

Date of last review	January 2024	Review period	1 year
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Attendance Policy and Procedures

Enabling a world of freedom, opportunity and fulfilment

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History of Policy Changes

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change
January 2023	All	New document	Trust Board
November 2023	3	Additional bullet point added regarding frequency of attendance reporting. Referenced in procedures	Standards Committee
November 2023	4	Change national average to the likelihood as NA is very different by phase	Published national data
December 2023	5/9	Example posters removed	Published separately
December 2023	11	Appendix 2.0 removed	Published separately
March 2024	9	Additional information regarding attendance affected by Mental Health Issues	Trust Board

Key Personnel

Academy Leader	Ben Hillier
DSL	Craig Chambers
Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance	Craig Chambers

Policy Aims

Expectations and responsibilities

At all times we will:

- have high expectations for every student's attendance at school. 97% is the benchmark for 'good' attendance
- set expectations about attendance from the outset through the transition process
- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the Academy's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity
- not stop pushing for whole-academy improvement once attendance reaches the national average
- see the process of securing good attendance for all students as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished'

Work with students, parents and carers

At all times we will:

- communicate high expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to students
- explain to parents and students why good attendance is important and how it helps students to achieve
- report to parents their child's current attendance if attendance drops below the expected standard
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that we can work together in acting accordingly
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents

Recording keeping

At all times we will:

- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately

- systematically analyse attendance information looking for patterns and trends
- use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals and at a whole- Academy level

Legal Framework

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

Parents who condone absence without good reason should recognise that this is an offence in law and may result in legal action. There is no entitlement in law to time off in term time (leave of absence). Magna Learning Partnership Academies will not authorise leave of absence in term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Whilst there is not a definitive list these are typically for the following reasons:

- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Close family bereavement
- Matters relating to a child's welfare

Individual cases will be addressed by the Academy Leader or Academy Attendance Lead. Should a parent need to apply for leave of absence they are required to apply directly to the Academy Leader in writing. A decision will be made in writing at the earliest opportunity.

Where a student has been absent and the Academy has not been able to make contact to explain the absence within a 10 day period (5 days for a vulnerable student), the Missing Children Procedures will be actioned by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and relevant agencies notified.

Fixed Penalty Notices

A penalty notice is an alternative to being taken to court by the Local Authority. If a child has 10 or more sessions (am/pm) of unauthorised absence, the Academy will inform the Education Welfare Service who may issue a penalty notice for each child to each parent. Anyone who has day to day care of a child is considered a 'parent' and legally responsible for making sure the child attends school, this could be a step parent or a parent not living at the child's home address.

The penalty is £120 per child per parent if paid within 28 days. The penalty is reduced to £60 per child per parent if paid within the first 21 days

If a parent fails to pay the fine within 28 days, the Local Authority will have no option but to prosecute a parent in the Magistrates' Court. This could lead to a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child.

Expectations and Responsibilities

The likelihood of children making expected progress reduces significantly when attendance falls below 95%. 95% attendance equates to 9.5 days of missed school in an academic year of 190 days. A student with attendance

below 90% is deemed persistently absent. This equates to over 19 days of missed school in an academic year and approximately 6 months over 5 years.

>99% 'Excellent attendance'

>97% 'Good attendance'

>95% 'Average attendance'

Attendance	Number of days absent	Approx time missed in 5 years
99%	2 days	10 days
97%	6 days	2 months
95%	9.5 days	3 months
90%	19 days	6 months
85%	28.5 days	9 months
80%	38 days	1 year

Transition to Secondary School

At the time of transition, the Class Teachers will identify individuals with patterns of attendance below 95%, and any student at or above this figure who required significant intervention by the Primary Academy in achieving this attendance, and share this information with the Senior Leader for Attendance as well as the next Class Teacher prior to the start of the academic year.

The Attendance Lead will flag siblings in families with poor attendance histories. This 'watch' list will be monitored closely by the Academy leader.

Empowering Young People

Realising the Academy's strategic aims and objectives is a significant contributing factor in assuring high attendance without the need for intervention. It is our collective responsibility to realise these aims and objectives and in doing so demonstrating that securing 'good' attendance is a collective responsibility. Our ultimate aim is to achieve an attendance of 100%. Through the completion of regular stakeholder surveys, we will seek the views of our students and respond to this information. We want students to enjoy their education experience, make positive lifestyle choices and forge resilience when faced with challenges.

Procedures – Guidance for all Staff

Work with students, parents and carers

The importance of communication and positive relationships

The Academy will ensure it communicates with both students and parents regularly and 'strongly' about the importance of 'good' attendance. This includes communications at least termly, through the reporting cycle and at parent events, through the pastoral programme, through rewards and through the academy website. For individual communications see response to student absence.

It is vital that all staff 'notice absence'. *"I note you were absent yesterday"* is a common phrase we all must use. Do not allow students' absence to go under the radar. For this communication to work well we must first build a positive relationship with the student and then 'lift the lid' to find out what are the barriers to good attendance.

In all communications links will be made between attendance and how it enables students to achieve. There is compelling evidence that correlates good attendance to 'at least' good achievement and attainment.

In communicating with both students, parents and carers we will: 'listen, understand, empathise and support – but not tolerate'. For this communication to work effectively, staff need to have built positive working relationships with parents, so that parents trust them. At the same time, these relationships need to be built on honesty, so that parents accept tough messages about attendance when they need to. It is vital that Class Teachers build these positive relationships with parents at the earliest opportunity.

Why do some students attend better than others?

There are any number of reasons for non-attendance. They may include:

- parents did not have a good experience of school themselves and do not see the importance of attendance
- parents may be working shifts and there is no-one to get a student out of bed and ready
- attendance data is misunderstood by parents – while 90% may be good as a mark in a test, in attendance terms it means one day a fortnight being missed
- basic routines are not in place at home, leading to lateness, which can lead to non-attendance through missing the school bus
- parents cannot get their children to come to school, even though they understand the importance of attendance
- older students' non-attendance is affecting their younger siblings – the whole family stops attending
- the student is a young carer
- there are financial barriers, for example parents being unable to afford transport to school, school uniform or sanitary products
- anxiety may be a factor
- they may dislike a teacher, subject or planned event
- they may be experiencing bullying

By asking the right questions and listening, sometimes problems can be solved easily.

The importance of **'not letting up'** cannot be underestimated. Whilst this might 'strain' these relationships at times it is in the best interest of the student and the parent.

Response to student absence – who is responsible?

In matters of attendance there is a hierarchy of people in place to provide information, challenge and support where needed. This hierarchy is outlined below with responsibilities outlined at each stage. Overall responsibility sits with the Attendance Lead in the Academy. They will work closely with the Class Teachers ensuring that staff fulfil their responsibilities regarding attendance.

Intervention		Responsibility
Level 0	Attendance Admin and record keeping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure registers are completed accurately, students coded accordingly. Reasons for absence given. 2. To contact home on the first day of absence First Day Contact
Level 1	Class Teachers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To build positive relationship with students and their parents/carers 2. To monitor attendance and punctuality for all members of the class 3. To contact home if absence is unexplained or is beginning to show a pattern 4. To make students and parents aware of the importance a maintaining 'excellent attendance'

			5. To liaise with the Senior Leader regarding any attendance concerns (Level 2)
Level 1	Supplementary – student Premium (PP) Champion (as applicable)		All of the above alongside the class teachers and senior leader. And: 6. Meet with all PP students on any 2 nd absence 7. Meet with PP students and their parents on any 3 rd and subsequent absence
Level 2	Attendance Lead		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a strong attendance ethos within the academy. Seek to unlock any barriers to ‘excellent’ attendance working with class teachers. Intervention with students between 85%-95% and not improving following actions from the Senior Leader. School Attendance Meeting to be initiated. <p>Ensuring:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Regular contact with home regarding attendance concerns Meeting with students and their parents for a School Attendance Meeting where attendance does not improve to establish an Attendance Contract Involving a Senior Leader to reinforce a clear message regarding attendance should other interventions not worked.
Level 3	SLT	Link:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrating improved attendance Supporting class teachers in School Attendance meetings with students, parents and careers where impact has been ineffectual following the first SAM. A clear message must be given around expectations, making the links between attendance and achievement.
Level 4	Attendance Leads		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide strategic planning for attendance Ensure regular attendance communications with stakeholders Systematically analyse attendance information looking for patterns and trends Use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals and at a whole-academy level Monitor the fulfilment of roles with regards to attendance Make attendance referrals to the Academy Attendance Leader Provide fortnightly attendance updates to the Academy Leader Respond to Leave of Absence requests To convene School Attendance Meetings (SAMs) for students Meet with EWO and refer students for Fixed Penalty notices as appropriate

Flow Chart Response to Absence

<p>First Day Contact (Admin)</p> <p>Parents contacted via phone as soon as child is absent without the Academy being advised of the reason. Request details regarding absence. (<i>Recording unwell/ill is not sufficient</i>)</p>
Concerns remain i.e. absence is regular or patterns emerge
<p>Absence falls below 97% (Class Teacher)</p> <p>Class Teacher to consider student circumstances and discuss with student. What has been the students' (siblings of) attendance history? Is it a 'one-off'? Use Appendix 1.0 – How attendance improves over time. Target set.</p>
Concerns remain
<p>Senior Leader Attendance Meeting (SAM)</p> <p>Meeting arranged with student and parent. This could be virtually or in person. Attendance Contract agreed and written. 6 week monitoring period – 100% target for that period.</p>
Concerns remain
<p>Senior Leader Attendance Meeting (SAM)</p> <p>Meeting arranged with student and parent. This should be in person. Attendance Contract reviewed and amended. 6 week monitoring period – 100% target for that period.</p>
Concerns remain
Refer to Academy Leader
Concerns remain
<p>Refer to Educational Welfare Service (EWS)</p> <p>Single Agency Referral Form (SARF) & Documents to EWS</p>

IMPORTANT NOTE: It is important to recognise improvements in attendance. Use praise or reward when no further action is required.

Registers

Attendance registers are legal documents and the accurate completion of registers is a contractual obligation. Registers must be completed electronically at the beginning of each lesson by the teacher. Staff must ensure that the appropriate mark is recorded against each student. No gaps should be left on the register. If a reason for a student's absence cannot be established, then the member of staff must report the absence immediately.

Registers are monitored throughout the day by the administration team and anomalies investigated.

Punctuality

Punctuality of the Academy day is really important and this will also be monitored by the Class Teachers and Attendance Lead. This will also be reported to the parents and will be monitored closely.

Record Keeping and Information Sharing

Registers are an official document, which are coded accurately and checked regularly to ensure consistency.

There is a weekly attendance focus where both individual and group attendance is highlighted.

The Attendance Lead provides weekly attendance update to the senior leadership team with both vulnerable grouping breakdowns and assessments of persistent absentee attendance for that week. All of this is underpinned by the regular use of FFT Attendance tracker.

School Attendance Meetings (SAMs)

If a student's attendance falls below 95% or they have an unexplained absence of more than 2 days in a term, School Attendance Meetings will be held by the Attendance Lead. Parents and carers will be invited in to discuss and agree an attendance contract. There must be a clear focus on the importance of attendance and agreement by all parties that attendance will improve and that any barriers to this will be removed by either home or Academy as necessary.

Students will be expected to attend for 100% of the review period. If this does not happen, then a School Attendance Review meeting will be held. If the student does attend for 100%, then the meeting will be held either in person or virtually to praise and congratulate the student.

Attendance affected by Mental Health Issues

Schools should set and maintain high expectations for the attendance, engagement and punctuality of pupils who are anxious about attending school. It is important to recognise that, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future.

School staff will recognise that there can be attendance challenges where a child has a social, emotional or mental health issue, particularly a severe issue for which the child is receiving clinical treatment.

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a 'broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school' (West Sussex EPS 2018). Terminology varies in the literature and it is recognised that there are tensions over the most suitable terminology. MLP academies have decided to use the term EBSA in preference to other terminology, e.g., 'School Phobia', 'School Refusal'. 'Emotionally Based School Avoidance' is used as this seems to be the most commonly used term. However, we recognise that often 'avoidance' is an emotional response to an aversive situation rather than a conscious choice.

We recognise that in addition to those pupils not attending for extended periods of time, there are many other pupils who experience an aversion to aspects of the school experience. For example, an aversion to attending specific lessons or feeling overwhelmed in busy environments.

Magna Learning Partnership academies are aware of the following factors and data demonstrating the prevalence of EBSA within our local communities:

- Implementation of reduced school timetables
- Parent/carers feedback Surveys
- Elective Home Education
- Requests for professional involvement

The MLP approach to supporting children and young people who experience EBSA is underpinned by the following principles associated with positive outcomes:

Early Intervention	Working with parents/carers and staff as well as the pupil themselves
A focus on a rapid return to school alongside intervention, support and adaptations within the school and home environment	Working flexibly with a focus on understanding the function of the avoidance behaviour being shown by a pupil

Factors associated with positive outcomes for successful reintegration (Baker and Bishop, 2015)

School staff should work quickly to communicate this expectation to parents/carers, and work together with them to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance.

Any associated anxiety about attending should be mitigated as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance (see effective practice examples).

These adjustments should be agreed by and regularly reviewed with all parties, including parents/carers. Any actions taken to support attendance are referred to as “reasonable adjustments”. In developing a plan to support attendance through reasonable adjustments, school staff will need to take into account the individual circumstances of the child, being mindful of safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 guidance.

Appendix 1: How Attendance Improves Over Time

We know absences can be for more than 1 day per absence. The following table can be used to help explain how attendance for students improves over time. A student with a long absence in Term 1 (say 5 days) can still achieve 'good' attendance by Term 6 should no further absences occur.

Days Absent	End of Term 1	End of Term 2	End of Term 3	End of Term 4	End of Term 5	End of Term 6
0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1	97.1	98.6	99.0	99.2	99.4	99.5
2	94.3	97.1	98.0	98.5	98.8	98.9
3	91.4	95.7	97.0	97.7	98.1	98.4
4	88.6	94.3	96.0	96.9	97.5	97.9
5	85.7	92.9	95.0	96.2	96.9	97.4
6	82.9	91.4	94.0	95.4	96.3	96.8
7	80.0	90.0	93.0	94.6	95.6	96.3
8	77.1	88.6	92.0	93.8	95.0	95.8
9	74.3	87.1	91.0	93.1	94.4	95.3
10	71.4	85.7	90.0	92.3	93.8	94.7
11	68.6	84.3	89.0	91.5	93.1	94.2
12	65.7	82.9	88.0	90.8	92.5	93.7
13	62.9	81.4	87.0	90.0	91.9	93.2
14	60.0	80.0	86.0	89.2	91.3	92.6
15	57.1	78.6	85.0	88.5	90.6	92.1
16	54.3	77.1	84.0	87.7	90.0	91.6
17	51.4	75.7	83.0	86.9	89.4	91.1
18	48.6	74.3	82.0	86.2	88.8	90.5
19	45.7	72.9	81.0	85.4	88.1	90.0

 Persistent Absent