

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>MLT Attendance Policy</b>
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<b>Policy Category</b>  (Please Indicate)	<b>1</b>	<b>Trust/Academies to use without amendment</b>
	<b>2</b>	Academy specific appendices
	<b>3</b>	Academy personalisation required (in highlighted fields)

### Summary of Changes from Previous Version

Version	Date	Author	Note/Summary of Revisions
V1	October 2022	DJA	New policy – Fully revised in line with latest guidance.
V2	November 2023	DJA	Academy specific updates e.g. staff details

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## 1.AIMS

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Each Academy within the Maltby Learning Trust (MLT) encourages 100% attendance and punctuality for all students. The Trust expects all students to attend regularly and arrive at lessons on time, in order to take full advantage and access the full-time educational opportunities they are entitled to. The expectation is that parent/carers will ensure that their child or young person arrives at the Academy on time every day and supports the MLT policies and procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.

In order to achieve excellent attendance, MLT Academies provide welcoming, safe and secure environments where students feel valued. In addition, each Academy works hard to create a stimulating and accessible curriculum with high quality teaching for every student, together with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Attendance is inevitably bound up within the ethos of MLT Academies and the networks of relationships that exist within it.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child or young person's schooling, and regular absence equates to significant lost learning time which will seriously affect their learning and progress. Any child or young person's absence also disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring children and young people attend regularly at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## SAFEGUARDING

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of our Academy, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the curriculum
- Anti-bullying.

Failing to attend our Academy on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

## 2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

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 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 \(Student Registration\) \(England\) 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.

## 3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Local Governance Committee is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of student attendance across the Academy/Trust policies and ethos
- Making sure Academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole Academy
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

### THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the Academy
- Monitoring Academy-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students. Ensure all staff understand their role in ensuring good attendance and punctuality, and in reducing absence including persistent absence
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### THE DESIGNATED SENIOR LEADER RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the Academy
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Provide regular attendance monitoring by Attendance Officers in conjunction with Pastoral, Inclusion and Safeguarding Teams, including acting early to address patterns of absence
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families
- Ensure students with good and rapidly improving attendance and/or punctuality are recognised and rewarded
- Ensure students with poor attendance and/or punctuality are investigated through Academy referral procedures and challenged through Academy and Local Authority sanctions
- Ensure parent/carers are supported to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and are punctual in attending at the start of the school day and in secondary Academies, at the start of each lesson
- Ensure students and their parent/carers are made aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and are informed of the consequences when it is not. Give parent/carers details on attendance through the website and the Academy app
- Report to parent/carers regularly on how their child is performing in the Academy, what their attendance and punctuality rates are and how these relate to their attainment, progress and Academy target
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through year group, House, class competitions, certificates and commendations
- Run promotional events when parent/carers, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the Academy.

The designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Mr D Meyerhoff and can be contacted via 01709 760222 Ext 169 or alternatively dmeyerhoff@wathacademy.com

## THE ATTENDANCE TEAM

The attendance team is responsible for:

- Carefully monitoring the attendance and punctuality of all students
- Identify any attendance problems and students who are at risk of persistent absence
- Liaise closely with pastoral, inclusion and/or safeguarding staff as well as the Principal to support attendance and punctuality initiatives. Working with Education Welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Principal
- Ensure class teachers and/or Form Tutors liaise proactively with the Attendance team to help identify and address attendance issues
- Take relevant action where attendance is a cause for concern e.g. telephone parent/carers to discuss the problem, make home visits, organise meetings with parent/carers to decide on the appropriate intervention
- Pursue enforcement action where no significant improvement has been made to attendance, as required by the 'Attendance Matters Pathway for Schools' (**see Appendix**

**1.1 and 1.2).** This is the process agreed by the Local Authority and all Rotherham and Doncaster schools to address irregular or non-school attendance

- Advise the Principal (authorised by the Principal) when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- On discovering truancy, the Academy will inform the student's parent/carers and Tutor the same day and appropriate sanctions applied.

The Senior Attendance Officer is Mr G Bramhall and can be contacted via 01709 760222 Ext 187 or alternatively [gkbramhall@wathacademy.com](mailto:gkbramhall@wathacademy.com).

## TEACHING STAFF

Teaching staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the class attendance and report any cause for concern to the Attendance Officer, SLT staff member or the Principal
- Have frequent discussion with students about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Support students who have been absent in making up missed work.

NB. Subject teachers in secondary Academies will follow up suspicious absences by informing the Tutor and Pastoral teams of any discrepancies immediately. They query persistent or frequent absences with the Tutor to ensure that it is not 'selective truancy'.

## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE/OFFICE STAFF

School Administrative/Office staff will:

- Take calls from parent/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parent/carers to the Head of Year/Pastoral lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

## PARENT/CARERS

Parent/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. Wherever possible the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.

Parent/Carers have a legal duty to send their children to school regularly and risk prosecution if they fail in this duty. Only the Academy, within the context of the law, can approve absence. Parent/Carers cannot approve absence.

## STUDENTS

Students are expected to:

- Ensure that they arrive promptly, attend all morning and afternoon sessions and timetabled lessons punctually
- Sign out at Student Reception/Reception and obtain an 'Authorised Absence' slip, which gives proof of their authorisation to be off-site
- Not leave the Academy premises during lunchtime. (Note extensive 'Active Lunchtime' provision and a number of healthy eating outlets are provided).
- Discuss promptly with the Attendance team any problems that may affect their attendance
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Sign in and out of the premises via the central entry/exit system (Sixth Form only).

NB. Permission to leave the site will normally only be given for fixed term exclusion, or authorised medical/dental appointments.

## 4. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

### ATTENDANCE REGISTER

The Academy will keep an attendance register and place all students onto this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

Registers are legal documents and must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct symbols/codes. See **Appendix 2** for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.



The Academy will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school before 8.20a.m. on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.25 a.m. and will be kept open until 9.10 a.m. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:00 and will be kept open until 12.30 p.m.

## UNPLANNED ABSENCE

The student's parent/carer must notify the Academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.20 a.m. or as soon as practically possible by calling the Academy Attendance staff on 01709 760222, option 2, giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child or young person is expected to return. Parent/carers should contact the Academy on each subsequent day of absence.

The Academy will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless it has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the Academy may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the Academy is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

If the absence involves physical injury, with implications upon the student's return to the Academy, a risk assessment will be carried out by the SENDCO for each specific case.

Illness during the school day:

- If a student becomes genuinely unwell during the day, they will be sent to reception by the class teacher (Primary Academies) or by their Teacher/Pastoral Manager (Secondary Academies). Students should not contact parent/carers directly
- Staff will then assess the illness and make decisions about whether parent/carers need to be informed and whether a student will be sent home, wait and/or return to class
- No student should leave the Academy premises for such arising medical reasons without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home)
- In the event of a student being genuinely unwell and unable to continue with the Academy day, contact will be made with parent/carer. In the interest of safeguarding students' arrangements will be made for the student to be collected by parent/carer or another nominated family member
- Appropriate first aid will be administered where deemed necessary by a trained first aider.

## PLANNED ABSENCE

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the Academy in advance of the appointment. The Academy may request evidence of the appointments.

See Appendix 3 which details of how parent/carers should request a leave of absence.

However, we encourage parent/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of the Academy for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the Academy can authorise.

## LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Students arriving after registration time will receive a late mark (L) in the register. If a student is going to be late, parent/carers have a responsibility to inform the Academy of their child's lateness by telephone.

Registers close at 9.10 a.m.:

- Secondary - Students arriving after this time must report to the Attendance office.

A class charts message will be sent to parent/carers before 10.00 a.m. indicating lateness or absence if no contact has been made by parent/carers to explain this.

Secondary:

- Avoidable and persistent lateness in Secondary Academies will result in a detention.
- Students will be challenged for poor punctuality as follows:
  - 'Late to school' (not on site for 8.20 a.m.) will result in a detention (30 minutes after school on the same day)
  - Each 'late to lesson' will result in a late mark adding to the register.
  - If a student has 3 or more 'late to lesson' marks in a week, this will result in the student being placed on a Punctuality Report which will be monitored by the relevant AYL/PYL for that year group. This report must be taken home each evening and signed by the student's parent/carer. If the report is unsuccessful the AYL/PYL will issue a C4 detention

Ultimately, the parent/carer of a child or young person who frequently arrives late at school can be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure their child attends regularly.

## FOLLOWING UP UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

Where any student we expect to attend the Academy does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the Academy will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the Academy cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the Academy will conduct a home visit
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the Academy will consider involving an Education Welfare officer.

## REPORTING TO PARENTS/CARERS

The Academy will regularly inform parent/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly letters. Attendance figures are also included in each Learning Cycle report.

## 5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

### APPROVAL FOR TERM-TIME ABSENCE

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

The Academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form – **see Appendix 4**. The Principal may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent/cares belong. If necessary, the Academy will seek advice from the parent/carers religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Family funeral
- Emergencies and other avoidable causes

- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the Academy, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.

## LEGAL SANCTIONS – FIXED PENALTY NOTICE

The Academy or Local Authority can fine parent/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Principal, Local Authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holiday taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

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

## UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

**Unauthorised absences** are those which Maltby Learning Trust does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parent/carer's keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the register
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Excessive, prolonged or repeated patterns for absence due to illness without medical evidence/ confirmation from a GP or other healthcare professional
- Waiting for a delivery
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Parent/carer's illness.

## LEGAL SANCTION - PROSECUTION FOR PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)** - A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls to 90% or below for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child or young person's educational prospects and the fullest support and co-operation is needed from parent/carers to tackle this.

Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority; parent/carers will be informed of this immediately and remedial action will be taken.

Reducing unauthorised absence from the Academy is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Truancing can also leave a student vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Under existing legislation, parent/carers commit an offence if a child or young person fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason). Parent/carers are legally responsible for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually. This applies even if children are missing school without the knowledge of their parent/carer.

In line with the Local Authority 'Attendance Matters Pathway for Schools' (**see Appendix 1.1 or 1.2**), parent/carers can be prosecuted; fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child or young person attends school regularly and punctually. Alternatively, the Local Authority may supervise a family for at least a year or until attendance improves to a satisfactory level, under the terms of an Education Supervision Order.

## 6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

See **Appendix 5** for the Academy's strategies for promoting attendance.

## 7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

### MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The Academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, half-termly, termly and yearly across the Academy and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The Academy will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Local Governance Committee.

## ANALYSING ATTENDANCE

The Academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

All teachers should look out for any patterns in absence and investigate or report their concerns to the Attendance team and/or Pastoral teams as appropriate. If a student's attendance level drops below 97% the cause will be investigated by the Academy Attendance team who will liaise with parent/carers.

As well as liaising with parent/carers, the Attendance team reports concerns about attendance to the Principal and advises when fixed penalty notices should be issued. The Principal is responsible for ensuring the Attendance policy is implemented consistently across the school and reporting to the Local Governance Committee (LGC). The LGC are responsible for monitoring attendance data for the Academy on at least a termly basis.

## USING DATA TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

The Academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers/form tutors, and other leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

## REDUCING PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The Academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parent/carers of students who the Academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

## MONITORING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY AT OFF SITE PROVISION

Where students attend external provision, weekly registration certificates are received from the external providers. These are monitored and any concerns reported to the Attendance team/Senior Leadership team.

## 8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the Executive Director. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

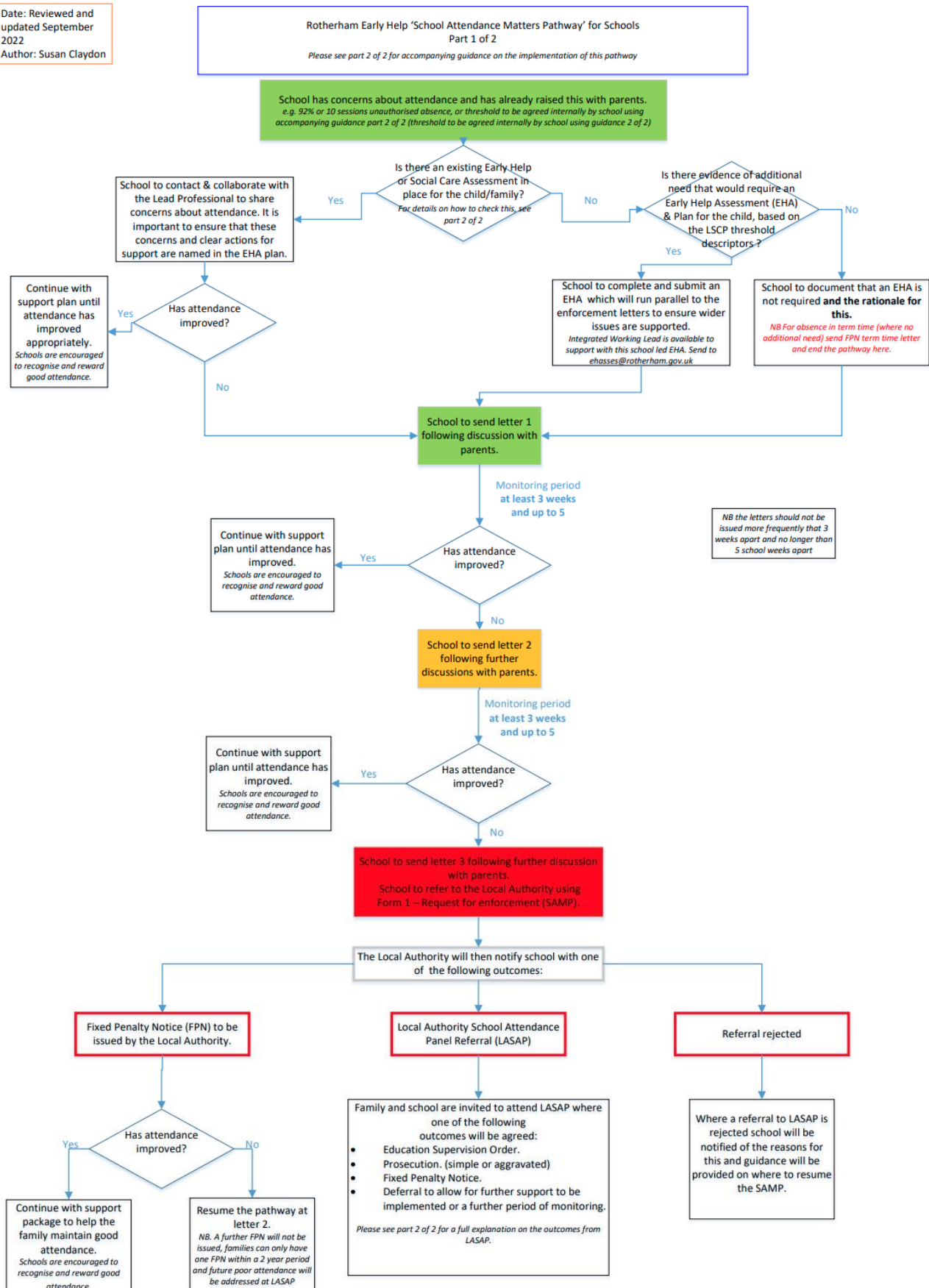
## 9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions
- Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School.

## APPENDIX 1: ROTHERHAM PATHWAY

Date: Reviewed and updated September 2022  
Author: Susan Claydon





## Early Help School Attendance Matters Pathway Guidance for Schools Part 2 of 2. Updated September 22

### INTRODUCTION

This guidance document accompanies the School Attendance Matters Pathway (SAMP) for schools (part 2 of 2). This guidance is intended to assist schools in implementing the SAMP effectively in order to support enhanced school attendance and to trigger enforcement when all strategies have been tried and exhausted.

Enforcement for poor attendance can take place only once a child is of compulsory school age. A child is of "compulsory school age" at the start of the first term that follows their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Whilst poor school attendance cannot be legally enforced for children below compulsory school age, the pathway and subsequent engagement and support is relevant from the first day that a child starts to attend school.

### 1. IDENTIFYING CONCERNS RELATED TO ATTENDANCE

The Local Authority has suggested that the threshold for poor attendance is 92%, or ten sessions of unauthorised absence. This was based on attendance that is approaching the persistent absence rate, which is 90%. It is important to note however that schools are free to apply their own threshold (within reason) and that 92% is not an imposed level. The school must ensure that their School Attendance Policy makes the school target clear to parents/carers when a child secures a school place. It is useful for schools to display SAMP pathway and guidance on the school website for parents to have an awareness that the SAMP is aligned to the school attendance policy.

**Accurately calculating attendance data.** Schools are advised to calculate a child's number of sessions of unauthorised absence, **rather than the overall percentage attendance**, to enable a complete understanding of a child's absence. This is important because the overall percentage attendance will always vary, dependent on the number of available sessions and will also be affected by the length of time since the school year started. **For this reason, a calculation of unauthorised sessions provides the most accuracy.**

The initial step in the SAMP is to have a conversation with the child/parents/carers to discuss concerns about attendance, using methods such as phone calls, meetings, letters, and home visits. Rewards and incentives are another method at school's disposal to encourage regular school attendance.

If a child's attendance falls below the threshold set by school; the school should inform parents and follow the SAMP.

**Pathway Starts.** To start the SAMP the school should check whether there is an existing Early Help Assessment in place for the child and family, or whether they have an allocated Social Worker. School can do this in one of the following ways:

- Ask an Integrated Working Lead (IWL):  
North [Amanda.Millington@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Amanda.Millington@rotherham.gov.uk)

Central	<a href="mailto:Samantha.Smith@rotherham.gov.uk">Samantha.Smith@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
South	<a href="mailto:Samantha.Blyth@rotherham.gov.uk">Samantha.Blyth@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
South	<a href="mailto:Rebecca.Green@rotherham.gov.uk">Rebecca.Green@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
South	<a href="mailto:Trudie.Slack@rotherham.gov.uk">Trudie.Slack@rotherham.gov.uk</a>

- Ask the school's named Early Help Link Worker <sup>i</sup>.
- Ask one of the Attendance Team:
 

North	<a href="mailto:Kate.Pollard@rotherham.gov.uk">Kate.Pollard@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
Central	<a href="mailto:Lisa.Mariott@rotherham.gov.uk">Lisa.Mariott@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
South	<a href="mailto:Kathryn.Wiltshire@rotherham.gov.uk">Kathryn.Wiltshire@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
RIO (Attendance)	<a href="mailto:Charlotte.Mann@rotherham.gov.uk">Charlotte.Mann@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
- Call MASH, First Response on (01709) 336060.

If there is an existing Early Help Assessment in place, or the family are open to Children's Social Care, school should contact the Lead Professional to discuss and ensure that attendance is named explicitly in the plan with clear actions to address poor school attendance.

Liaising with the Lead Professional and school contributing to the existing plan is important, as there may be other concerns held (not necessarily related to the child in your school) and it is vital that as professionals we 'join the dots' to ensure that communication is robust. Many Serious Case Reviews cite the lack of professional collaboration as a contributory factor.

## 2. SCHOOL AND THE EHA

If there is not an Early Help Assessment in place and the family is not open to Children's Social Care, it is important, given the concerns about attendance, that school carry out the assessment where there is evidence of additional need <sup>ii</sup>. This assessment is vital to understand fully the issues that are contributing to poor attendance (attendance is often a symptom of wider need) and where required, bring in appropriate agencies to support the child and family.

The **offer of support** through the Early Help Assessment is a mandatory element of the pathway and is supported by 'Working Together to Safeguarding Children' (2018) which outlines that:

*"Children and families may need support from a wide range of local organisations and agencies. Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency (e.g., education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989.*

*A lead practitioner should undertake the assessment, provide help to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and co-ordinate the delivery of support services. A GP, family support worker, school nurse, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs co-ordinator could undertake the lead practitioner role".* <sup>iii</sup>

The Early Help Integrated Working Lead's (IWL's) are available to support schools in completing the Early Help Assessment and plan. See previous details for the IWL in your area.

If the family is resistant to having an Early Help Assessment, **persistence and reassurance is key**. It is important to reassure that the assessment is a way of understanding what is working well, what the family and professionals are worried about and what is needed to help things improve. We know that families come initially be resistant but with reassurance go on to positively engage.

If, after reassurance and persistence, family are still unwilling to engage with an Early Help Assessment, then school should continue with the 'Attendance Matters Pathway' and enforcement action that can then be considered. NB all stages of the pathway must be undertaken (stages one to three).

It is important in the instance of non-engagement that the **school records all evidence** <sup>iv</sup> related to attempts to support the family, as this will be required later should enforcement action being pursued in Court. Lack of evidence (recorded in a timely fashion, as attempts to engage are made by school) will result in a rejection of the FPN or other enforcement action. The Early Help Attendant Leads are available to discuss children and give advice should this be required.

The SAMP once initiated should run a parallel to the Early Help Assessment, or Children's Social Care intervention to ensure that wider issues which may be impacting on attendance are both connected and supported. It is important to note that when considering FPN enforcement action, the local authority will consider a 9-to-10-week period. During this time school should continue to follow the pathway and send letters 1 to 3 with a minimum of a 3-week gap between each letter.

The SAMP contains a series of three letters, sent at different intervals by school within set timeframes. **It is important to retain the wording in the letters** and send them in the sequence described in the SAMP. This is essential to ensure consistent approaches across Rotherham and equitable processes are implemented for families.

**Letter 1** is the first in the series. This has been designed to support school in sharing the concerns with parents and emphasise the need for improved attendance as well as offering support again. If attendance shows an improvement after letter 1, no further letters should be sent.

**Letter 2** is the second in the series and should be used when support has been offered and/or taken up, but attendance has nevertheless not shown improvement. NB Before sending letter 2, a minimum of 3-week gap should be given to allow for an improvement to take place.

**Letter 3** should be sent if there is still no improvement in attendance and at this stage, the letter makes it clear to parents/carers that they are highly likely to be subject to enforcement action. When warning letter 3 is sent school should refer to the Local Authority using Form 1 - Request for Enforcement (SAMP)<sup>v</sup>. Documented evidence of when letters were sent, should be recorded at all stages, as this will be required if the case later progresses to enforcement and/or Court.

Warning letters should be sent no more than 5 school weeks apart.

### 3. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES (FPN'S)

The FPN is used as the first step of enforcement action in the SAMP. This consists of a fine of £60 per parent per child and this rises to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Non-payment of the FPN is escalated to Court. **FPNs are issued only once** and if future issues regarding attendance occur the pathway restarts at letter 2 and the child will be escalated to LASAP. In the instance of an unpaid FPN the headteacher will be asked to sign a Headteachers Certificate of Attendance that is

required for the Court. The Attendance Leads will request this and set a timeframe for this to be returned.

To avoid unnecessary work that results in a withdrawal of an FPN prior to submitting to Court, **it is important that school check with parents for any mitigating issues** prior to progressing with the SAMP and make this clear to the Local Authority.

In the instance of an escalation to Court and a parent pleads not guilty, school may be approached for additional information to support the prosecution.

#### 4 LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PANEL (LASAP)

***For children with persistence absence where an FPN has not had the desired impact.***

The LASAP is Rotherham's multi-disciplinary decision-making forum that oversees enforcement action under the provision of the Education Act (1996) with regards to parental responsibility for regular school attendance.

The LASAP will consider children that are referred by schools, where there is extremely poor attendance and where all appropriate strategies (and application of the School Attendance Matters Pathway) have been tried and exhausted.

Schools are responsible for submitting requests to the SAMP for further enforcement following the issue of a previous FPN.

Following request for further enforcement to SAMP, schools will be informed by Attendance Leads of one of the following outcomes:

- Fixed Penalty Notice issued.
- Agreed to hear formally at the next LASAP.
- Decision to hear formally at a future LASAP to facilitate the gathering of all information.
- Referral rejected and school notified of the reasons.

The chair of the LASAP is the Early Help Head of Service and meetings are attended by a range of professionals including a Local Authority solicitor. When school has a child being discussed at LASAP the school will be invited to attend the meeting along with parents, and the child where appropriate.

The LASAP is responsible for ensuring that appropriate action is agreed and that the correct procedures have been followed. The panel will decide on one of the following outcomes:

- **Education Supervision Order (ESO).** An ESO is a court order that triggers a formal plan to bring about a return to regular school attendance. This can be in conjunction with an existing Early Help or statutory assessment. The application is heard in the family proceedings court where magistrates have the power to grant the order. An ESO is granted for twelve months initially but extensions can be applied for annually for up to a period of three years until the end of compulsory education.
- **Prosecution.** Section 444 of the Education Act has two separate but linked offences, under which parents can be prosecuted: a) where a parent fails to secure a child's regular attendance and b) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. Parents who are prosecuted for the simple offence (a) could receive a fine of up to £1,000 per parent/carers. For the aggravated offence (b),

parents could receive a community order, a fine of up to £2,500 per parent/carer or a custodial sentence.

- **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN).** FPN's are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents, who are defined as any person who has parental responsibility or care of the child.
- **Deferral.** In some instances, it may be necessary to agree a deferral of enforcement. This may be where attendance has started to improve prior to the LASAP, or where some specific support has been agreed but not yet tested. In these cases, a decision will be made to defer enforcement and an agreement will be made about when to bring back to a future LASAP.

Following consideration of the child, the decision will be circulated to the referring school and relevant family members within three days of the panel meeting, however all relevant parties are usually telephoned on the day of LASAP, prior to the formal letter being issued.

## 5. MAINTAINING ATTENDANCE

Sometimes attendance can improve whilst progressing through the pathway, however later, it again deteriorates. This can be extremely difficult for schools to manage and repeating past processes can be frustrating and is not in the best interests of the child.

Schools should therefore be aware that if there has been less than a six-week period between the initial improvement and subsequent deterioration and this can be evidenced, schools do not need to start from the beginning of the pathway; but can start from the place where they last were (i.e., re-join the pathway where they left off i.e. if letter 2 was sent; re-send letter 2 and progress from there.)

## 6. LEAVE OF ABSENCE / HOLIDAY IN TERM TIME FPN REQUESTS

To process an FPN for a holiday in term time, the child's attendance must be below the **combined National Average (currently 95.2%)** for the previous 12 months including the holiday absence period.

A child's percentage should be calculated prior to requesting an FPN to establish whether the child is **below the combined National Average**. If the child is in Year 7 this should include the year 6 registration certificate of attendance from their previous school. To work out the child's percentage a calculation is needed of the previous 12 months, including the holiday absence period. For example, if the holiday was 18th November 2021 – 29th November 2021 the previous 12 months including the holiday absence period would be 30th November 2020 – 29th November 2021.

When a leave of absence is requested and school do not feel there are exceptional circumstances to authorise the absence, school should notify parents immediately in order to inform them of their intention to progress a request for enforcement. This then provides evidence to the Local Authority that the parents were aware that their child's absence was not authorised prior to going on holiday / taking leave of absence.

When it comes to school's attention that a child is taking leave of absence in term time without a prior request being submitted, the school should send the letter **during the absence (i.e., do not wait for families to return home.)**

When it comes to school's attention that a child has taken a leave of absence after the absence period (ie. where this has been shared after they have returned to school), the school should send the letter within five working days.

In all cases the referral to the Local Authority should be sent within five working days of the last date of the holiday.

Form 2 – Request for Enforcement (Holiday in Term Time) <sup>vi</sup> should be completed and sent to the Local Authority.

## 7. KEEPING UP TO DATE WITH GUIDANCE

Schools can keep up to date with Government guidance and sign up for alerts, on the Department for Education website:

[School attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-guidance)

Other relevant guidance includes:

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2018)

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education)

[multiagency threshold descriptors.pdf \(proceduresonline.com\)](https://proceduresonline.com/multiagency-threshold-descriptors.pdf)

<sup>i</sup> See Early Help Link Worker for Schools Document.

<sup>ii</sup> See Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Levels of Need document

<sup>iii</sup> See Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

<sup>iv</sup> Eg. Evidence of letters; home visits; minutes of meetings; pastoral support documentation; school level support offered etc.

<sup>v</sup> Form 1 – Request for enforcement (SAMP) and **note all other versions should be deleted.**

<sup>vi</sup> Form 2 – Request for enforcement (Holiday in Term time) and **note all other versions should be deleted.**

## APPENDIX 2: ATTENDANCE CODES

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

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness

<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Student 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 student's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

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



### APPENDIX 3: REQUESTING LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Maltby Learning Trust or Academy Principals are no longer able to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. The Principal may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any student absent during term time, unless granted by the Principal because of exceptional circumstances, will be recorded as 'unauthorised' absence. All requests for leave of absence should be in writing to the Principal and will be considered on an individual basis taking into account individual circumstances.

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority where 'a student has been taken on holiday during term time, the absence has not been authorised by the school, and the child's attendance is below the Local Authority average for the previous school year or 3 terms.' The penalty is £60.00 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days of receiving a notice and £120.00 if paid after this but within 28 days.

## APPENDIX 4: LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

The request for leave of absence form (below) can be obtained in hard copy from Reception and must be returned to the Academy Attendance Team at least one month in advance of the absence.

### WATH ACADEMY

## Leave of Absence Request Form

*Please read the information on the reverse of this form before its completion\**

I wish to apply for my child to take leave of absence during term time.

Name of Child(ren)

Form/ Year Group/ Class

.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....

Leave of absence dates

Start date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Number of school days missed \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for requesting Leave of Absence at this time .....

.....  
.....

A LETTER FROM AN EMPLOYER MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS REQUEST FORM IF THE ABSENCE IS DUE TO WORK COMMITMENTS.

Full name, address and date of birth of parent(s)/Carer(s) applying for leave of absence

Parent 1 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 2 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ parent 1 Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ parent 2

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

If you go ahead with the leave of absence when unauthorised, you may receive a **Fixed Penalty Notice** issued through the Local Authority. This will be £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days rising to £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days.

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SCHOOL USE ONLY

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

% Attendance: \_\_\_\_\_

Leave of absence in term time – information for consideration on back of request form: -

- 1 The decision to grant the request is for the school, not the Authority or the parent. Only schools can authorise absences.
- 2 There is no requirement to authorise just because a request has been made.
- 3 The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) gives the Local Authority the power to issue fixed penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence during term time.
- 4 No parent can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as a right.
- 5 Any request for leave must be made in advance.
- 6 Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.
- 7 If the application for leave of absence in term time is made because of the parent's workplace holiday arrangements, then a letter from the employer explaining why the leave of absence must be taken in term time **MUST** be attached to this form on proper letter-headed paper.
- 8 If important work has been missed by the pupil due to the parents making a request for leave of absence for a holiday the parents should not expect special arrangements to be made by the school for that pupil to catch up that work.
- 9 The circumstances of each individual request will be taken into account. The following factors may be relevant, but this should not be regarded as a comprehensive list:
  - Parent's workplace holiday arrangements if supported by a letter from employer.
  - The overall attendance of the child for the previous academic year or 3 terms.
  - If taking leave of absence in the first half of the first term would have a negative impact on pupil progress.
  - If a previous holiday has been taken in the same academic year.
  - Timing of internal and/or external examinations/assessments.
  - The reason given by a parent for requesting leave of absence in term time.

## APPENDIX 5: STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

**Text messages** - Regular whole school SMS messages are sent to all parents/carers reminding them the beginning and ending of term times, attendance challenges and current progress with attendance. Texts are also sent reminding parents/carers to ensure appointments are made out of school hours and to notify the Academy of any reasons for absence.

**Half Termly postcards** - Every half term the Attendance Team sends a postcard home to all students who are on 100% for the relevant half term. The postcard contains a positive message from the Attendance Officer and a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

**Weekly reward** - Each student who attends 100% of the lessons that week receives a chocolate bar in their last lesson on Friday. Students vote for their favourite chocolate bar through student voice every 4 weeks.

**Attendance Badge** - Each student that attends school on the first day will be given a 100% Attendance badge. It is the student's responsibility to keep the badge by maintaining the 100% attendance. If the student misses a day of school, they hand the badge back to their Tutor during Mondays Tutor session. Students are to wear the badge on the right lapel opposite their House badge.

**Achievement Points** - Every half term 10 Achievement points are added to all student's accounts that were present 100% of the time for the relevant half term.

**TV Screens** - The highest year group and current cumulative attendance from the previous week are displayed on TV screens in all social areas. The display will also include the Attendance Matters triangle and the Attendance Matters chart.

**Dedicated tutor session (Tutor time every week)** - Dedicated tutor time once a week to specifically discuss attendance. Tutors also move the names of students on the Attendance Matters triangle.

Students record their own cumulative attendance percentage in their planner. Students should be able to talk through their own percentage and placement on the Attendance Matters triangle.

**Cumulative Attendance Tracker in the Student Planner** - Each week all students plot their current cumulative attendance in their planner. This allows them to track and reflect on their own attendance and take ownership of this.

**Daily Attendance report whole staff** - Attendance data including Pupil Premium, weekly cumulative and whole school cumulative is e-mailed to all staff on a daily basis. Attendance is the responsibility of everyone.

**Never Been Absent With All Stars** - Displayed around school is the NBA (Never Been Absent) group of students who remain on 100% attendance for the year.

**Attendance phone line** - Following initial registers the Attendance Team collates absences and sends a SMS to all parents/carers of students who currently do not have a reason for absence.

**Home visits by the Attendance Team** - Daily home visits by the Attendance Team to students with absences, longer-term medical conditions and students who are a cause for concern. The Attendance Team also work with more difficult families conducting visits to those who may not

engage as well over the phone or come into school to meet. The Attendance Lead Officer directs home visits for the Attendance Team and arranges for students who are visited to return into school later that day.

**Designated Period 2 for Pastoral Year Leaders-** Once registers are completed the Pastoral Year Leaders (PYL) meet at the start of Period 2 with the Attendance Team to discuss absences in each year. This also includes welfare checks for students whose parents/carers have rung in. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure families feel supported and know they can work with the school to ensure the best for their child.

**Attendance Panels –** We aim to triangulate between school, home and support networks to ensure our more vulnerable students are in school consistently; trying to break down barriers before the FPN pathway is followed.

**Close partnership with Local Authority -** Communication to the Local Authority for pending prosecutions. Tracking and monitoring of previous FPN and prosecution pathways.