

Abbey Academies Trust



Every Child Matters

POLICY

For

Attendance

Amended

September 2016	September 2019	September 2022
September 2017	September 2020	February 2023
September 2018	September 2021	September 2023

Every Child Matters within a loving and caring Christian environment

We have a vision of a community in which each person is offered the opportunity to fulfil their potential and to understand themselves to be valued for who they are. Through a stimulating and challenging learning environment, we pursue academic excellence and seek the flourishing of all members of the school community. As inclusive and caring church schools, our commitment is to help pupils become thoughtful, open-minded and compassionate human beings who have the knowledge, skills and motivation they need to bring about positive transformation in the world.

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."
John Wesley

Abbey Academies Trust schools seek to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. We recognise that children are created in the image of God but also value their individuality as they explore their own God given talents and are treated with respect and dignity at all times. We are committed to giving all of our children every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards. We do this by taking account of pupils' varied life experiences and needs and offering them learning opportunities that inspire them to want to attend school. We offer a broad and balanced curriculum and have high expectations for all our children including outstanding attendance. The achievements, attitudes and well-being of all our children matter.

"I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11. We actively seek to overcome the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude individual pupils, or groups of pupils. This means that equality of opportunity must be a reality for our children. We make this a reality through the attention we pay to the different individuals, and groups of children within our school.

As a Rights Respecting School (UNICEF) we promote children's rights and put them at the heart of the school's practice and ethos to improve well-being and help all children to realize their potential. When considering attendance and punctuality we focus on:

Article 3 which states that adults should think about the best interests of children and young people when making choices that affect them.

Article 28 states that children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are; and

Article 29

You have the right to education which develops your personality, respect for other's rights and the environment.

The following documents have been used to support the writing of this policy:

- *Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities*
- *Working together to improve school attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities*

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore Abbey Academies Trust and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. (See Appendix 2)

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Although schools are not held to account for pupils' attendance until their pupils reach statutory school age, the school will monitor poor patterns of attendance in nursery and address them as soon as they become concerned.

Members of staff responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school

Abbey Academies Trust: Mrs Sarah Moore (Executive Headteacher/CEO)
Bourne Abbey CofE Primary Academy: Mr Peter Bellamy (Executive Headteacher)
Bourne Elsea Park CofE Primary Academy: Mr Peter Bellamy (Executive Headteacher)
Colsterworth CofE Primary School: Mrs Louise Jordan (Head of School)

For further information and contact details of school staff who should be contacted regarding details and support on attendance, the following email addresses or phone numbers should be used:

Bourne Abbey CofE Primary Academy: 01778 422163 or BAP.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk

Bourne Elsea Park CofE Primary Academy: 01778 426968 or BEP.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk

Colsterworth CofE Primary School: 01476 860569 or CSW.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk

Key aims

1. To continue to improve the overall attendance levels of pupils at Abbey Academies Trust schools
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with the school
3. To develop a clear framework of responsibilities to ensure actions to promote attendance are completed
4. To provide support and advice to parents and pupils and have clear procedures for requesting pupil absence
5. To implement a system of rewards for good attendance
6. To work in partnership with other agencies to promote attendance

Key actions to achieve each aim

- 1) To continue to improve the overall attendance levels of pupils at Abbey Academies Trust schools**
 - Apply the Whole School Attendance Policy consistently
 - Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality
 - Monitor attendance regularly and report it to stakeholders
- 2) To make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with the school**
 - Produce termly reports for Trustees/governors including information regarding 'Children Missing in Education' (CME) and 'Children Electively Home Educated' (EHE)
 - Use the school newsletter to remind of importance when it is deemed appropriate
 - Remind parents of the importance of good attendance
 - Introduce reward systems to celebrate outstanding attendance (not just 100% for the term or year) and for those pupils who have not been able to attend due to circumstances beyond their control e.g. medical conditions
 - Provide school staff training on attendance
- 3) To develop a clear framework of responsibilities to ensure actions to promote attendance are completed**
 - Maintain clear and unambiguous procedures for statutory registration

- Make phone contact, using designated school staff, on first day of absence.
- Ensure clearly defined late registration procedures
- Respond swiftly to lateness (in respect of both pupils and parents)
- Provide Attendance team with time to monitor attendance and identify any patterns for individual pupils
- Review attendance regularly
- Ensure procedures are robust and follow the LA 'School Risk Assessment for Children Missing in Education (CME) and Children Electively Home Educated (EHE)'.

4) To provide support and advice to parents and pupils and have clear procedures for requesting pupil absence

- Highlight attendance in newsletters and Collective Worship/Assemblies
- Provide clear information on the benefits of outstanding attendance
- Provide individual attendance information clearly in each child's annual report
- Inform parents of current and previous attendance if causing concern
- Inform parents of new statutory amendments to pupil registration regulations that came into force from 1 September 2013. The changes remove all references to authorised absence being granted for family holidays during term time and the "allowance" of up to 10 days authorised leave
- All absence requests to be dealt with by Executive Head Teacher/Head of School
- Parents/carers to be informed that if they choose to take term time breaks or if attendance is poor, they could be issued with a penalty notice which may lead to a fine.
- Ensure Parents/carers to only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstance and do so in advance

5) To implement a system of rewards for good attendance

- Provide termly bronze, silver and gold certificates for attendance (autumn, spring, summer)
- Provide annual certificates for attendance
- Provide a termly attendance prize for families (Christmas, Easter and end of the summer term.)
- Provide a reward for 100% attendance in a school year
- To award 'Honks the Goose', 'Elsea Bear', 'Banana Monkey' or the attendance trophy to the class with the highest attendance each week in award assemblies.
- To award individual weekly 100% attendance in weekly award assemblies with an attendance pencil and a prize. This will be especially awarded to children who suffer from more serious medical conditions or who are dealing with challenging situations in their lives.

Important times:

The school day starts at **8.55am**, children are allowed to come straight into school after the gates open at **8.45am**. Gates will be closed at **9am** and any child arriving after that will have to enter school by the front entrance and sign the late register.

Registers are marked by **9.10am** and your child will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in by that time.

Registration closes at **9.30am** and if your child arrives at school after this time they will receive an unauthorised absence mark.

The school day ends at 3.15pm.

Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with school staff to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Illness and medical appointments

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments around the school day. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

Parents and carers are asked to contact the school office by phone or in person if their child is absent from school. They are asked to update the school on a daily basis during the absence.

If the school has not been notified of a child's reason for absence, a member of the Attendance Team will contact the parent/carer on the first morning by phone to ascertain the reason for the absence. Unexplained absences will be classed as 'unauthorised absence'. If school cannot get in touch with you, we have to follow the Local Authority 'children missing in education' procedures.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

AUTHORISED absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent feels they need support getting their child to school regularly and on time, then we will work with that family to improve the situation.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance is below 90% across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need the parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this (See Appendix 1). We will work with parents to help understand and address any reasons for absence including in-school barriers to attendance. Where outside barriers are identified we will signpost access to any required services in the first instance.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. Where there is lack of engagement from parents we will hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in the future. Where support is not working, we will engage with, or if appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, staff from Abbey Academies Trust may intensify support through statutory children's social care.

If necessary, we will work with other schools in the local areas, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

Severe Absenteeism (SA)

Particular focus will be given to pupils who are absent from school for more than they are present (**those missing 50% of more of school**). These severely absent pupils are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners and it is likely we will agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority. This support may include a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of education provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school. If all avenues of support have been facilitated but severe absence for unauthorised reasons remains it is likely to constitute neglect. In these instances, we will be mindful of potential safeguarding issues and, where these remain, it may be necessary for a full children's social care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children's Safe in Education 2023.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Abbey Academies Trust maintain the same ambition for maximum attendance for SEND pupils. We recognise that some pupil face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. We will consider additional support from internal support (such as pastoral care, support from SENCo etc...) as well as wider services and external partners and make timely referrals if required. We will monitor the attendance data of SEND children specifically reviewing this data with leaders and supporting those who need it.

Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance

Abbey Academies Trust will follow DfE guidance (February 2023) where there is a pupil experiencing social, emotional or mental health issues that are affecting attendance. Abbey Academies Trust will make reasonable adjustments to support attendance. The Trust will maintain high expectations for the attendance, engagement and punctuality of pupils who are anxious about attending school. Abbey Academies Trust will work with parents/carers in conversations at an early stage. Abbey Academies Trust will also work with other professionals and provide cross-agency support where appropriate.

Support for pupils with a social worker

Abbey Academies Trust will inform the social worker of any pupils if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices may be applied for persistent poor attendance (below 90%) or leaves of absence which take the attendance figure to less than 90%. A Penalty Notice is issued under the following legislation:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise;
- Where a child is a registered student at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act;
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or £120.00;

Legal intervention

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate Abbey Academies Trust may work with the local authority's Attendance Support Team to take forward legal intervention. If necessary, the Trust will following guidance from the local authority Attendance Support Team and the latest documentation, including *'Working together to improve school attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities'*)

Abbey Academies Trust will always consider balancing reward, support for pupils and families and sanctions appropriately.

Policy reviewed: Autumn term 2023

Next review Autumn term 2024

Appendix 1

Persistent Absence (Those missing 10% of more of school)

Background

The following table shows estimated cumulative absent session thresholds for around 15 per cent and 10 per cent:

	15% absence	10% absence
Half term 1	10 or more sessions	7 or more sessions
Half term 1-2 (autumn term)	22 or more sessions	14 or more sessions
Half term 1-3	30 or more sessions	20 or more sessions
Half term 1-4 (autumn term and spring term combined)	38 or more sessions	25 or more sessions
Half term 1-5	46 or more sessions	31 or more sessions
Half term 1-6 (full academic year)	56 or more sessions	38 or more sessions

(1 session = 1 morning or 1 afternoon attendance)

GOLD	Attendance is 97% and above Absent for less than 6 days in a year.
SILVER	Attendance is 95 - 97% Absent for less than 10 days in a year.
BRONZE	Attendance is 93 - 95% Missing up to 13 days a year.
RED	Attendance is 80 - 93% Missing up to 40 days a year! Or eight weeks!
WISE UP!	Attendance is below 80% Missing so much time from school means it will be almost impossible for your child to learn effectively.
SEVERE!	Attendance is below 50% Severely absent pupils are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. If all avenues of support have been facilitated but severe absence for unauthorised reasons remains it is likely to constitute neglect.

The DfE and Ofsted continue to have a sharp focus on persistent absence as there is a direct link between persistent absence from school and poor attainment.

Schools are not judged solely on their overall attendance figures, but also on the number of pupils who fall into the persistent absence category.

Appendix 2

How much education does your child miss if they are absent from school?

The table below shows how many days of education your child will miss over a period of 6 years whilst they are in Primary School.

Years	Percentage attendance						School days missed
	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	
1	9.5	19	28.5	38	47.5	57	
2	19	38	57	76	95	114	
3	28.5	57	85.5	114	142.5	171	
4	38	76	114	152	190	228	
5	47.5	95	142.5	190	237.5	285	
6	57	114	171	228	285	342	

How much education is your child going to miss?

If your child's percentage attendance is **95%** throughout primary school, your child will have missed just less than **1 term** (57 days) of their education

If your child's percentage attendance is **90%** throughout primary school, your child will have missed about **1½ terms** (114 days) of their education.

If your child's percentage attendance is **85%** throughout primary school, your child will have missed just less than **1 year** (171 days) of their education.

If your child's percentage attendance is **80%** throughout primary school, your child will have missed about **1 year and 1 term** (228 days) of their education.

If your child's percentage attendance is **75%** throughout primary school, your child will have missed about **1½ years** (285 days) of their education.

If your child's percentage attendance is **70%** throughout primary school, your child will have missed about **1 year and 2 terms** (342 days) of their education.

Appendix 3

Effective school attendance improvement and management

(From 'Working together to improve school attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities' May 2022)

