



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Introduction

Good attendance at our academies is a key factor in achieving the best possible outcomes for children - children can only learn effectively and take advantage of the opportunities that the academies presents them with if they attend regularly. We aspire for all our children to have 100% attendance but we recognise that some occasional absences may be unavoidable. To this end we expect all children on roll at our academies to attend every day when the academies are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

This policy provides a framework across all 7 academies in the KWEST Multi Academy Trust (the Trust) within which all staff, pupils, carers, external agencies, governors and trustees can contribute to the development and maintenance of high standards in terms of attendance and punctuality.

We believe that reducing absence:

- Promotes children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Enables every pupil to have access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Gives pupils the best opportunity to succeed whilst at the academies.
- Encourages the development of positive life-long habits that will prepare pupils for life beyond school

### Aims

The core aims of this policy are:

- To establish a consistent approach to attendance and punctuality across KWEST academies.
- To encourage and secure good levels of attendance and punctuality at each KWEST academy by creating an ethos where these are valued by everyone.
- To ensure that no identified groups are disadvantaged by poor attendance.
- To establish clear systems at all levels for maintaining and monitoring good attendance and excellent punctuality.
- Where attendance is not yet good, to improve overall attendance and reduce unauthorised absence.
- To raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.

### Legal Framework

The 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude by regular attendance at the academies. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend regularly.

Under the Education Regulations 2006, the Trust and Local Improvement Team (LIT) is responsible for ensuring that the academies keeps attendance registers that record which pupils are present (whether at the academy or at another approved educational activity) at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions of the school day. These registers also record whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The academies have a legal and moral responsibility to promote good attendance and to take appropriate measures where necessary to ensure that all pupils attend regularly.

## **Responsibilities**

There is a shared responsibility amongst academy staff, parents and carers for ensuring that pupils maintain good levels of attendance and punctuality. In addition, every effort should be made to meet the following responsibilities:

### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends the academy regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Reporting all absences to the academy in line with this policy.
- Informing the academy in advance of any appointments in school time.
- Providing supporting documentation for absences as and when necessary.
- Making requests for leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances and when it is unavoidable to do so.
- Talking to the academy as soon as possible about any concerns over attendance.

### **Head of School s with responsibility for attendance**

The Head of Schools with responsibility for attendance is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of the academies attendance
- Identifying/monitoring trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to/meeting regularly with the academies' PSA
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the academies' PSA
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Securing a high, positive profile for attendance and punctuality through, for example, whole school assemblies and reward systems

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Completing registers accurately and punctually at the start of morning and afternoon sessions
- Recording all reasons for absence in the register using the correct codes
- Maintaining an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing senior staff where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Developing a positive culture around attendance and punctuality in their classrooms
- Discussing attendance issues at parent-teacher consultation meetings where necessary

### **Administration staff**

Staff in each Academy Office are responsible for:

- Overseeing the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the late pupils are signed in according to the Trust policy
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Monitoring class and individual attendance/punctuality looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Executive Headteacher/ Head of School with responsibility for attendance or PSA
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

### **The PSA:**

The PSA is responsible for:

- Liaising and regularly meeting with academies' staff with responsibility for monitoring and promoting academies' attendance
- Producing a written summary report on attendance and actions taken to improve attendance at least termly
- Responding to individual cases of poor attendance in line with the procedures set out in this policy and any additional academy-specific systems and procedures as appropriate
- Understanding Trust/academies policies and procedures deemed, in agreement with Trust/academy leaders, to be relevant to their role
- Acting as an agent and representative of the Trust/ academies at all times, in line with Trust/academies' policy as is appropriate according to their role

### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from the academy for what is deemed to be a legitimate reason and the academy has received due notification from a parent or carer.

Absences will usually be authorised for:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (whenever possible please make these outside school hours)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances
- Issues related to transition

Only the academies can authorise absences. Consequently, some absences supported by parents/carers may not be authorised by the academy. In some cases, further evidence may be requested before authorising an absence e.g. documentary evidence of an appointment.

### **Unauthorised absence**

Any absence for reasons other than those defined above is unauthorised.

For example, absences will not be authorised for:

- Shopping
- Minding the house
- Birthdays or similar events
- Family holidays during term time
- Looking after family members (except in exceptional circumstances)

### **Procedure for notifying the academy of absence**

Parents/carers should always notify the academy if their child is going to be absent from the academy for all of or part of the school day. The specific procedures for notifying each KWEST academy are supplied in Appendix 1

### **Requests for exceptional leave of absence**

Circumstances may arise where a parent/carer wishes to request leave of absence for a child.

When considering individual cases of absence, the academy will consider:

- The nature of the event
- Frequency of absence
- Whether advance notification is given
- The overall attendance record of the pupil(s) and, in particular, their status regarding persistent absenteeism
- The academic attainment and progress of the pupil(s) over time
- Parents/carers who wish to ask for their child to be absent from academy should complete a Application for Leave of Absence (Appendix2) form. The Executive Headteacher/Head of School should determine the number of school days a child can be away from the academy if the leave is granted.

### **Holidays**

The amended Education Regulations 2013 for England, with regard to pupil registration, no longer permit academies to authorise any absences in relation to holidays. The amendments state that

academies may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Further guidance regarding exceptional circumstances is supplied in [Appendix3](#).

### **Good attendance, absence monitoring and unexplained or persistent absence**

KWEST academies have set the threshold for good attendance at 96% - Flowchart: Appendix 4  
Ongoing unexplained absences are addressed by each academy on a daily basis. Historic unexplained absences are reviewed at each academy's by PSA working in partnership with key staff at the academies level.

The threshold for persistent absence is currently 10%. Therefore, pupils whose attendance falls below 90% will be considered persistent absentees. In order to secure appropriate levels of attendance from all pupils, each academy will ensure that its PSA monitors those pupils whose attendance is at or below 93%. Where attendance falls below 93% with no singular event to explain it:

- Parents/carers will be notified of the academy's concerns by letter and the academy will seek to work with them to resolve any issues.
- Children will be supported as appropriate and in line with other Trust/academies' policies e.g. anti-bullying. Referral may be made, in consultation with parents/carers, to an outside agency.
- Where unauthorised absence continues, or attendance continues at a low level, the academy will invite the parent/carers to discuss the matter with the academies' PSA and/or a senior staff member as appropriate.
- Where the issue continues to be unresolved, the academy will discuss the situation with the PSA and take appropriate action accordingly.

The Head of Schools reserves the right to **consider** issuing penalty notices or taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail to meet their responsibility for sending their children to the academy on a regular basis.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued in response to unauthorised absence and may also be issued if the academy has evidence that a parent/carer has failed to ensure regular attendance.

In line with the amendments made to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England)

Regulations 2007 please note that:

- The Head of School can now request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to parents when pupils take leave of absence without academy authorisation.
- The amount payable on issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular attendance.
- Penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child.

### **Pupils leaving the site during the school day**

During school hours the staff at each academy are in loco parentis and have a legal responsibility to know where the pupils are and act accordingly to secure their safety and well-being at all times. To this end:

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the academy.
- Parents are kindly requested to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Where it is necessary for a child to leave the site during the school day, parents are requested to confirm in writing, by letter or email to the relevant academy office, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- Any pupil leaving the site must be signed out on leaving the academy and be signed back in on their return at the academy office.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the academy prior to the end of the school day, parents must report to the academy office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.

If a pupil leaves the academy's site without permission, the academy will contact both the police and the pupil's parents immediately in an effort to secure their safe return.

## **Monitoring and reporting**

The Trust/LIT will monitor the effectiveness of the policy. The CEO will report to the Trustees regularly regarding attendance.

**Review** This policy will be reviewed annually.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Absence procedures for Magdalen Academy, St Germans Academy and Wimbotsham & Stow Academy**

#### **Timings of the school day**

Open: 8.45am

Morning session begins: 8.55am

Registers close: 9.10am

Afternoon session begins: 1.00pm

Registers close: 1.15pm

School day ends: 3.15pm

Children are supervised on the playground from 8.45am, and school starts at 8.55am.

When the weather is inclement the children go straight into their classrooms.

Children are officially late when they arrive after 8.55am or 1.00pm - they are marked late (L code) until the registers close 15 minutes at the start of each session. Any child arriving at/returning to school more than 15 minutes after the session starts is marked as absent (U code) for the morning/afternoon session respectively.

#### **Procedure for notifying Academy of absence**

Parents/carers should contact the academy before 9.00am if their child is going to be absent on that school day. The academy has an out of hours answer phone system to support parents in this respect.

#### **Registration and absence monitoring procedures**

The academy operates an electronic registration system. Class registers are checked every morning, and parents/carers who have not notified the academy are contacted before 9.30am to ascertain the reason for absence. Initial contact will be by automatic text message generated by the academy's attendance system.

Where no response is received, the school will endeavour to make telephone contact with parents of absent children by 9.30am to confirm the reason for absence.

#### **Returning to Academy after absence**

In relation to sickness or medical appointments, a letter should be given to the office in order for the absence to be authorised. In the case of prolonged absences (a week or more) or where attendance has dropped below 90%, further evidence will be required in order for the absence to be authorised e.g. medical appointment card, letter from GP or hospital consultant etc.

#### **Key Academy staff and contact details**

Telephone/out of hours contact: Magdalen 01553 810326, St Germans 01553 617246 and Wimbotsham & Stow 01366 382336

Administrator with responsibility for attendance: Office in each academy

Member of staff with responsibility for attendance: PSA Mrs Toni Clarkstone

**APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME**

**Important Information for Parents**

- Headteachers comply with the 2013 amendment to the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (2006) Regulations 2013** which means that they cannot authorise a leave of absence from school unless it is exceptional; every case should be treated on an individual basis and with due consideration of the circumstances. Ultimately, it is the Headteacher of the school who decides if a period of leave during term time should be authorised or not
- Headteachers may grant leave of absence if they consider exceptional circumstances apply
- If the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Headteacher will determine the length of the absence authorised
- Requests for leave of absence should be made in advance and before any arrangements are confirmed or money committed
- If leave of absence is granted please contact school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the absence on your child's academic progress
- This form **MUST** be completed by the parent who intends to remove the pupil from school during term time
- Failure to make a request for a leave of absence in advance will result in the absence taken being recorded as unauthorised

**Please note: Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time.**

**I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:**

Full name of child/ren.....

Address.....  
.....  
.....

From (1<sup>st</sup> day of absence) ..... To (last day of absence)  
.....

Total number of school days.....Expected date of return to school.....

Reason for proposed absence - please provide reasons to support the application including evidence:  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Please read the following and sign to indicate you agree:**

*I would like to request the above absence. I understand that the school strongly advises against taking unnecessary absence during term time, and accept that this may have a detrimental impact on my child/ren's progress. I undertake to make sure my child/ren catch up with any work that is required of them.*

Signature of parent(s)/carer(s):

Date:

Your request for leave of absence from school during term time has been considered and has been:  Agreed  Days agreed  Not agreed

Signature of Head of School:

Dear Parent/Carer,

### Attendance at school and legal intervention

[Research](#) commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At Magdalen Academy, St Germans Academy and Wimbotsham & Stow Academy our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind all parents/carers that the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention through the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice where they have:

1. 10 consecutive sessions<sup>1</sup> of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time (for absences from 1 September 2017); or
2. 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday.

Any pupil at Magdalen Academy, St Germans Academy and Wimbotsham & Stow Academy who meets either of the criteria will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment within 21 days. If a Notice is unpaid within 21 days, the fine will double to £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. If a fixed penalty notice fine is not paid in full within the timescale set out above, the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against the parent(s) in the local Magistrates' Court for the offence of failing to ensure their child has attended school regularly.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

*Louise Arrowsmith & Suzie Hayes*

Heads of Schools

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the school day consists of 2 sessions.

### **Appendix 3: Guidance for authorising leave of absence (source: NAHT guidance document)**

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for pupils during term time. It is valuable to have some guiding principles to provide consistency across KWEST Academies. This guidance has no statutory authority and is intended to inform decision-making only. Final decisions rest with individual academy Executive Headteachers/Head of Schools.

The decision to authorise absence is at the Executive Headteacher/Head of School's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from academy to academy and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The default KWEST policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**. All requests for leave of absence should be made in advance; there is no guarantee that any absence taken without seeking academy consent will be granted retrospectively, regardless of whether it meets the criteria. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.

In deciding whether the circumstances of a request for absence are exceptional, consideration should be given to the following:

1. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is not considered an exceptional circumstance.
2. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
3. Absence for the marriage or bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the service only, not extended leave.
4. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
5. Academies may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
6. Academies have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
7. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis and such circumstances may be considered exceptional.

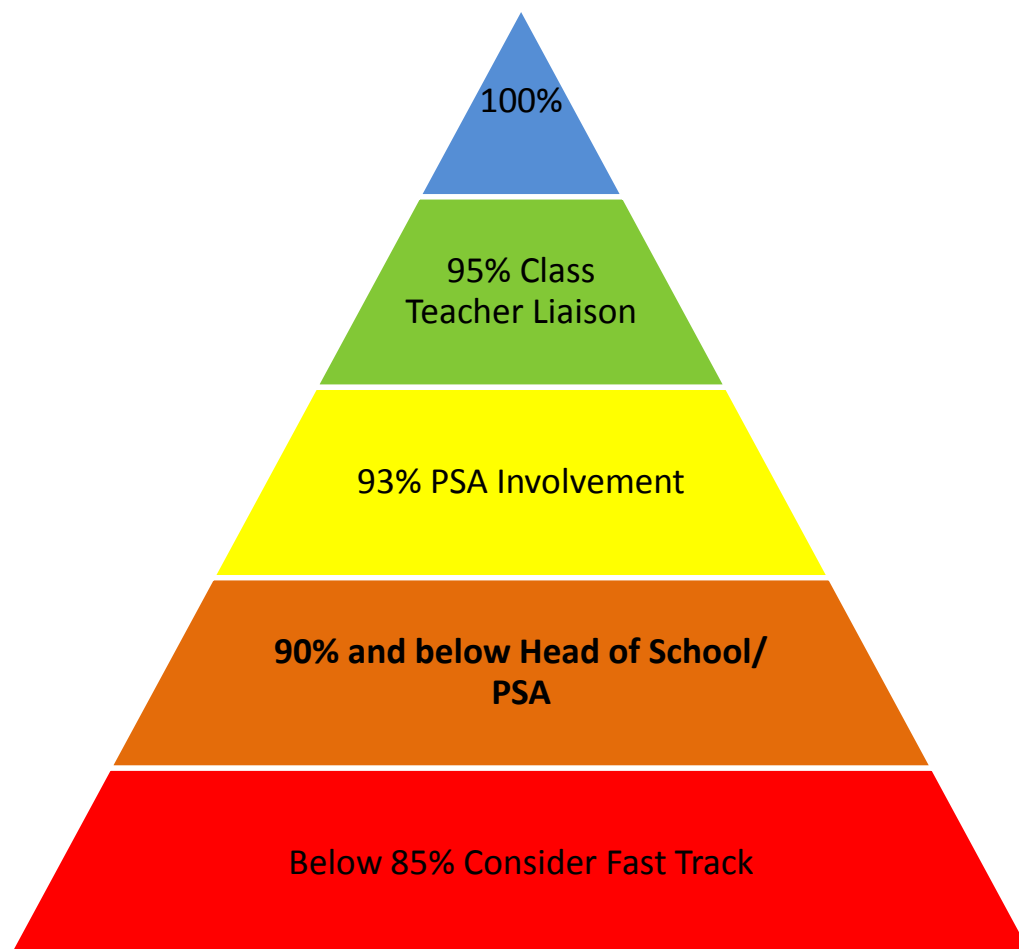
The statements above are illustrative and do not constitute an exhaustive list. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. 'Unavoidable' means an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

It is important to note that Headteachers/Head of Schools have the power to determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when making such decisions.



## Appendix 4: Flowchart

### Attendance Policy Action Plan



#### **First Day of Absence**

Office to contact home and record reason for absence on MIS

#### **Fourth Day of Absence**

Class Teacher/ PSA to contact home. Focus of phone call to enquire how pupil is feeling, offer to send work home if further absence is expected, offer support from school. A note of this contact should be logged and kept. Inform parents we will be in contact again in a couple of days to see how pupil is if still not back in school.

Classes will receive monthly records of attendance for pupils in their class to share at pupil progress meetings. This data will be used to identify any dips or patterns in attendance and inform next steps and actions to be taken

**Attendance between 96%-100%**

No actions required.

**Attendance drops to less than 95% - Class Teacher**

Class team to look at reasons for absence e.g. blocks of illness (example 1), medical appointments (example 2) within school time or potential patterns in absence (example 3). Team to contact home and explain attendance is looking low. Offer support from the Academy if needed.

No further action may be needed following contact if low attendance is due to blocks of absence for illness etc. however this should still be noted. Notes of contact made to be kept on attendance form in black diaries.

**Attendance drops to less than 93% - PSA**

If attendance continues to drop and figures fall below 93% the PSA will make further contact with home and explore reasons for continued absence. Conversations recorded in daily log book.

Outcomes of contact will be logged on attendance sheet with actions noted to improve attendance. Copies of logs to be shared with Head of School – Monitored half termly

**Attendance drops to less than 90% - Head of School and PSA**

If the above actions do not impact on pupil's attendance and they continue to have time out of school then a referral will be made to Executive Team.

The academy will continue to work with home and parents will be offered the opportunity to meet and discuss issues.

A two week monitoring period will be put in place. Should attendance continue to drop during this time then a referral to the attendance officer will be made. – Monitored fortnightly.

**Attendance does not improve after 2 week monitoring period/ below 85%**

**FAST TRACK**

