Somercotes Academy

Attendance Policy

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To make changes to this policy, please email admin@lincolnshiregateway.co.uk.

Lincolnshire Gateway Academies Trust

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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 pupil 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 pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

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 (Pupil 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.
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (DfE)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

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

3.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr S West, supported by Mrs R Smith and these members of staff can be contacted via the Academy office.

3.4 The attendance lead

The school attendance lead is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Principal
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance lead is Mrs Rebecca Smith and can be contacted via the Academy office.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office promptly at the start of the day and after lunch.

3.6 School administration staff

School administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Make calls to chase absence on a daily basis.

The designated administration assistant for attendance is Mrs Kate Samuell and can be contacted via the Academy office.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am 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 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. 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 name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

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

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

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9:30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin staff (see also section 7).

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 a 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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

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

Parent/Carer must complete a Leave of Absence form giving at least two full weeks' notice.

The Academy will check legislation and guidance, including what constitutes 'special circumstances' and what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances', and reasons for authorising/not authorising Leave of Absence.

The Academy may telephone the parent/carer if insufficient information is submitted. The Principal may grant or deny the request.

The Academy will complete the 'Reasons for Refusal' on Leave of Absence form.

The Academy will return the form to the parent, files copies of all paperwork as evidence, copy retained for Education Welfare Service.

The Academy will monitor attendance/absence over the appropriate period.

The Academy will inform the Education Welfare Service of related unauthorised absence.

Academy and Education Welfare Service liaise to determine course of action which may include Referral, action towards Penalty Notice, Fast Track to Improving Attendance (up to and including Prosecution).

Please note: All requests for Leave of Absence must be submitted prior to a student's absence, as permission cannot be given retrospectively.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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 necessary.

The pupil'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 school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

<u>What time will the gates be opened in the morning?</u>

- Staff will open the gates at approximately 8.20am to receive the children from the bus.
- All relevant staff should be outside as the gates are opened.
- Staff should greet the children at the gates.
- As the children come in, they must go out into the playground.

What happens at 8.50am?

- All students must enter the school and report to their designated tutor groups.
- Teaching Assistants will wait at the gates for any late arrivals
- Custodian will begin locking the gates, leaving the main gate open.

What happens if a child arrives after 8.50am?

- If a child is late, up until 9am the students enter via Student Services. After this, the gates are closed and the child must enter the school through main reception.
- It is important that there is a clear routine for any child who is late.
- Any child who is late will be recorded as such, and will receive a C2, a half hour lunchtime detention.

When must registers be completed by teachers?

- Registers should be taken in silence to ensure accuracy (and for good behaviour), and staff should complete a head count upon completion to check the number of students present in the room corresponds to the number marked present on the register.
- They must be taken and submitted in the first 5 minutes of each lesson.
- The register marks must reflect the children in the class at that time (obviously, this might, on occasions, include a child who has arrived but is out of the classroom for any reason when the register is taken).

How should registers be marked for any child who is not present?

- An 'N' mark must always be entered for any child who is not present when the class teacher takes the register. If any reason for absence has been provided, the mark will be edited by a member of the administration team.
- If a child arrives late, the teacher must edit the mark directly to reflect this.
- This includes any absence we have been notified about in advance.

What procedures are in place for children who are persistently late?

- If a child is persistently late, the office will notify the child's Head of Year. The Head of Year will contact home for the child to discuss the child's lateness with a parent/carer, to ascertain why they have been late, to ensure parents/carers are aware of the persistent lateness, and to outline the importance of good punctuality. They will also escalate the consequence for the behaviour in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- If there is no improvement over an agreed period of time, the Head of year will consider next steps which may include involvement from the EWO, a formal letter, meeting with parents/carers with the EWO and/or the Assistant Principal; Early Help support.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Send a text message to the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the text is not answered, we will follow up with a phone call to give parents a further opportunity to respond. If the school cannot

reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may ask the pastoral support assistants or the EWO to visit, or call the police.

- 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 school will consider involving an EWO.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels using SIMS In Touch. Parents can access up to date information regarding their child's attendance.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil 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 pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school 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 2 full weeks' notice before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the academy office. 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 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

5.2 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 a fine, or penalty notice, each parent is fined £60, which rises to £120 each if you do not pay within 21 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 holidays taken in term time without permission
- 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.

5.3 Absence related to a mental health issue

School staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions or perform mental health interventions, but they are expected to work to ensure regular attendance for every child by ensuring that the school is a calm, safe and supportive environment. The school has a duty of care to promote children's mental health and wellbeing, and embed this into the whole-school ethos and policies. As part of curriculum coverage, the school has a legal responsibility to teach pupils through a high quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate curriculum about respectful relationships; emotional wellbeing; mental health. This is in addition to supporting each individual's social and emotional development.

The school maintains high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of pupils who are anxious about attending school and recognise that, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue. The school recognises that there can be attendance challenges where a child has an SEMH issue, particularly a severe issue for which the child is receiving clinical treatment. Parents should notify school on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness, and any absences will be recorded as authorised where it is not possible for a pupil to attend due to illness, both physical and mental. Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams, or variable moods/ It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly. Any associated anxieties about attending school should be mitigated as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance. These adjustments should be agreed by and regularly reviewed with all parties, including parents/carers.

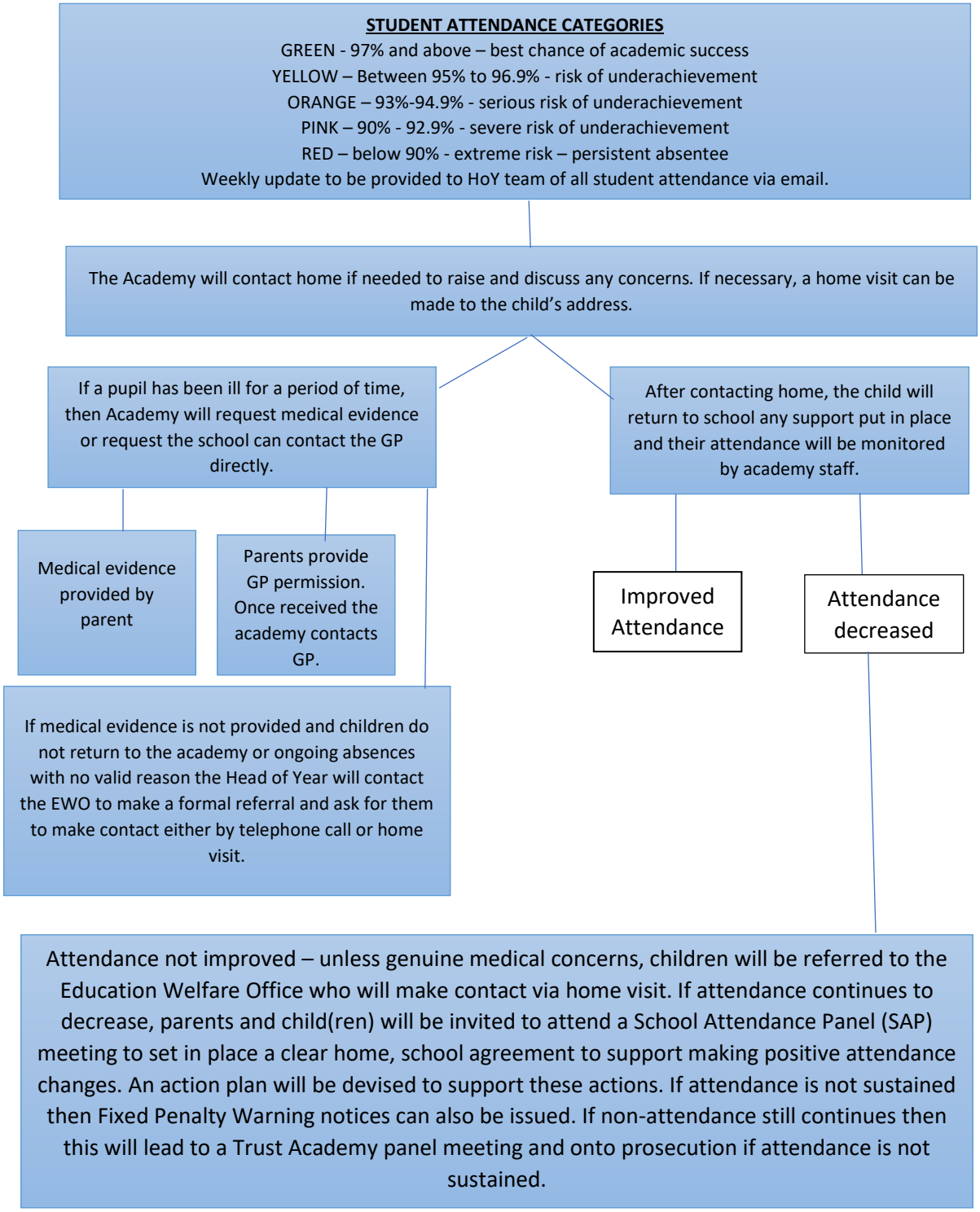
6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance rewards are given through our system of EPraise – this is part of a wider scheme, where pupils can spend EPraise points on rewards.

Attendance	100% attendance – every full week 100% attendance for a full half term 100% attendance for a full term	5 EPraise Points 10 EPraise Points 25 EPraise Points

Students with attendance of 97% or above will be rewarded at the end of each full term with a Rewards breakfast during form time in the final week of term.

7. Attendance monitoring



7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Parents will receive letters of concern where student attendance repeatedly falls. They may be invited into the academy to attend meetings with the pastoral team.

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 board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

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

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to heads of year and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils 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

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

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

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (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
- Send letters to notify parents that their child has fallen into persistent absence at the end of each half term
- Add students to a daily ‘watchlist’ so that their attendance can be closely monitored
- A Home Visit will be made where children are absent for 3 days and no contact as been made

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Mrs R Smith (Attendance Lead). At every review, the policy will be approved by the Principal.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
	Authorised absence	
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil 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)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	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 pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day