

DIOCESE OF
ST ALBANS
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Attendance Policy

Primary School Level

Kensworth CE Academy

Policy type	Local Academy/Core Trust Policy
Adopted by the Trust Board	April 2018
For Review	Annually
Headteacher Signature	

This policy is a mandatory policy for all DSAMAT Academies and will be implemented with agreed local amendments.

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1. Introduction

This policy explains why attendance is essential for children to reach their full educational potential and how the academy promotes good attendance. It also covers how the academy handles lateness and persistent absences. It is written to reflect the religious character of the academy and its Christian ethos and values.

For a child to achieve their full educational potential a high level of attendance is essential. Kensworth CE Academy is committed to providing an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

Parents and pupils play an active part in making our academy successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The minimal acceptable standard of attendance at Kensworth CE Academy is 96%.

For our children to take full advantage of the education opportunities offered it is vital your child is at the academy, on time, every day the academy is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality during their schooling are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work.

School attendance is subject to statutory guidance set by the Department for Education and the government. This policy takes into account the latest guidance provided by government. Any national statutory changes will be implemented by the academy as soon as practicable.

2. Attendance

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between educational achievement and absence level
- Regular attenders make better progress, both social and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to maintain
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders find transition points easier to manage

2.1 Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the academy, parent/s and the child. The academy will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in regular communications
- Report to you on how your child is performing in the academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good attendance through school certificates and badges – Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.
- Set attendance targets for the whole school and some individual pupils. Whole school targets are well publicised

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Responsibilities of the academy's attendance leader

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the academy.

This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place. If absence is frequent or continuous staff will discuss with parents/carers the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep these to a minimum.

Only Kensworth CE Academy can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent/carer has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call, email or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it. If, after investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

3.2 Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the attendance lead on matters of absence and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

3.3 Responsibilities of pupils

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an unavoidable reason for absence.
- Arrive at school on time ready for learning

3.4 Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility. (Section 7 Education Act 1996 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/7>). Permitting absence from the academy that is not authorised by the academy creates an offence in law.

- A 'parent' is defined in Section 576 of the Education Act 1896 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/576> and is defined as follows
- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that the child lives with and is looked after by that person, irrespective of what their relationship is).

3.5 Responsibility of Diocese of St Albans Multi Academy Trust

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.
- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it every two years
- Agree targets for attendance at the academy.
- Ensure that they receive reports from the head teacher regarding academy attendance as part of the academy monitoring or academy profiling exercise.
- Where the academy is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Board believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance.
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the academy attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively.
- Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the head teacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

3.6 Parents will have a duty to:

- Inform the academy on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences will in advance

- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence
- Ensure that their child arrives at school correctly dressed, on time and ready to learn
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- Take holidays only during official school holiday times
- Collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent or significantly late the school is obliged to share concerns as necessary, including with both the Police and Children's Social Care.

4. Recording attendance

Legally the register must be taken twice daily. The academy begins at 8.55am. Doors to the academy will be open at 8.50 am. Morning registration is at 8.55 am and closes at 9.10pm. Afternoon registration is take 1.30pm

5. Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss time with their class teacher getting vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others.

- The academy day begins at 8.55am and all pupils are expected to be in the academy at this time
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information may be used by the courts, should 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 for Education guidance. This mark shows the pupil to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment and an official letter/note is provided by the dentist/hospital they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointment are to be made outside of academy hours or during academy holidays

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated absent lateness (U code) are unauthorised absences and may be subject to legal action (see Section 9 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists; parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend to formally discuss the attendance concerns. The Local Authority Attendance Officer may attend this meeting.

If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 12-week period Local Authority may issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

6. What to do if my child is absent

A child who does not arrive at Kensworth CE Academy and where the parents have not informed the academy is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information for any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Send a note/email in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular academy attendance
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer and/or head teacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Access and Inclusion Service if absence is unauthorised and doesn't meet academy expectations

6.1 Third day absence

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to consider implementing the child missing in education procedures as set down by Local Authority. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and the wider family.

6.2 Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is missing education. Staff from the Local Authority will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

6.3 Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses **19 days/38 sessions** of absence across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a *persistent absentee*, i.e. a pupil with 90% attendance or below. Absence

for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows that these gaps at whatever level affect attainment. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the DSAMAT, Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Attendance of 90% over a 5-year period is the equivalent of a child missing half an academic year of schooling. Any persistent absentee pupils and their parents may be subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract/legal action.

7. Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend the academy every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an unavoidable reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence:** is when the academy 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 academy has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from the academy after a parent's request

Unauthorised absences are likely to include: parents allowing their child/ren permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for

- Shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- Truancy before or during the academy day
- Absences which have not been explained

An academy 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.

8 Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance Regulations were updated in September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that head teachers 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. Circumstances where absences may be regarded as exceptional will vary from school to school and family to family.

There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in academy 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 in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the academy, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions of absence reaches the thresholds in the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (10 sessions of absence in 12 school weeks), parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 9 for detail). Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

For national guidance refer to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

9. Legal measures

9.1 Failing to ensure regular school attendance (including penalty notices)

Section 7 of The Education Act 1996 requires parents to secure the education of their children of compulsory school age.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and
- b) To any special education needs s/he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

9.2 Tackling persistent absence or lateness

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school and are not attending regularly:

- Penalty Notices: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
<http://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/38/contents>
- Magistrates Court Action under Sec 444 (1) and (1a) of The Education Act 1996
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/444>

9.3 Penalty Notices

Local Authority Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices states that where a child has had 10 unauthorised absences in a 12 school week period, the academy may request a penalty notice be issued. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that the powers for this legal sanction are applied consistently and fairly across all academies and their families within the authority. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/444>

Penalty Notices can be issued when

- A pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the academy, providing the academy has taken into account Department for Education guidance to inform its decision making.
- Where the academy believes that the sanction will lead to an improvement in attendance, e.g. persistent late arrival at the academy; parents' failure to attend/co-operate at a parenting contract meeting

Parents and carers will be alerted/warned about the possibility of a penalty notice being requested for unauthorised absence, via the academy's newsletter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the academy's attendance policy and website.

If more than one parent has parental responsibility, both parents will receive a Penalty Notice. In situations where there is more than one pupil in a family with irregular academy attendance, multiple penalty notices can be issued to the same parents during the year. However, this action must be subject to careful consideration and co-ordination.

Penalty Notice costs:

- £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute

9.4 **Legal action taken under Section 444 (1) and (1a) Education Act 1996**

Where the academy has tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absences but the measures taken have been unsuccessful, it can then refer on to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer. If there is either no improvement in the attendance nor satisfactory evidence provided for the absences following their intervention, this may result in legal action at Magistrates Court being initiated.

Sanctions available to the court include;

- A fine of up to £2,500
- A conditional discharge – you will be given a set amount of time in which to improve your child's attendance. Should you fail the Council may bring a further prosecution against you and, if found guilty, you will be sentenced for both offences
- An absolute discharge – the case is proved but you will not be subject to a penalty, although you will receive a conviction
- A community order such as unpaid work, curfew or tagging
- Imprisonment – for up to three months

10. Advice and guidance

10.1 My child is trying to avoid coming to the academy. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend schooling. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the academy, the parents/carers and the child.

If a child is reluctant to attend, then it is better not to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may also make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries.

Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend the academy 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.

10.2 What can I do to encourage my child to attend the academy?

- Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.
- For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for your both.
- 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!

10.3 Leavers

If your child is leaving our academy (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

- Give the academy office 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 academy in writing.

Please note: if pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

10.4 Absence through child participation in extra curricula exams etc (e.g. music) including theatre, film or television work and modelling

A parent can seek leave of absence from an academy for their child to take part in a performance.

They must however contact the head teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of this, the impact that this may have on their child's education, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence.

It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

10.5 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents can seek leave of absence from the academy for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competition.

It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence.

Head teachers can authorise this absence. For further advice and guidance on Child Employment and Performance Licenses contact Central Bedfordshire Council Access and Inclusion Service on 0300 300 4953.

10.6 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

The absence of a child from a Traveller family who has left the area can be authorised if the absence is for the parent's work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return.

An academy cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll whilst they are travelling. When the child is travelling the academy holds the place open and records the absence as authorised by using the T code.

Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at the academy although may offer support to the pupil whilst they are away.

Please note that pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to use travelling for work purposes as a defence against prosecution. For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, contact Central Bedfordshire Council Access and Inclusion Service on 0300 300 4953.

10.7 Religious observance

The absence of a child may be authorised if the religious festival falls on a school day exclusively set aside by the religious body to which the pupils parents/carers belong.

11. The Admission Register and Attendance Register

11.1 Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

11.2 Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

12. Monitoring and Review

12.1 This policy forms part of the Diocese of St Albans Multi Academy Trust suite of policies. Policy formats are centrally generated and locally amended. The Trust has delegated [Kensworth CE Academy] the responsibility for the local implementation and monitoring of this policy. The Trust will approve all major changes to this policy. The policy will be promoted and published throughout the Trust.

12.2 This policy will be reviewed every two years or if there are changes to the relevant legislation.