

# Attendance Policy 2020

## Marish Academy Trust



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## 1. Aims

Our Academy Trust understands the difference high attendance can make to outcomes and life chances for every child. Therefore, we have designed and implemented an extremely robust policy and procedure, to ensure:

- that every family is aware every day counts
- highest rates of attendance and reduced absence are the norm in our schools
- that the devastating effects of unauthorised persistent absence are eradicated
- every pupil has full access to the quality full-time education to which they are entitled
- prompt action is taken when a child or family has a concerning pattern of absence or does not respond to initial enquiries about their child's absence.
- we support all parents in the fulfilment of their legal duty to make their children of compulsory school age attend regularly
- we are proactively safeguarding the well-being of every child, every day.

This policy and our associated practice also promotes and supports punctuality in attending lessons. Our practice includes making first day absence phone calls, home visits if we cannot make contact with parents and involving the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer or even the police, if we believe a child is either missing education or is missing.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold. As an academy, this policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. School procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8.30am, or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We undertake not to ask for medical evidence without due cause. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Parents should email/ telephone the school office and notify them of these appointments in advance.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

### **3.6 Reporting to parents**

Parents will be informed about their child's overall attendance both at parents evening and at the end of the school year on their school report. However, at Marish Academy Trust, we make parents aware of their child's attendance throughout the year, especially if it drops below our Trust wide

target of expectation of 96%. This information may be shared via letter, email, telephone call or at a meeting.

#### **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

##### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as the life threatening illness or death of a near relative. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Executive Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Examples of **unauthorised absence** include:

- term-time holidays
- travelling abroad to visit family and friends

Marish Academy Trust targets children with unauthorised/unexplained attendance and tries to help them improve attendance by meeting with parents regularly, closely monitoring the situation, offering the child incentives such as a space in a particular club and in particularly difficult circumstances, free minibus pick up and drop off.

##### **4.2 Legal sanctions**

Local authorities can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, 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 pupil 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 may decide to prosecute the parent.

## **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

Firstly, assiduous monitoring and analysis of overall attendance data and attendance data of all groups of children, but specifically those groups that have been an issue in our data and our dashboard in previous years has enabled us to take prompt proactive action whenever attendance starts to be an issue.

So for example, overall attendance was low in 2015 and this was addressed by making attendance a whole school priority. The following strategies were established as routine practice:

1. Every class teacher tracks all children with below average attendance and takes immediate action such as contacting parents, arranging minibuss collection, completing home visits and putting in place individual reward strategies to improve the attendance of individual children.
2. Each day our minibusses collect 20 children who are vulnerable for a number of reasons, including attendance. If their attendance does not improve over half a term, parents are warned the transport will be withdrawn. In most cases, this resolves their attendance issue. We also take home a minimum of 12 children, sometimes more depending on need.
3. Weekly ECM and PPA meetings review attendance concerns in all year groups and office staff and senior leaders meet with parents whose child's attendance is not improving and follow up with first day phone calls, meetings and home visits. We look for patterns and causes of absence that can be resolved easily through partnership with parents. In cases where there is no good reason for absence and no improvement with support, senior staff will refer to the LA Attendance Improvement Officer for action such as fines and prosecution.
4. Every week all children with below 96% attendance are flagged up and any new additions to the persistent absence list are monitored on a daily basis.
5. Tracking every child who is a persistent absentee (PA) and ensure we engage parents to improve this.
6. We have a reward place for high attendance that consist of prizes and certificates

The impact of these actions is evident in the much-improved overall attendance over last three years and most importantly, a commensurate improvement in pupils' progress as a result.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents are also supposed to update the school office every day their child continues to be ill.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. 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 governors.

Internally we collect and store attendance data within our School Information Management System (Pupil Asset) and use it to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The governing board**

The Strategic Board of Marish Academy Trust is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for both schools on a termly basis. It also holds the Executive Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **7.2 The Headteacher**

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the trust, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **7.3 The attendance officer**

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **7.4 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

### **7.5 Office staff**

Office staff are expected to take calls/emails from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

## **8. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policies.

**Revision History**

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