



South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust

Attendance Procedures

September 2023

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Attendance Procedures

School attendance is subject to various education laws and these school attendance procedures are written to reflect the laws and guidance produced by the Department for Education and the Local Authority (Cornwall or Plymouth depending on where the child normally resides).

Section 1

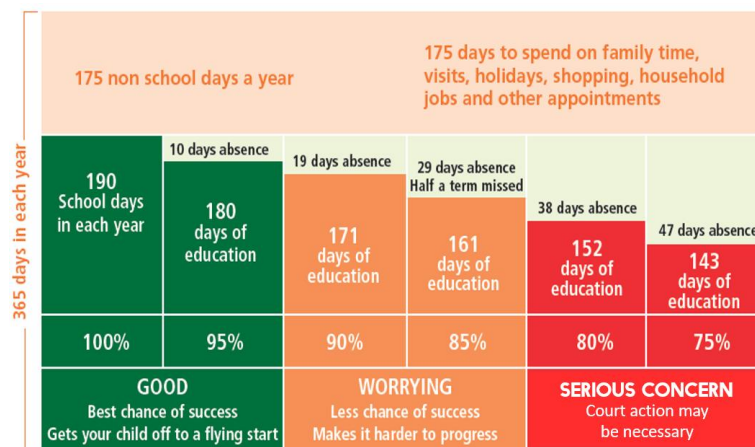
1.1 Rationale

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome through the embodiment of our Trust values. Parent/carers and students play a part in making each school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents/carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is each school's duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

1.2 Good attendance is importance because

- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork, and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment, or training
- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%



Section 2

2.1 Operating the procedures

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parent/carer and the child.

To help us all to focus on this, your child's school will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance through its website and letters, as well as contact with home
- report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- set targets for the school and individuals for attendance, where appropriate
- run events in which parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels
- have clear trigger points that may escalate to the next stage as detailed below

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell (generally confirmed by a medical professional), staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Informal stage – For children whose attendance is less than 100% but more than 95%

During this stage, schools are free to try employ a wide range of strategies tailored to the needs of the child and initiatives led by staff in each school. The goal of all of these various methods is always to achieve 100% attendance, to ensure parents are kept well informed and to check that absences are not an indicator of any possible emerging patterns.

All staff are expected to challenge the majority of students' absence from school to achieve the wish that students attend school 100% of the time.

Some examples of how this may be achieved are as follows:

Some schools focus on the idea of 'broken weeks':

If a student has two broken weeks of attendance (this can be triggered if a child misses one session of attendance (morning or afternoon mark) in each week) in four calendar weeks – the teacher/tutor of schools using these methods try support initially by speaking to the student. They may intervene with appropriate actions such as phone calls home, attendance/punctuality report, conversation about potential barriers to good attendance.

Most schools continue to experiment with new technology and new ways of contacting parents:

The school may send home weekly letters, updates, or emails to inform parents of their child's current attendance level.

The school may use text messages to inform parents of absence, requesting parents/carers to contact the school.

The school may use apps (such as ClassCharts) to enable live reporting of attendance data.

For early signs of absence patterns emerging, the teacher/tutor may refer to the Head of Key Stage/Head of Year/pastoral team for initiation of formal stage. It is the school's decision to proceed onto the formal stage and this can happen at any time, even if the informal stage hasn't commenced.

Formal Stages

- Stage 2 – Student percentage falls below 95% (5% absence) - concern letter sent to parents/carers. The school (depending on the child's historical pattern of absence) may request medical evidence before any future absences can be authorised
- Stage 3 – Student percentage falls below 90% (10% absence) – the student become a 'persistent absentee'. A further concern letter sent to parents/carers. Parent/carers may be invited to a meeting to discuss their child's attendance. As part of this meeting, an Attendance Contract may be drawn up to highlight current concerns/barriers and set targets for improvements (with an agreed timescale to monitor improvement)
- Stage 4 – Student percentage falls below 85% (15% absence) - The student may now be referred to an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who may proceed with legal action. Parent/carer may be invited to a meeting with the EWO and a member of school staff (depending on who is most appropriate within the child's setting)
- Stage 5 – Any student whose attendance is below 50%, is referred to as Severely Absent. The parent/carer, unless the absence is authorised/unavoidable, will likely face prosecution

First Warning and Final Warning of Prosecution – If the above stages do not have the required impact of improving a child's attendance rates in school, it may be necessary to proceed with legal action. This can take many routes such as a Fixed Penalty Notice or an Education Supervision Order (ESO) when a legal order is placed on a child to attend school each day. We hope to avoid these actions, and this is of course possible with early identification and support as outlined previously.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of each school's Attendance Lead

In each school, a Senior Leader oversees, directs and co-ordinates the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and to ensure these attendance procedures are consistently applied throughout the school. The Senior Leader will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed.

Responsibilities of tutors and staff

Tutors/class teachers will:

- ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- promote good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities in line with these attendance procedures
- liaise with the Attendance Lead on matters of attendance and punctuality if a student's absence causes concern

- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence to the appropriate Leader (whether Head of Year (Secondary) or Head of Key Stage or Headteacher (Primary)).
- support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school through discussions and supportive interventions offered.
- log interventions, contact with parents, discussions with students, letters sent etc

Responsibilities of students

- attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- arrive in school on time ready for the morning
- arrive at all lessons and learning time punctually
- take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours (with parental consent)

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents must:

- inform the school on the first day of absence (and subsequent days if required)
- discuss with the school (usually teacher/tutor) any planned absences well in advance and apply for these on an Absence Request Form (available from the school)
- support the school in aiming for 100% attendance from their child each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and every subsequent day of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments (these may not be authorised if it is for non-urgent appointments)
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance (absences are rarely authorised), such as if a parent/carer who is serving in the Military has leave; a housing crisis which requires immediate absence; attendance at a funeral; respite care of a Looked After Child (LAC)

Section 3

3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session.

3.2 Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions, retrieve prior knowledge or organise work. If a student is late, they can miss learning time with their class teacher getting vital information as well as causing disruption to the lesson for others.

- **all students are expected to be in school on time.** Please see your school's website for the specific timings for your child's school
- all lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary

- arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with the Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site but is legally recorded as an absence
- if a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, medical appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays

Additional codes used nationally can be found in Section 5.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and could be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further detail).

3.3 What to do if my child is absent?

First day of absence

A student not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a student is absent the parent/carer must:

- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- provide any appropriate medical evidence that has been produced explaining if a longer-term absence from school is necessary with clear dates of return (e.g. post-operative care)

Second day of absence

Parent/carers are required to contact school EVERY DAY of a child's absence. The school will continue to try and contact the child's parent/carer on this day.

Third day of absence

Please note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, on the third day of absence, the school may have to start safeguarding procedures (although the school can decide to commence this earlier if they deem it necessary). The school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the student, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. The school reserves the right to call the Police for a welfare check to be carried out.

Five days of absence

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive sessions. If a student is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority may be notified that the child is *missing in education (CME)*. Children's Services (MARU/MASH) staff or Police may visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. It is the parents/carers responsibility to inform the school of any changes to contact numbers and addresses.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a student misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a *persistent absentee*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a student by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, the school monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data may be shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

Section 4

4.1 Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the child's school) in advance and before making any travel arrangements. The school reserves the right to only authorise one session for medical appointments during school hours unless the appointment can be proven to be an exceptional circumstance.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and will likely result in a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and the school expects parents/carers to help the school by not taking children out during school time.

4.2 Part time timetables

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (September 2022) clarifies the responsibilities on schools to minimise the number of students on a reduced timetable / part time timetable. These should only be used where the student has a medical condition (evidenced by a medical professional) which means the student is unable to attend school full time. They should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time possible and be reviewed regularly.

Section 5

5.1 Understanding absence codes

Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes (but is not an exhaustive list):

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily
- to go shopping
- their own or family birthdays
- to look after siblings
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence, they have been on holiday.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

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 appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending another 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)	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)	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. Includes absences caused by COVID	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	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

Section 6

6.1 DfE guidance

The Department for Education produce guidance that summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, Headteachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents. These requirements are contained in:

Working together to improve school attendance September 2022

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

Section 7

7.1 Various situations not covered above and FAQs from parents/carers

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. The school will be more than happy to offer a meeting with your child's teacher/ tutor to see if there is something, we can support with to encourage improved attendance. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

We recommend that you contact your child's school immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, perceived bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional (your child's GP for example).

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

I'm considering home schooling my child, what should I do?

We truly believe that the vast majority of children should be in school. Whilst it is the parent/carer's legal right to choose Elective Home Education, we will almost always dissuade against this move and would encourage parents/carers to discuss any potential concerns, or reasons why they may be considering EHE, with the child's teacher/tutor, a member of the Safeguarding Team, or someone from the Attendance Team.

My child is leaving the school, what do I need to do?

If your child is leaving our school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 6, Year 11 or Year 13, parents are asked to:

- 1- Give the school comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing otherwise we are not allowed to remove a child from roll
- 2- If students leave and we do not have the above information, then your child may be considered to be a *child missing education (CME)*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services (MARU/MASH), the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided

We are a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and/or Showman family and wish to travel

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. If you intend not to return to your child's school, please communicate this to the school as soon as possible.

Study leave (Year 11 and 13)

As a research led organisation, we are always keen to learn from research into methods that give children the best possible chance of success in their examinations. Currently the very best available research states that pupils/students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. Hence, study leave is not currently granted during this period, and students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Schools, on occasion, may attempt new combinations of home and school learning including 'period 5' and holiday sessions. In such cases, parents will be kept fully informed of any changes to usual expectations.

Teenage pregnancy (Secondary)

Support will be directed to keeping a student in school and, wherever possible, their return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence may be treated as unauthorised. Their case will usually be referred to CHES (Community and Hospital Education Service) who will likely provide education if the child isn't able to attend school immediately before or after the birth.

My child doesn't attend the school due to diagnosed health conditions (physical and/or mental)

Schools will support children and families to re-engage in learning wherever possible. Where attending school site goes against medical advice (which should be provided in writing to the school), the school will work with external partners (such as Community and Hospital Education Service (CHES)) to initiate education at home or at another suitable venue. This will be reviewed every 6 weeks and the school should continue to carry out regular safeguarding checks on the child, as well as suitability checks on the provider in line with the guidance as stated with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).