DUDLEY ACADEMIES TRUST
Attendance Policy

Issue number:	001
Responsible:	Compliance & Safeguarding Officer
Approved by:	Board of Trustees
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Contents

Aims

Our academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every learner has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Excellent attendance at school is crucial if learners are to reach their full potential. If they are 'dreaming big' they need to attend school on time every single day.

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 parent/careral 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 (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Learner 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.

School procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all learners are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all learners 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 learner 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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

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

Learners are expected to be on school premises at least 10 minutes before registration time or period 1 (whichever is first on their timetable) to ensure that they are punctual for the start of the school day.

Unplanned absence

Parent/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence and will need to contact the school on each day of absence (see also 'Attendance monitoring' section).

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 parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parent/carers/carers will be notified of this in advance.

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 parent/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, we ask that learners attend school before and after the appointment, only taking the minimum time needed away from school.

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 the 'Authorised and unauthorised absence' section.

Lateness and punctuality

A learner who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

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

If a learner is persistently late to school, we may have no alternative but to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer.

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.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Granting approval for term-time absence

Principals may not grant any leave of absence to learners during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent/carer is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent/carer or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Principal is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional;
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states ''on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent/carer belongs'';
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Principal is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Principal is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents/carers to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the Principal may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the learner's parent/carers/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent/carers/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller learners 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 learner is attending educational provision

Legal sanctions

Schools are able to make referrals to the Education Investigation Service (EIS) who can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents/carers pay £60.00 within 28 days. If the fine is not paid within that period, the fine doubles to £120.00. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

If parents/carers fail to pay the fine within 42 days this may result in them being prosecuted.

The decision on whether or not to refer to EIS to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct. 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 learner is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Strategies for promoting attendance

It is important that good attendance is acknowledged, celebrated and rewarded. Achievement in attendance is as important as achievement in subjects and this should be embedded within the ethos of the academy.

Awards will be given each term to learners who achieve throughout the academic year

- 100% attendance and punctuality
- 100% attendance
- 95% plus attendance

Each term, letters are sent home to all learners' parents and carers informing them of their child's attendance and offering congratulations or advice as necessary. All celebratory rewards will be presented at the academy's assembly.

For the policy and procedures to be effective, it is important that all concerned play an active role and contribute to the partnership, i.e. parents/carers, learners and teachers.

Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer will monitor learner absence and information may be share with the Local Authority and other agencies if learner's attendance is a cause for concern.

The Attendance Officer will provide relevant teachers with regular attendance for each learner within their form group/class. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attenders at the top; every learner will be colour coded as indicated below:

- **Green** – learners with attendance 100% and 97%
- **Amber-Green** – learners with attendance 96%-94%
- **Red-Amber** – learners with attendance 93%-91%
- **Red** - learners with attendance below 90%

The academy recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Thea academy also recognises that some learners are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those learners with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, and looked after children.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and learner.

If after contacting parent/carers a learner's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer.

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

Learner-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.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole academy on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual learners and supports any referrals made to the EIS for fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The attendance officer

The attendance officer:

– Monitors attendance data at the school and individual learner level
– Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal
– Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
– Arranges calls and meetings with parent/carers/carers to discuss attendance issues
– Advises the Principal when a referral needs to be made to the EIS for a fixed-penalty notice

Class teacher's/form tutors

Class teacher's/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

Office/Reception staff

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

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Learner is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Learner is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Learner arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Learner is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Learner is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Learner has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Learner is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Learner is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Learner is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Learner has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Learner has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H (not accessible at school level)	Authorised holiday	Learner has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a learner will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Learner is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Learner is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 learner is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Learner from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Learner is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Learner is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for learner's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Learner arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Learner of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or learner is in custody
Z	Learner not on admission register	Register set up but learner has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day