



CONNECTED LEARNING Attendance Policy

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**Each academy school must enter details as relevant to them where indicated
in red or elsewhere if required**

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction and background

Connected Learning recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our Trust's ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

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

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help the school to focus on this it will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in school newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- Contact parent/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates or whatever is relevant for your school

3. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Any pupil whose attendance is below 96% (evidence that the pupil has attended a doctor’s or medical appointment should be provided to the school. Copies of letters for appointments for regular/ongoing issues should be provided to the school).

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then the school will work with that family to understand the root problem. **The school can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the Parental Support Adviser.**

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s education and the school need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

All absences and the reasons given are monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA Mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and the parent/carers will be informed immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully; this will be monitored in combination with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. A separate data file is updated termly.

In response to strategies with persistent absentees and parents that have not notified the school of a pupil’s absence within the expected time (before alerting the LA’s Children Missing in Education (CME) Officer), the following is to be undertaken:

- Office will text the parent
- Family Support Worker or designated member of staff will post a note through the parents’ door asking them to contact the school and inform them of the whereabouts of the child/children (they will travel in pairs but will not enter the property)

At 10 days the school has a statutory duty to inform the CME Officer.

5. Absence Procedures

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.00 am. **The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call**

- Or they can call into school and report to reception.
- If a child is absent the school will:
- Telephone the parent/carer on the first day of absence if there has been no notification
 - Invite the parent/carer in to school to discuss the situation with the **Attendance Officer and/or member of the School Leadership Team**
 - Refer the matter to the CME Investigation Officer if attendance fails to lead to improvement

6. The CME Investigation Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the CME Investigation Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Missing Education and Child Employment Service¹.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Investigation Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and into the wider world.

How lateness is managed in this school:

The school day starts at **8.40 am** and it is expected that children will be in the playground before this time ready to line up **when the whistle is blown**. School gates open at **8.30 am** and close at **8.40 am**.

Any child that does not come through the school gate in the morning (ie arrives after 8.40 am) is late and recorded in the late book. They then have to report to **members of the Inclusion Team at break time** to catch up on any work missed during the morning class time.

At 9am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that the parent / carer could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

¹ Also referred to as the Attendance Compliance Team

If a child has a persistent late record their parent will be asked to meet with a senior member of staff to resolve the problem, but parents can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

8. Holidays in Term Time

Schools have a very full curriculum to follow within the time given and any absence has a negative effect on a child's learning. Whilst it is acknowledged that illness cannot be helped, holidays can be taken during the school closure periods. Each year more and more parents are taking holidays at the correct time realising the importance of the time their children spend in school which is good to see.

Following Government expectations on attendance a Trust decision was made that no leave of absence/holiday will be authorised for any child, irrespective of their attendance, except for 'exceptional' circumstances'. Exceptional circumstances do not include availability of cheap holidays during term time particularly those that overlap with the beginning or end of term. They also do not include extended leave for such events as weddings, birthdays or other family celebrations.

All requests for leave of absence have to be applied for in writing to the Headteacher / Head of School and will be considered on a case by case basis. Forms are available from the school office. A written reply will be sent for all requests.

The Trust is obliged to inform parents/carers that if leave of absence/holidays is taken without authorisation, the school may complete a request for consideration of issuing a penalty notice and send it to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service Attendance Leader². Their Intervention Panel will decide if the issue of a penalty notice is appropriate. If a penalty notice is issued and payment is not made then a prosecution may follow. The penalty for each parent is £60 for each child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice after which Missing Education and Child Employment may prosecute.

Please refer to the link below for further information³

9. Targets

Targets for the school and for classes will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these.

The acceptable minimum level of attendance of any child at this school is 96% attendance.

The Trust's target is to achieve 100% because good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year the school will monitor absences and punctuality to show where improvements need to be made.

10. Summary

² Also referred to as the Attendance Compliance Team

³ https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Attendance_Compliance/Pages/InformationForSchools.aspx

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.