, e-mail or writing prior to the absence.

- Sickness
- **Emergency** medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances i.e. bereavement
- If permission for absence has been granted in advance by the head teacher
- Transport arranged by the Local Authority has failed to arrive where the pupil lives beyond statutory walking distance

NB: Medical Appointments (GP, hospital, dentist, optician etc.) – The Academy ask that such appointments are made outside of school hours, however if this is not possible the Academy would expect pupils to attend school before/after the appointment. Medical evidence should always be provided in order for the absence to be authorised.

Absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** when due to:

- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Slept late
- No uniform
- Looking after brothers or sisters or unwell parents
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Unapproved holidays

It may be necessary for the Academy or the Attendance Officer to ask the parent/carer to provide the Academy with written evidence of reason for absence, e.g.

- Appointment cards/letters
- Medical certificate
- Letter from GP

NB: Minor ailments (as defined by NHS), such as coughs/colds, sore throats, headaches, stomach aches etc. are not considered to necessitate time off school and absences due to these may not be authorised.

If there is an extensive period of absence due to medical reasons, the Academy or the Attendance Officer may ask for the permission of the parent/carer to contact the child's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the child from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the child.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a ‘**persistent absentee**’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child’s education and we need a parent/carer’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority, Family Solutions or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Term Time Leave of Absence

Parents do not have a right to take children on holiday in term time. Taking a child out of school during term time could be detrimental to their educational progress. A pupil who takes 10 days absence will only attain 94.7% attendance in the year. 10 days absence also means the pupil will miss 50 hours of education.

There is no entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time; however, they may apply to the Academy for leave of absence if they believe there are exceptional circumstances. Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the Academy. As from 1st September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended Regulation 7 prohibits the proprietor of an Academy from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advance application has been made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

If a parent requests leave of absence during term time an ‘Application for Leave of Absence During Term Time’ form must be completed together with a letter outlining the exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine whether the leave can be granted and the number of school days a child can be away from school.

If the absence is not authorised and the leave is still taken, the case will be referred to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school. If the penalty is not paid within the timescale, the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority will then institute legal proceedings in the magistrate’s court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure a child attends school regularly.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2, Part 6) the Academy will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, which has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued applies to pupils of statutory school age (SSA). Essex partners have agreed to use penalty notices for the following circumstances (Essex code of Conduct)

- Penalty notices for irregular school attendance/unauthorised leave of absence
- ❖ Penalty notices may be issued where there has been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous ten school weeks. This includes unauthorised late arrivals, coded U, which counts as unauthorised absence for the whole session. In addition to the above criteria, due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, penalty notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised leave of absence during the first two weeks of September due to a term-time holiday. Discretion will be used to enable up to two penalty notices to be issued to each parent for each child within a twelve month period. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance the Local Authority's legal intervention process will be used.

Children Missing from Education

Pupils who have been missing from school/academy without any explanation from parents/carers will be considered by the school/academy to be a Child Missing From Education (CME). Safeguarding interventions such as an unannounced home visit by school/academy staff or a request for a Police Welfare check will be considered by the school/academy in order to ensure the safeguarding of all our pupils. It may also be necessary to liaise with social care and the Local Authority, therefore it is of paramount importance that parents/carers adhere to the school/academy first day contact procedures and notify the school/academy before 9:15am on each day of absence. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, Regulation 4, requires schools/academies and Local Authorities to jointly make reasonable enquiries to locate a child who is missing from education.

Registration Times

The Academy will complete accurate registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

Registration will close 15 mins after individual Academies start time. If a child arrives after these times they will be marked with an 'L'. If a child arrives after registration closes they will be marked with a 'U'. This code means 'Late after registration closes' and is an unauthorised absence.

Parents/carers should be aware that penalty notices can also be issued for persistent late arrival after the close of registers ('U' code).

The Academies across the trust have different registration times, listed below:-

	Morning Registration	Afternoon Registration
Westwood Academy	9:00am – 9:15am	1:10pm – 1:25pm
Bardfield Academy	KS1 and EYFS: 8:45am - 9:00am KS2: 8:40am – 8.55am	KS1 and EYFS: 12:40pm – 12.55pm Years 4 and 5: 12:40pm - 12:55pm Years 3 and 6: 1:00pm - 1:15pm
Winter Gardens	8:45am – 9:00am	KS1 and EYFS: 12:45pm - 1:00pm KS2: 1:00pm - 1:15pm
Parkwood Academy	8:45am – 9.00am	1:00pm – 1:15pm
Kents Hill Academy	8:55am – 9:10am	1:00pm – 1:15pm

Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality

- Expectations are made clear to parents with regard to attendance and punctuality in a variety of ways, e.g. at the induction meeting, website, Academy Information Leaflet and newsletters.
- Opportunities to maintain awareness through newsletters, parents' evenings and pupil reports will be used.
- Parents, pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Pupils with a known attendance problem being admitted to the Academy will be interviewed with the parents and will be set targets for improvement.
- Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality.
- All issues which may cause a pupil to experience attendance difficulties will be investigated by the Academy, and supported, i.e. temporary need for taxi transport etc.
- The Academy will have regular meetings with appropriate staff in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

The Academy also actively promotes and implements reward systems to recognise and encourage good attendance of all students in accordance with the Equality Act 2010; recognising the attendance achievements of pupils who suffer with diagnosed health conditions.

- There are special weekly, termly and annual assemblies to celebrate pupils who have achieved 100% attendance, including stickers and certificates.
- The Academy encourages punctuality with a range of stickers, certificates and reward charts.
- Every week, the class with the highest overall attendance wins the Academy's attendance 'mascot', which they retain in their classroom for the following week. Also on a weekly basis (Bardfield and Winter Gardens) children may be rewarded with a H.E.R.O badge (Here Everyday Ready On time).
- Children achieving 100% attendance each Term will receive a reward.
- At the end of the academic year, every child with 100% attendance is rewarded with a prize/school trip.

Summary

The Academy has a legal duty to promote good attendance and prepare pupils for their lives beyond school. Equally, parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly. All staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils, as this are the best way to ensure the highest level of attendance for our school/academy community.

Review of the Attendance Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually but may be subject to changes in local and national policy.

To be revised September 2019