

Primary Attendance Policy

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Mission Statement

“To nurture and develop all people in our Trust so that they reach their full potential academically, vocationally, and personally, including being positive role models for future generations in the community. We will achieve this by providing high quality values-based education that cultivates employability and life skills making our schools the first choice for young people, parents, carers, staff and employers.”

Values

The values of Respect, Excellence, Collaboration, Independence, Perseverance, Enjoyment, Leadership, Integrity and Care are central to everything we do at the Skills for Life Trust.

Statement of Equality

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Purpose

The purpose of this a policy is to promote outstanding attendance in order to allow students to achieve their full potential and is written with consideration of [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Principles

Skills for Life Trust is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all students and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. To this end, we aim to:

- Provide an environment in which all students feel safe and valued.
- Develop skills for life within our students including punctuality and time keeping.
- Work with parents to remove any barriers to learning.
- Work towards a goal of 100% attendance for each student.

- Work with the South East Attendance Support Service (SEASS) to intervene where a student's attendance falls below acceptable levels.
- Comply with all government legislation and guidance relating to school attendance.

The 1996 Education Act clearly states, "If any child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parents/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence". Both nationally and in Medway expected attendance is set at 96% and as a Trust this is also our expectation. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 also introduced the use of penalty notices as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a penalty notice being issued.

Pupil absence rates are carefully monitored. Skills for Life Trust is keen to work with parents to increase the amount of time a child spends in school. In such cases, the Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher will invite parents in to discuss the reasons for the absences and consider possible solutions. Where there is no improvement, a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered.

Religious Observance

Skills for Life Trust will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. Following DfE guidance, the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, Academy staff will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. The Academy will expect to be notified by parents in advance if their child will be absent for religious observance.

Interviews at other educational institutions

Following DfE guidance, schools should be satisfied that the interview and/or test is linked to transfer to another educational institution. Absence should be limited to the time taken to complete the test and travel to and from. Parent/carers will be asked to provide evidence of appointments in advance.

Practice

We have a dedicated Attendance Officers in all of our Primary Schools as per the front cover of this policy.

All children are entitled to receive an effective full-time education suitable to their age, ability and

aptitude. It is the joint responsibility of the Academy and parents/carers to ensure that our children receive that education.

The Skills for Life Primary schools expects all children to attend their academy every day that the academy is open, in full school uniform, arriving on time, registering for the morning and afternoon sessions and remaining for the full academy day.

There are 2 registers taken every day: morning and afternoon. Each registration is 1 session. In the event of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) being recorded, a referral may be made to SEAAS. If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a six-school week period, a penalty notice may be issued resulting in a £60 fine, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice within 28 days will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.

Only the Academy has the right to authorise absence. The Academy will not do this if they believe that a child's attainment is being significantly impaired by his/her level of attendance.

As part of the Academy attendance policy, referrals will be made to our Attendance Advisory Service the **South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS)** where there are concerns about a child's attendance which has not been resolved by the school and/or when the school believes that the child's attainment is significantly impaired by his/her level of attendance.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important. Arriving late for school is a poor start to the day, causing embarrassment to a child, disruption to the class, unnecessary difficulties for teachers who are teaching, and most importantly, disturbance to learning for other children. The school gates open at 8.30am, school starts at 8.50 am and the registers close at 9.00am. Children who arrive after this time are considered late and this will be marked as Late - L. Those children arriving after 9.30am will be marked as Late (after registers closed) – U.

The afternoon mark will be marked as Late – L if children arrive after 1pm and will be marked as Late (after registers closed) – U after 1.30pm. Parents will need to sign their children in at the school office.

Nursery pupils should arrive on time for their morning and afternoon session. Nursery morning session begins at 8:30am and afternoon session begins at 12:30pm.

Most primary age children are brought to school by parents or carers. Therefore, poor punctuality is the sole responsibility of the parents or carers. If children are not brought to school on time they come to believe that education is not considered to be important, which often leads to truanting when they are older.

Illness and medical appointments

Dental and medical appointments

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever possible. If this is impossible then absence will only be authorised when the appointment card is shown. The child should be returned to school immediately after the appointment, unless advised otherwise by medical professionals.

Parents will need to provide proof of an appointment preferably before the appointment (i.e. letter, appointment card) to the class teacher or office.

Sickness

If a child is unwell, they should not attend school. **We ask that parents notify the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence using the contact details for the attendance officer.** If the school has not been contacted, the school will ring home to find out the reason for absence. If school cannot make contact with home, a home visit will be arranged to check on the welfare of the child.

The Academy is very concerned for the welfare of our children. Where there are persistent or prolonged periods of sickness, the academy may refer the matter to SEAAS so that the correct advice and assistance can be put in place to support the family through this difficult period. Where contact is limited or any concerns are raised, a home visit will take place within the first 3 days of absence.

There may be occasions where medical evidence is needed to support the reasons for a child's absence from school. The academy and SEAAS will not approach a family doctor to obtain evidence. However, it is the responsibility of a parent/carer to provide a medical certificate or doctor's letter, as appropriate. For contagious illnesses such as chicken pox, where children may have a longer period of absence, parents may request work from the academy when their child is well enough to complete it.

Authorised Absence

A child shall be considered for authorised absence from the academy:

- At any time when he/she was prevented from attending by reason of **sickness**, as described above, or **any unavoidable cause**.
- An unavoidable cause is an incident of a serious nature in the immediate family of the child concerned. Where something of this nature has occurred, we ask that the family contact the academy at the earliest opportunity, so that the academy can provide support, the length of absence from the academy can be agreed and that the child can be correctly registered.
- On any day exclusively set apart for **religious observance** by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs.

The academy recognises all religious beliefs and actively seeks to support families on these occasions. Where a family wishes to exercise this entitlement, the academy asks that the family contact the academy office in writing at the earliest opportunity, requesting a religious observance day, so that the length of absence from the academy can be agreed and that the pupil can be correctly registered.

If a parent/carer wishes to take a child out of the academy during term time, they should seek permission, in writing, from the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. **Each case will be treated on its merits, but it is not the policy of the Academy to authorise such absences, except in the most exceptional circumstances.**

Leave during Term time

Please note that the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, removes references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If a parent/carer wishes to request such leave, they should make a written application at the earliest opportunity. The Headteacher and senior staff will consider each request and inform the parent/carer as soon as possible, in writing, whether the request has been granted or not. If a request for such leave is not granted, any absence from school during the above dates will be recorded as unauthorised.

Parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised. (Regulation 8 of the Education Regulations 1995 applies). Parents of children in Years 2 and 6 should note that absences will not be authorised for any reason during preparation for and administration of Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs.

Where medical leave is needed, medical evidence will be required for this period in order to authorise this time.

If unauthorised leave during term time is taken, the school will refer to the Local Authority who will consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

Notice to each parent for each child that is taken out of school. Standard information provided with each Penalty Notice states that a £60 fine is payable within 21 days of the Notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 21st day and 28th day. If neither of these sums is paid within these periods, the Local Authority may consider a prosecution for an offence contrary to Sec. 444(1) Education Act 1996.

Levels of attendance

Penalty Notice 1 (PN1) letters are sent to all parents at the beginning of the school year to outline expectations for attendance. Penalty Notice 2 (PN2) letters are sent to parents where a previous history of persistent absence has occurred to ensure families provide medical evidence for each absence. Previous persistent absentees are monitored closely to ensure early support is in place if attendance is not at the expected level.

Levels of attendance	
Outstanding	99% - 100%
Good	96% - 98.9%
Requires Improvement	90.1% - 95.9%
Persistent Absence	90% or below
Severe Absence	50% or below

Persistent absentees are those pupils whose attendance falls at 90% or below which is the equivalent of one day absence every two weeks. Severe absentees are those pupils whose attendance falls at 50% or below which is the equivalent of one day absence in every two days.

The Headteacher and the Attendance Officer monitor the attendance of each child on a regular basis. Parents will be notified by the academy when attendance is not at an acceptable level or a regular pattern of absence is noted and you will be invited to discuss any concerns or problems that you have. Attendance is also monitored and discussed weekly at SLT meetings.

If there is still no improvement and we believe that the child's attainment may be impaired by his/her level of attendance, a formal referral will be made to SEASS. Parents will then be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer in order to address the attendance concerns for your child. Some pupils will be issued with an Attendance Improvement Plan.

Where no improvements are made the school in conjunction with the SEASS will monitor the child's attendance. In the event that the child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a six-school week period the child will be referred to the Local Authority in order for a penalty notice to be issued to each parent/carer who has day to day responsibility of the child. This is a £60 fine if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 within 28 days. A failure to pay a fine will result in court action being taken.

The academy will also notify parents when improvements have been seen.

Rewards

We place a high importance on regular and punctual school attendance and we do our best to promote and reward good attendance for all the children. Attendance is a regular feature of our celebration assemblies. We present certificates each week along with attendance Ted for KS1, lower

KS2 and upper KS2.

Non-uniform days are used to reward either class or whole school outstanding attendance. Skillsy the Squirrel visits pupils to encourage good attendance.

Conclusion

Academy attendance and attainment are closely linked. It is extremely important that all of our children attend the academy on a regular basis, so that they receive the education to which they're entitled. This ensures that our children have the best opportunities in later life.

If a child misses one day at the academy per week over their school life; that is 80% attendance and is the equivalent to missing two full school years by the time they reach the end of secondary education. That is a lot of missed learning!

We expect any parents or carers who are having problems with their child's school attendance, to make an appointment to speak to the school so that we can provide advice and strategies to assist.

Nursery Attendance

Although nursery pupils are not statutory school age, we still expect pupils to attend nursery every day. This instils good practice for when they start mainstream education.

If your child is unable to attend nursery, it is the parents' responsibility to contact the school office before 9.30am, providing the reason for absence. If the child is unwell and requires a visit to the GP or hospital, please ensure you request medical evidence of your appointment, this supports your child's absence from school. We ask that all appointments be made outside of the school day, where possible.

Please be aware, if your child's attendance level drops below 80% you may lose your child's nursery place. We are always here to help and support, so if you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance during the school year, please make an appointment to speak to your child's class teacher / Attendance Officer or you can request the contact details of SEAAS via the school office.

Appendix A: Categorisation of Absence

Any student who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories:

- Unauthorised Absence - This is for those students where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.
- Authorised Absence - This is for those students who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.
- Approved Educational Activity - This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. Students recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This would include:
 - Work experience placements
 - Field trips and educational visits
 - Sporting activities
 - Link courses or approved education off site
 - Most types of dual registration

Attendance will be categorised using the following codes:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances not covered by another Code	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed) after 9am morning session and after 1pm afternoon session.	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence

T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed) after 9.30am morning session and after 1.30pm afternoon session.	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances