Attendance Policy - appendix

Walton Academy

Edition – September 2024

Diverse Academies

Contents

1   Policy Statement

Scope and mission

At Walton, we are committed to ensure all pupils reach their full potential and have every opportunity to be successful in their next steps and career of choice when they leave us. We believe that to achieve this, high levels of attendance is essential, and it is the responsibility of both parents and teachers to support and promote excellent school attendance and punctuality.

Purpose and Intent

As a Trust, this policy is written in accordance with the statutory guidance on attendance in the DfE document, 'Working together to improve school attendance'

To ensure that every child attends, on time, every day possible so that they:

- Establish positive routines and attitudes towards their education from the earliest point
- Progress well academically and socially
- Develop excellent habits for their next steps in education and their careers

Roles and responsibilities

All staff, and other responsibility holders, within the academy play an integral role in improving and supporting excellent attendance of all its pupils.

All staff

- Develop and maintain a positive culture where all pupils are effectively supported
- Uphold and reinforce expectations for good attendance and punctuality
- Complete registers on time and accurately
- Raise specific concerns to Head of Year/Attendance Officer

Attendance Officers and Heads of Year

- Communicate effectively with parents/carers regarding concerns at the earliest point, working together to eliminate barriers
- Raise concerns with Assistant Principal (Behaviour and Attitudes)
- Ensure parents are fully informed of the academy expectations and requirements.
- Work proactively in partnership with the local authority 'School Attendance Support Team' accessing the four core functions (communication and advice, targeting support meetings,

multi-disciplinary support for families and legal intervention) as and when necessary to support good attendance.

- Ensures that the academy follows the local authority procedures for managing and referring Children Missing in Education (CME).

- Supports pupils back into the academy following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Safeguarding team

- Monitor the attendance of children under social care or other vulnerable pupils

- Ensures that the above applies to those Children being Looked After (CLA) and those Previously Looked After (PLAC) in accordance with the respective guidance.

- Ensures that suitable provision and support is given to those pupils with SEND, specific medical and / or mental health conditions which may be barriers to achieving regular attendance.

Assistant Principal (Behaviour and Attitudes)

- Develops and maintains a positive culture across the academy where all staff understand the link between behaviour, attendance, and inclusion.

- Ensures attendance is recorded accurately and promptly in the SMS and where absence is recorded as unexplained in the academy attendance register, the correct code is inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session.

- Establishes and implements robust systems for tracking attendance and punctuality of all pupils, ensuring that children at risk or missing education are closely monitored with appropriate action taken in line with operating guidelines and policy set out below in particular those at risk of Persistent Absence and/or Severe Absence.

- Ensures parents are fully informed of the academy expectations and requirements.

- Manages staffing resource to effectively promote, support and monitor high levels of attendance through pastoral teams and delegation of responsibility to attendance officers for specific activity.

- Evaluates and reports attendance and punctuality, using this to improvement robust strategic plans for improvement, reporting actions and impact to Executive leaders and the local academy committee as required.

- Ensures that for those children educated in Alternative Provision, robust safeguarding and attendance monitoring procedures are followed in accordance with the guidance and Trust policy.

- Ensures that academy staff receive effective, targeted attendance training dependent on role – in accordance with para 61 of the Guidance.

Principal (supported by the executive principal)

In addition to the accountability of the points above,

- Ensures all children access their full entitlement to high quality education.
- Implements the Trust policy, determining local processes and systems appropriate to context
- Will determine, in any cases where there is doubt, whether an absence may be authorised.
- Works proactively in partnership with the local authority 'School Attendance Support Team' accessing the four core functions (communication and advice, targeting support meetings, multi-disciplinary support for families and legal intervention) as and when necessary to support good attendance.

See note 1 for further responsibilities of parents/carers and pupils.

Benefits

In accordance to the Trust policy, Walton Academy is committed to work together by incorporating the following:

a) EXPECTATIONS – we aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents to build a culture where all want to be in our academies.

b) MONITORING – we will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

c) LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING – when a pattern is spotted, we discuss with pupils and parents to understand any barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

d) FACILITATING SUPPORT – we commit to removing barriers and to help pupils and parents access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of our academies.

e) FORMALISING SUPPORT – where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we work with partners to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond.

f) ENFORCEMENT – where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Legal Requirements

Walton Academy adheres to the points stipulated in the Trust Attendance Policy in relation to the specific legal requirements for all stakeholders, including staff and parents etc.

More information can be found in the Trust policy (page 8-9)

2   Authorised and Unauthorised absences

Walton Academy follows the guidance outlined in section 5 (persistent and severe absence) of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

Authorised absence is granted when the academy accepts the reason for absence. We expect parents to inform of the absence in a timely fashion. If the academy does not receive notification of the absence prior to the pupil returning to school, they will be deemed to have an unauthorised absence until we are in receipt of the particular reason for absence.

See Note 2 for list of attendance codes.

Incidents of absences whereby there is no reasonable or genuine explanation for absence will be explored and where appropriate recorded as unauthorised.

Absence might be authorised	Absences might be unauthorised
Genuine illness	Caring for younger siblings
Agreed religious observance to which the parents belong	Shopping/day trips
	Birthdays
Family bereavement	No uniform to wear
Sporting/musical activities during the academy day	To complete homework/coursework
	Lateness
Medical appointments (with genuine proof)	Holidays
Suspensions	

Penalty notices may be issued if the academy feel that parents/carers are not meeting their duty to ensure high levels of attendance.

We recognise that pupil attendance below 90% is poor any pupil under this figure will be treated as a 'persistent absentee' by the academy and the DfE (Department of Education)

Severe Absences

Pupils who are absent more than they are in school (less than 50% attendance) will be classed as severely absent.

Support and intervention will be offered and implemented to encourage pupil attendance. Examples of how were support pupils and their families:

- Early Help Assessment
- Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) plan
- Home visits/neutral location meetings
- Out of school hours meetings in school
- Phased return package
- Alternative Learning Package

Following the intervention and support offered by the academy, if severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, we recognise that it is likely to constitute neglect and would therefore be treated as a safeguarding issue.

At Walton, our Head of Year team and Attendance Officer work together to monitor attendance across year groups and identify pupils who need targeted attendance support as soon as possible.

Family Holidays

As per guidance, parents/carers are not entitled to remove their children from school for holidays during term time. Where parents consider that here may be exceptional circumstances, this should be submitted in writing, outlining the specific circumstances for the holiday, to the Principal prior to booking to seek authorisation.

We do not authorise holiday absence unless the request meets exceptional circumstances. The overarching decision is at the discretion of the Principal.

Examples could include:

- Where families are service personnel
- When a family needs to spend time together during or after crisis
- Other compassionate circumstances that can be confidentially shared with the academy

If you take your child on holiday during term time you may be liable for a penalty notice being issued with or without prior notice. More details can be found on the Lincolnshire County Council website: https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-attendance

The academy will endeavour to concur with [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) (DfE 2024)

3   Addressing attendance and punctuality concerns

Through working closely in partnership with parents/carers, we aim to establish positive routines for attendance and punctuality from the earliest age. Due to the established impact of lost education on progress and achievement, we will always provide comprehensive support to children and families to endeavour to overcome barriers, but we have a robust response where concerns emerge.

Examples of how we support our pupils and their families:

- Regular contact offering support via attendance, pastoral or safeguarding teams
- Daily monitoring and/or check ins whilst the pupil is in school
- Home visits to discuss attendance concerns and barriers to returning to school
- Teachers informed when a pupil is returning after long term absence
- Resources printed out from lessons for pupils to glue in their books
- Support from outside agencies will be explored (EBSA, EHA etc)

It is important that children arrive at school on time to avoid missing key learning, information and the impact on routines and relationships. Pupils must arrive on academy site by 8.45am each day. Punctuality is monitored, intervention and sanctions imposed, and persistent concerns could result in PN (penalty notices).

Considering all the above, and in circumstances where it is justified, failure to co-operate with an outside agency could lead to the Local Authority prosecuting parents of children with poor attendance. This could lead to the issue of a penalty notice or a 'fast track' to prosecution, (where parent(s) may be summoned to a magistrate's court in just 12 weeks).

4   Effective partnership with outside agencies and the local authority

At Walton, we have forged strong links with outside agencies and the local authority (LA) to support us in helping pupils attend school more frequently. To ensure their relationship is robust and efficient we,

- Conduct initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral - record relevant information to assist support and intervention with relevant agencies
- Refer cases to Children Services when a pupil continues to have excessive amounts of unauthorised absence and/or lateness, despite interventions made
- Hold termly attendance reviews with key school staff and feedback data to the leadership team and Local Academy Committee
- Arrange multi-agency liaison meetings as appropriate
- Establish and maintain a list of named contacts within the local community police force
- Expect the LA to rigorously track local attendance data and provide an attendance support team (including advice and protocols around Children Missing in Education and Elective Home Education)

5   Rewards and recognition

At Walton, we pride ourselves on recognising achievement and rewarding our pupils especially in relation to attendance. This includes prolonged improvement following below expected attendance.

Pupils are reminded of their individual attendance each week during tutor time and tutor group/cohort attendance it is highlighted in weekly assemblies via their Head of Year.

Pupils are recognised and rewarded in the following ways:

- Weekly raffle tickets (end of term celebration)
- Achievement points
- Recognition cards/phone calls home
- Attendance badges
- Letters home to parents
- Celebration Assembly rewards – tutor groups with the highest attendance
- For pupils in Year 11, invitation to the respective academy prom may be linked to attendance. This is also a formal part of the Prom Agreement that parents and pupils sign in advance.

6   Part-time timetables

We recognise that in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs.

Reasons why pupils may need to have a temporary part-time timetable:

- Outcome of a SEND review and/or PEP review in the case of a Children being Looked After (CLA)
- As part of the Team Around the Child (TAC) or Early Help Assessment (EHA) and only when other options have been explored.
- When academy leaders need to address pupils' social emotional mental health needs with the goal of reintroducing them to full time learning

Pupils who fulfil a part-time timetable will be closely monitored and the offer will be reviewed fortnightly. Parents/carers will need to be in agreement of the plan for their child and accept the targets and action points discussed in the meeting prior. A parent/carer must consent to the part-time timetable and be clear that they are taking responsibility for the child when they are not in school. The aim will be to integrate the pupil back to full time as soon as possible.

When considering or implementing a part-time timetable we take into consideration the wider safeguarding implications for the child.

We ensure that a pupil absent, under these conditions, has their absence recorded as authorised.

The academy will endeavour to concur with [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) (DfE 2024)

7   Monitoring and review of policy

This policy is reviewed annually however maybe revised throughout the academy year to reflect any changes in legislation to ensure it is working effectively.

Note 1: Further responsibilities

Parents/carers:

- Ensure their child attends every day the academy is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Ensure their child arrives in the academy on time and prepared for the academy day.
- Support their child in maintaining at least the Trust expectation for attendance for the duration of the academic year, unless medical or exceptional circumstances affect their attending school.
- Contact the academy as soon as possible to notify of absence.
- Contact the academy to discuss any emerging concerns / barriers that might prevent their child from maintaining good attendance or arriving promptly at the academy.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support when applicable.
- Provide the academy with a minimum of TWO up to date home and emergency contact details. Our academy leadership teams will ensure that each child has two contacts recorded on SIMS, unless there are exceptional / individual circumstances that preclude this.
- Submit, in writing, requests for exceptional leave of absence in good time to the academy principal prior to making any arrangements.
- Provide medical evidence from the parent for an absence when requested by the academy. We accept appointment cards or letters and prescribed medication with the child's name clearly labelled.

Pupils:

- Attend every day unless there are reasons such as illness, specific family circumstances or other extenuating factors which preclude this.
- Arrive on time at the start of the school day.
- Be punctual to lessons within the school day.

Note 2:   Specific codes for attendance

Code	Reason
/	Present (AM/PM)
L	Late (after registration)
B	Education off site (Alternative provision)
C	Authorised absence
D	Dual Coded – pupil at another educational setting
E	Excluded/Suspended
G	Unauthorised holiday
H	Authorised holiday (Principal's discretion)
I	Illness
J	Interview
M	Medical reason (proof shown)
N	No reason given yet
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
V	Educational trip or visit with school
W	Work Experience
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Policy lead	Mrs K Dolby (AP : BA)
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Policy approving body	*To be completed by CQR Team* [Insert as appropriate e.g. Executive Leadership Team/Trustees/Sub-Committee]
Date of approval	[Insert date policy approved]
Adopted on	[Insert date uploaded to website/Staff Portal]