Church Lawton School

Liberty Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Date	December 2023
Written By	Director of Safeguarding
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1. Aim of this policy

To support excellent levels of attendance for all pupils to enable fulfilment of their potential at Church Lawton School

2. Key principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded.

- It is the responsibility of everybody in the school to improve attendance and punctuality.

- Where attendance or punctuality fall short of expected standards, steps will be taken to address this.

- Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. The school will work with pupils, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.

- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents, carers, or pupils have should be discussed withkey, worker, form tutor. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents, carers, and pupils should contact Autism Lead or Attendance officer

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1   The school will

The school will:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance.

- work with pupils and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and understand any barriers to attendance.

- investigate unexplained or unjustified absence.

- consider individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- share information and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance.

- regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data including to identify pupils or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future.

- ensure that all pupils can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case.

- ensure that the trust board, the executive team, and the school's leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy.

- ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the non-statutory attendance guidance issued by the Department for Education, *Working together to improve school attendance (2022)*

- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) (please refer to our Safeguarding Children and Young People (Child Protection) policy.

- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education

- regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels

- support pupils who are returning to education following long term absence

- ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using an electronic management information system.

- assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school to a designated senior leader.

- observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education ([Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](#) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

3.2 Parents and carers

We expect parents and carers to:

- ensure that their child arrives at the school on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment.

- promote the importance of regular attendance at home.

- follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child from the school (see section 6.1 below)

- avoid unnecessary absences.

- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.

- not take their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 6.3 below)

- inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent/carer with whom the child shall live

- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

- Responsibilities are set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk.)

3.3   Pupils

We expect pupils to:

- attend the school regularly and on time

- be punctual to all lessons

- follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the school late (see sections 4 and 5 below).

3.4   Designated attendance lead

The designated attendance lead ("DAL") at the school is Jenny Treanor

The DAL will be responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at the school and will:

- offer a clear vision for attendance improvement.

- evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes.

- oversee attendance and absence data analysis.

- ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and pupils.

- provide data and reports to support the work of the board of trustees (see below).

3.5   The board of trustees

The board of trustees will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the trust and school's ethos and policies.

- ensure the school's leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

- regularly review attendance data

- ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance.

- Ensure effective practice on attendance management and improvement is shared across its academies.

- have a Trust Attendance Lead (The Director of Safeguarding) who will drive improvement across the trust and act as a central point for academies with attendance queries.

- require the school to report to the trustees on the school's attendance at regular intervals, via the Trust Attendance Lead.

3.6   The Trust Attendance Lead

The Trust Attendance Lead will:

- ensure the school's leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

- review attendance data weekly, discuss and challenge trends and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.

- Facilitate the Attendance Training programme, providing opportunity for Attendance leads to work together across the Trust.

- require the school to report school's attendance data at regular intervals.

- Annually review the attendance policy

4 Registration

4.1 The school maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each pupil's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Registration session	Start time	End time (no longer than 30 mins after session start time)
Morning	9:00am	9:30am
Afternoon	1:00	1:30pm

4.2 Pupils who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session (within 30 minutes) will be marked as late. Where pupils arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 5 applies.

4.3 The register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes which can be found in the Department for Education's guidance on attendance - [Working together to improve school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](publishing.service.gov.uk)

4.4 The register is marked on the day only and no codes are entered in advance. Information regarding possible future absences will be noted however confirmed and recorded on the day of absence.

4.5 Where a pupil attends a registration session but does not attend subsequent lessons, we will treat this as a truancy and non-attendance matter in accordance with the behaviour policy and engage parents where necessary.

5 Late arrival

5.1 If a pupil arrives at the school after the relevant registration period has ended, he/she must immediately go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

5.2 Persistent lateness will be investigated and may result in escalation as outlined in Appendix 2.

6 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

6.1 *Authorised absence* - absence will only be authorised where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the school can authorise absence.

6.2   ***Unauthorised absence –*** absence will be marked as unauthorised where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

6.3   Reporting absence from the school

6.3.1   Where a pupil is to be absent from the school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the school by telephone on the morning of the day of the first absence and let the school know when they expect the pupil to return. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the school on each day of absence.

6.3.2   In cases of prolonged absence due to illness, the parents/cares may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor. If this evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

6.4   Appointments

6.4.1   Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a pupil should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

6.4.2   Where an appointment must take place during school time, the pupil should attend the school for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given to the form tutor.

6.4.3   For the time absent from the school to be marked as an authorised, confirmation of the appointment by way of an appointment card or letter must be provided.

6.5   Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)

6.5.1   Parents and carers should make every effort to avoid taking pupils out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time. The school will only authorise a leave of absence during term time where there are **exceptional** circumstances.

6.5.2   To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the Principal and, wherever possible, at least 4 school weeks ahead of the planned leave. This allows time for the Principal to request additional evidence to fully consider the request, prior to the start date of the requested leave.

6.5.3   Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the Principal will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:

•   will be confirmed in writing.

•   is solely at the Principal's discretion and

•   is final.

6.5.4 Where permission is granted, the Principal will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.

6.5.5 If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of the Academy, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see section 7 below).

6.6 Religious observance

6.6.1 We recognise that pupils of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and

- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs,

the absence from the school will be authorised.

6.6.2 We ask that parents/carers notify the School by writing to the pupil/'s form tutor in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

6.7 Coronavirus (Covid-19)

6.7.1 There may be circumstances in which pupils cannot attend school due to Covid-19. The school will adhere to any current guidance issued by the Department for Education relating to the recording of attendance in relation to Covid-19.

6.7.2 If a pupil tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded as illness.

7 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality

7.1 The school will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or groups of pupils who need it most. In doing so, the School, led by the DAL will:

- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.

- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and relevant leaders.

- identify pupils who need support from wider partners as soon as possible and deliver this support in a targeted manner.

- conduct thorough analysis of weekly, half-termly, termly and fully year data to identify patterns and trends.

- benchmark school attendance data at each level against local, regional and national level.

- monitor the impact of school strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular pupils and particular groups.

- work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups.

- hold regular meetings with the parents or carers of pupils who the school and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable.

7.2 Our procedures for managing unexplained absences can be found in **Appendix 1.**

7.3 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is:

- a pattern of unauthorised absence

- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival.

- persistent truancy or lateness

we will contact the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality see **Appendix 2.**

7.4 Failure to attend or arrive at lessons on time may also be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with the behaviour policy.

7.5 Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90% across the academic year. Absence at this level is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental co-operation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies and/or seeking to put in place a parenting contract.

7.6 Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any additional services.

7.7 Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending the school and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate or effective, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a fine (£60 if paid within 21 days, £120 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents.

7.8 When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, we will have regard to:

- section 6 of the Department for Education's guidance, Working together to improve school attendance: Working together to improve school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

- the local authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

7.9 In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.

Appendix 1 – Managing unexplained absences and responding to children missing education

School to attempt to make contact with parent/carer on Day 1 of Absence

⇩

If contact has not been made, no later than Day 3 of absence (best practice Day 1), Home-visit is conducted by school staff to establish pupils'

⇩

Days 0-10, Staff to continue to make efforts to engage the family and locate the pupil; recording their contact including all telephone conversations, texts, e-mails, letters, Home-visits. Liaising with professionals who may be involved. School should consider what action to be taken if attendance is 10% unauthorised.

⇩   ⇩

Whereabouts confirmed to be known
but not attending education or engaging with the school.

Whereabouts unknown

evidencing reasonable efforts to locate/make contact with the family, this can include move out of area.

⇩   ⇩

Child and family meet the threshold for Early Help or Social Care involvement. Make a referral evidencing the actions you have taken.

Absence meets the threshold for enforcement action as outlined in the [Local Authority] Code of Conduct, Child stays on roll.

Referral is made to: Children Missing Education Team No later than day 10 when there is no explanation for absence and above checks have been completed.

Detail clearly any safeguarding concerns you may have.

DO NOT remove from your roll until CME team has completed initial checks and confirmed that they can be removed.

Appendix 2 – Attendance flowchart

Attendance identified as 95% or below / Punctuality concern identified
Designated Person (HOY/Tutor/Teacher) investigates

⇩

Acceptable reason?

Yes ⇩   ⇩ No

No further action at this point – discussion to explore if there are any support needs in order to improve attendance

1st letter to parent/s

⇩

Improvement over 2-week period?

Yes →

No ⇩

2nd letter to parent/s – Attendance support meeting (EWO support may be sought at this point)

⇩

Improvement over 2-week period?

Yes →

No ⇩

3rd letter to parent/s. Internal school attendance Panel meeting (ISAP)- Designated Person to meet with parents/pupil and put in place Attendance Action Plan (AAP)

⇩

AAP review target met?

Yes →   No ⇩

Inform parents in writing.

Issue certificate for improved attendance if appropriate

Consider request for **penalty notice** and/or **4th letter** to parent/s to inform of referral to Education Welfare Service (see Local Authority Code of practice / Education welfare service guidance)