Unity Education Trust

POLICY	**Attendance Policy (Specialist Provision)**
STATUS/DATE OF THIS VERSION	**For ratification March 2021**
APPROVED BY	**Board of Trustees**
RATIFIED BY	**Board of Trustees**
REVIEW	**January 2022**

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY- UNITY EDUCATION TRUST

Policy Consultation and Review

This policy is available on our Trust website and is available on request from the Trust office. We also inform parents about this policy when their child joins our schools.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance on a daily basis and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Trust Board on an annual basis. This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Trust Board on 15th July 2019. It is due for review on 29th June 2020.

CEO Signature:

Date:

Chair of Trust Signature: Date:

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1. **Introduction/Aim**

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect of their life chances.

We believe that regular attendance enables children both to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become responsible, organised and motivated adults. We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; attendance is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies in safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account that the Human Rights Act of 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

2. Legal Framework

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance 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: The local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006: parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special education needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments): As amended by 2016 regulations, requires schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether a pupil was:
- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

➢ 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. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:	
Absence	Arrival at school after the register has closed
Regular attendance	Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised
Authorised absence	• An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave • Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave • Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave • An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause
Unauthorised absence	• Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason • Truancy before or during the school day • Absences which have never been properly explained • Arrival at school after the register has closed unless this is a result of a taxi issue which is not the fault of the child/parent • Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays • Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed • Leaving school for no reason during the day
Persistent absenteeism (PA)	• Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason, including illness. This means e.g. across a 6-week half term a pupil would be classed as persistently absent if they missed 3 school days or more. Actions taken around persistent absence vary depending on the reason for absence (see actions below).
Parent	• Any natural parent, whether married or not • Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person • Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

4. Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by governors, trustees, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governors and Trustees of Unity Education Trust will:

➢ Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents

- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure that the regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governors' meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or DfE as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The leadership team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that the regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governors and Trustees and on a half termly basis to the lead governor/trustee for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance

The Attendance Improvement Officer will:

- Monitor and analyse pupil attendance data
- Undertake fortnightly attendance meetings with the identified lead
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance

- Report concerns about attendance to the leadership team
- Coordinate individual action plans for pupils causing concern
- Work with bases to tackle persistent absence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Facilitate and manage the FPN and Fast Track process
- Refer attendance concerns to a DSL(s)

Class Teachers/Form tutors are:

- Responsible for recording AM and PM registers

The School Admin Team will:

- Ensure that the First Day Calling process is followed
- Take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents and the school timetable
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn and on time for the class
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

The Trust requests that parents will:

- Sign and adhere to the attendance contract at the point of admission
- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life

- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

Role	Name	Contact details
Attendance Lead	Jenna Keyes	Jenna.keyes@sssfn.org.uk
Attendance Officer	Emma Cashman	Emma.cashman@sssfn.org.uk
Named Governor for Attendance		

5. Recording Attendance

Attendance Register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

It will mark whether every pupil 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

See Appendix 3 for the DfE attendance codes.

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

Pupils on a full time timetable must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.15am and will be kept open until 9.30am, we keep our registers open for this length of time due to the considerable distance many of our pupils have to travel in order to access the school.

The register for the second session will be taken at 12.45pm and will be kept open until 1.00pm, we keep our registers open for this length of time due to the considerable distance many of our pupils have to travel in order to access the school.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.30am or as soon as practically possible.

If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to:

- Contact school by telephone call on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return
- If not contact is received, the attendance protocols will be instigated

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

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

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

The school will follow *appendix 4*-the joint protocol between health services and schools in respect of the management of pupil absence from school when medical reasons are cited.

Confidential information will only be shared with the consent of a person with parental responsibility for that child, or the young person themselves if over 16. Information sharing between health professionals and the school will be proportionate and in negotiation with the parent and child.

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 3 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil 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

Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Where lateness is not the fault of the pupil e.g. a taxi breakdown, late codes will not be used.

Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent to ascertain the reason, by calling each day the pupil is absent. See Appendix
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, including visiting the home of a pupil or requesting a welfare check to be made by the police if the pupil has not been seen for 10 days.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code is used
- Write to the parents to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Invite parents to discuss how we can support the family to make improvement
- Refer to an external agency/support service to offer support, guidance and advice
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquires to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi- agency support, such as referring to Children Services/CADs where there are safeguarding concerns.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The Director/Principal will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be “exceptional circumstances”. A leave of absence is granted at the Director/Principal’s discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. We will respond to all written applications for leave of absence in writing. *See Appendix* 5- *Leave of absence form.*

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance- where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes- this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (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 school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that the Director/Principal can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole purpose of a holiday

(unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Director/Principal must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances bases on individual facts and circumstances of the case. In almost every case we will not authorise a holiday in term time. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Director/Principal will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

- Study leave is used sparingly and is only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision will be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

7. Reducing persistent absence

Persistent absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason, including illness. This means e.g. across a 6 week half term a pupil would be classed as persistently absent if they missed 3 school days or more. Actions taken around persistent absence vary depending on the reason for absence.

Reducing persistent absence is managed through the Attendance Stages Process, see appendix 7.

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

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

The school can refer a case for a penalty notice and the Local Authority can issue the notice. 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 holidays taken in term time without permissions
- Where an excluded pupil 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.

8. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- First day calling and follow up
- Attendance stages protocol
- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Pupil voice activities
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Rewards such as certificates and prizes
- Additional learning support/intervention

- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages, including the use of a modified timetable (see appendix 2)
- Discussion with the attendance improvement officer
- Attendance panel meetings
- Engaging the support of other agencies
- Liaison with the County Attendance team

9. Attendance monitoring

The attendance improvement officer monitors' pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health.

The parent is expected to call the school each day their child is ill, unless agreed otherwise by the attendance improvement officer.

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days, the school will contact the parent in writing to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continue to rise after contacting the parent, we will consider making a home visit or seeking further advice from Children's Services.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-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 school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing body.

The school collects and uses attendance in the following ways:

- Weekly attendance report is produced for each base
- Overall weekly and attendance report
- 100% attendance report
- PA attendance report
- Individual attendance report for pupils who are subject to attendance action plans and/or Fast Track proceedings
- Termly herringbone audits
- Head of School Monitoring
- Attendance stages process

Data and reports are stored securely using the school system.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by the leadership. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

11. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Regulations, pupils will only be deleted from the register when the circumstances listed in Appendix 4 apply.

We will follow Norfolk County Council's Children Missing Education procedures when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown and the school will carry out joint enquiries with Norfolk County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

12. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-bullying
- National exclusion guidance
- Special Educational Needs
- Behaviour
- Joint Protocol between Health Services & Schools in respect of the management of pupil absence from school when medical reasons are cited