

Attendance Policy (Students)

November 2021

Date of Next Review – November 2022

1.0 Policy statement

Apollo Partnership Trust is committed to ensuring that students and parents / carers understand the absolute importance of full attendance at school. Absence has a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress at all phases. Poor attendance or sporadic absences may also be an indicator of underlying issues that need resolving either inside or outside of school. Absence from school may mean that a young person is more vulnerable to safeguarding risks, such as sexual and criminal exploitation, including county lines activity. As such, all our schools invest time in working with families to make student attendance a top priority. As a Trust, we take our duty to safeguard children seriously. Securing high levels of attendance for all students is at the heart of our work. We work tirelessly to create a culture in our schools where students want to attend and we see high levels of attendance as a benchmark of our schools.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance:

- The Education Act 2002
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Attendance guidance DfE (2021)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and latest amendment 2016

This policy relates to many other Trust policies and, in particular, the following:

- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Behaviour

2.0 Scope and purpose

- To create an environment in which students are enabled to become successful learners, responsible citizens and confident individuals.
- To form an active partnership with parents / carers to support the learning of their children.
- To ensure regular contact with students in order to safeguard their well-being.
- To provide every opportunity for our students to secure outstanding outcomes and be the best they can be.

Wherever Head of School is stated, this is to include the role of Headteacher, if applicable.

3.0 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Our schools will:

- accept that outstanding attendance is everyone's responsibility
- formally recognise good attendance and punctuality (above 95%)
- challenge attendance that is less than 95% and set targets for students to improve
- intervene when poor attendance / punctuality becomes a problem and before it becomes a habit
- if contact regarding non-attendance has not been received, follow up on the first day of absence with a phone call and / or home visit
- deal sympathetically with any problem a student may have which is causing attendance / punctuality to decline and always stay in regular contact with parents / carers
- act swiftly to reduce absence, in particular persistent absence, with a specific focus on immediate support for vulnerable learners
- work actively with children and families in Nursery and Reception classes to emphasise the benefits of high attendance; to instil and reinforce good habits of attendance from the start of their educational journey
- ensure every child of statutory school age has access to full time education
- communicate a clear and transparent process around the management of attendance to parents and carers following the listed process:

- prevention and reward / recognition;
- support and challenge with punitive measures where necessary;
- legal action and / or external agencies when other measures have no impact
- not grant extended leave during term time and will automatically refer to the local authority to fine.
- ensure that any special leave of absence, during term time, will be at the digression of the Head of School after the receipt of an 'Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances' form
- involve other external agencies if we believe there could be wider safeguarding issues surrounding the child

3.2 Parents / carers will:

- ensure their child attends school daily, be punctual and inform the school immediately if their child is absent
- inform the school in advance of any hospital appointment unavoidably scheduled during school
- inform the school of any problems which might affect their child's attendance
- cooperate with the school if their child's attendance / punctuality is unsatisfactory
- make requests for special leave of absence for their child during term time by completing in advance an 'Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances' form

3.3 Students will:

- always attend the school unless prevented by a specified illness or unavoidable circumstances
- always arrive at school and lessons on time

4.0 Targets, attendance and punctuality

Targets for overall attendance and punctuality are set on a yearly basis and can be found in the Schools' Improvement Plans. The target for all students is to achieve 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. The minimum expectation for all students is attendance over the academic year of 96%.

5.0 The impact of poor attendance on academic progress

If a child misses school on a regular basis, they are damaging their future life choices. Nationally, it has been proven that children with poor attendance in primary school miss out on making the expected progress in vital literacy and numeracy skills, and find it difficult to catch up. In secondary school, 19 days' absence correlates, on average, to a level at GCSE in all subjects.

6.0 Procedures

6.1 All our schools have in place a coherent system of rigorously monitoring student attendance. Attendance Officers, Class teachers, form tutors, Heads of Year, Pastoral Mentors, middle leaders, senior leaders, and the Education Welfare Officer all play key roles in this system and Arbor is used to manage this information.

6.2 If a telephone call from parents / carers is not forthcoming, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised. If no contact has been made by the parents / carers by day 3 (at the very latest) of the absence, the Pastoral mentor, the Education Welfare Officer or a member of staff will visit the home of the student. This will be an opportunity to explain the possible consequences of a fine if attendance does not improve. If there is a history of poor attendance, the visit may be earlier.

6.3 Social Services will be contacted by a Designated Safeguarding Lead on the first day of an unexplained absence for any child with a Child Protection Plan.

6.4 If a student is absent for three consecutive days (and contact has been made from home), contact will be made with home to gauge when the student will be returning to the academy and to arrange for missed work to be sent home, if appropriate.

7.0 Medical and dental appointments

These should be made, as much as possible, outside school hours. Any urgent medical and dental appointments must be authorised by completing the 'Request for Leave of Absence' form which is available from the school.

8.0 Leave of absence during term time

Leave of absence during term time is not permitted. Any extended absence from the school will be counted as unauthorised and can lead to a fixed penalty notice from the Local Authority.

9.0 Students who are late

9.1 Late to school is defined as students not being in registration when the register is taken. If a student arrives after 9.30am then an unauthorised absence code of 'U' will be applied to the register. We ask that all students are in the school building no later than 10 minutes before the official start time so that they can get prepared and organised for the learning that day.

9.2 An Attendance Officer will send a text message to parents / carers informing them when their child is late. In our secondary schools, lateness results in a same-day correction in line with the behaviour policy.

10.0 Persistent Absence (PA)

10.1 Any student who has an overall attendance of **below 90%** is considered to be in the persistent absence category.

10.2 Any student who is PA will be monitored and put on an action plan, if required. The Education Welfare Officer will meet with students, and their families whose attendance cause concern. Where necessary, home visits are made. In situations of persistent truanting, a parent / carer may be fined.

11.0 Religious leave of absence

For a day set aside exclusively for religious observance, students will be granted one day for each occasion of religious observance with a maximum of 3 days over one academic year. These absences, if granted, will be recorded as authorised using the 'R' code on Arbor. These are the codes as stipulated by the Department for Education and whilst absence is authorised, it does count against the child's attendance. This is the national policy.

12.0 Registers

12.1 The Register is a legal document which must be completed fully and on time at AM registration and at the start of Lesson 4, and then for every lesson throughout the day. Registration at the primary academies will be completed at the start of the day and after lunchtime. Should a student not be in registration, they should be marked absent; however, if form tutors are aware of any appointments elsewhere, in or out of school, these should be recorded using the relevant code. All schools follow the Department for Education guidance on the use of attendance codes and do not deviate from this.

12.2 Staff must take a register in every lesson. If a member of staff suspects that a student is missing from the lesson, then they should notify an Attendance Officer immediately.

13.0 Strategies for promoting high attendance

13.1 Outstanding achievement can only be achieved if it is recognised to be everyone's shared responsibility.

13.2 Trustees will:

- review the Attendance Policy annually
- scrutinise attendance key performance indicators at their Board meeting 4 times a year (including elective home education, managed moves in and out, fixed term exclusion and the use of alternative provision)
- hold the Local Governing Boards to account for explaining patterns of attendance within and between schools
- hold the Local Governing Boards to account for compliance with the Attendance Policy

13.3 The Local Governing Boards will:

- scrutinise the use of attendance codes in academies
- oversee decisions regarding elective home education and permanent exclusion

13.4 The school leadership team will:

- form positive relationships with students and parents / carers
- ensure that there is a whole academy approach which reinforces good school attendance, monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006, and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- ensure that there is a named member of the school leadership team to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resources
- return school attendance data as required and on time
- ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site, are implemented (see Appendix A for the action flowchart)
- ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence and is then interpreted to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families

13.5 Class teachers will:

- actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents / carers
- form positive relationships with students and parents / carers
- comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006, and other attendance related legislation
- contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- work with other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families

14.0 Attendance monitoring

14.1 The attendance officer monitors child absence on a daily basis.

14.2 If a student's absence goes below 90%, the student will be formally monitored with parental involvement.

14.3 The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall attendance rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the child will be classified as a persistent absentee.

14.4 The Trust, Local Governing Boards and schools will monitor persistent absence and 'low attendance', (this is defined as overall absence being greater than or equal to 5%).

14.5 Student-level absence data is collected each review by the Trust. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with Trustees.

15.0 Legal sanctions

15.1 Our school will work hard to engage with all our families to ensure that, where attendance of a student is a concern, appropriate support is identified and implemented, where appropriate and where possible. We expect that all parent / carers will engage positively with support and that attendance will improve as a result. However, as a last resort, the school will fine parents / carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school (where the child is of compulsory school age).

15.2 If issued with a penalty notice, parents / carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

15.3 The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Head of School, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.