

Birches Head Academy



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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Approved by Principal:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Masher', written over a horizontal line.

Paul Masher

Approved by Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Finlay', written in a cursive style.

Suzanne Finlay

Attendance and Punctuality Policy Contents

Introduction	5
Legislation and Guidance	5
Principles of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy	7
Daily Registers	8
Clubs at lunchtime	9
Trips	9
Rehearsals/Music lessons	9
Absence / Lateness	9
Absence from Academy	10
Early Identification and Intervention: assess, plan, do and review	11
Absence Codes	11
Academy attendance, safeguarding and children missing education	12
Notifying the Local Authority	13
Reluctance to attend academy	13
Leave of absence in term time	13
Persistent Absence	14
What happens next?	14
Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice	15
Application for Exceptional Circumstances	15
Punctuality	17
Late Procedures	17
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	17
Communication with parents	18
Rewards and incentives	18
Attendance Additional Intervention Meeting (AIM)	18
Appendix 1 – SIMS Lesson Monitor – User Guide	19
Appendix 2 – Sample stage 1 letter	21
Appendix 3 – Sample stage 2 letter	22
Appendix 4 – Sample Attendance Action Plan letter	23
Appendix 5 – Sample Medical Evidence letter	24
Appendix 6 – Sample stage 3 letter	25
Appendix 7 – Sample Final Warning letter	26
Appendix 8 – Sample flyer to parents	27
Appendix 9 – Sample Stage Action Plan	28
Appendix 10 – Staged Approach	29
Appendix 11 – Absence Codes	30
Appendix 12 – Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)	31

Appendix 13 – Local Authority Guidance for academies – Attendance case working. (Academy only).....	32
Links to other academy policies	34

Introduction

This is a statement of policy for Birches Head Academy. It provides guidelines for the standards of attendance and punctuality expected in the Academy and for the procedures adopted by the Academy and its governors when pupils fall short of these expected standards.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our Academy environment supports learning and the wellbeing of pupils and staff. Courage, justice, honesty, compassion, gratitude, humility, integrity and respect are the moral virtues within our community and we work hard to provide a safe Academy where pupils feel included in every aspect of Academy life and comfortable to voice their opinions.

This policy outlines what we expect from all our pupils in terms of their attendance and punctuality, and the sanctions that will be enforced if this policy is not adhered to. Good attendance and self-discipline are vital for pupils to carry with them both during and after their Academy years.

Regular and punctual academy attendance is important. Pupils need to attend academy regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Birches Head Academy fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in academy and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our Policy applies to all children registered at this academy and this Policy is made available on our academy website to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our academy.

This Policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from Stoke-on-Trent local authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Governors at our academy are committed to working closely with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Legislation and Guidance

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child's household) have a legal responsibility to ensure that those of compulsory academy age are educated, either by 'regular' attendance at academy or 'otherwise'. The 2008 Education and Skills Act (section 155) specifies the same requirement regarding regular attendance at alternative provision.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at academy is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Regular attendance has been defined by the Supreme Court (6th April 2017) to mean "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the academy".

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "The parent of every child of compulsory academy age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at academy or otherwise".
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "if a child of compulsory academy age who is a registered pupil at a academy fails to attend regularly at the academy his parent is guilty of an offence".
- Section 576 Education Act 1996 - Meaning of "parent"

***Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996** - A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him/her; or
- who has care of him/her;
- This also includes all parents who are absent. Parental partners can be included (whether or not they are married or the natural parent of the child as they have 'care' of the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling as their main carer, they can also be included as they are the main care provider.
- It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the pupil, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends academy every day.

Stoke-on-Trent Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices set out the procedures for the issuing an FPN. Full information can be found at:

https://www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/academies_and_education/232/pay_a_truancy_penalty_notice#:~:text=C ode%20of%20Conduct%20for%20issuing%20Penalty%20Notices&text=In%20recognition%20of%20this%2C%20the,the%20agreement%20of%20the%20academy.

Academies must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the academy has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the academy.

For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the academy year. Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

For further information on 'Academy attendance; Guidance for maintained academies, academies, independent academies and local authorities ' visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-academy-attendance>

Principles of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy

The Governing Board of BHA places a high priority on achieving standards and believe strongly that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential. They undertake this role by:

- Monitoring whole academy attendance termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards.
- Nominate a named Governor for Attendance.

The government expects:

- Academies and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
 - act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory academy age who are registered at academy attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Regular attendance and good punctuality at academy is expected. The reasons for this are obvious: pupils learn best and receive most from Academy when they are actually there. This issue is highlighted in the Home/Academy Agreement which all parents are asked to sign at the beginning of each year and also within other regular communications between home and academy.

The academy has a duty to safeguard all its pupils. If a child is absent, the parents/carers should inform the academy on the **first day of absence** and each following day of absence, stating the reason. The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance within the academy is Mrs L Toach (Vice Principal).

The academy will contact home when a child is absent, and the parent/carer has not notified the academy of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised. The academy Attendance and Welfare team may also support with home visits.

Any pupil whose absence falls below 97% should be noted by their Head of Learning and the pupil will be placed on the 'Attendance Strategy' which is a graduated intervention system.

This is to encourage improved attendance and put support systems in place with Education Welfare Service, Attendance Officer, Children's Services and Academy Nurse, to address persistent absence issues. Other outside agencies may also be involved in cases which show persistently poor attendance.

Having poor attendance can have an impact on pupil progress and result in underachievement.

Attendance during one academy year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

Amendments to the 2006 regulations from the Department for Education (which came into effect from September 2013) remove references to family holidays and extended leave. "Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances".

Please note 'exceptional circumstances' do NOT include a situation where parents choose to take pupils out of academy to fit in with their work-related holiday dates. Please refer to the DfE "Amendments to

academy attendance regulations” for further details. If parents believe that their circumstances meet the ‘exceptional’ criteria, they must put their request in writing to the Principal at least one month in advance of the date.

Parents who take pupils on an unauthorised holiday in term time will receive a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Daily Registers

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the academy is legally required to register pupils twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning between 08:45 and 09:30 and in the afternoon at Academic Review. It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The academy should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the academy’s electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the academy office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the Academy Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention and support processes that may need to be implemented.

Pupils should be on the academy premises no later than 08:30 ready for Line Up before their first lesson. The academy gate will close at this time. Pupils who attend after this time will be expected to enter academy through the late entrance at reception. **It is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a pupil checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill.

Each year an academy calendar is sent out and is also on the website which clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in the academy.

Pupils who arrive after the academy gate closes will have to enter the academy through the late entrance where they will be met by their year group Learning Coach to register/or sign a late register at the reception desk. Pupils who arrive late to academy will receive a late mark which will result in them receiving a same day after academy detention for 20 minutes.

Parents will be alerted to this through the academy text system. Under rules set out by the Government ‘Academies don’t have to give parents notice of after-academy detentions or tell them why a detention has been given’ available at: <https://www.gov.uk/academy-discipline-exclusions>

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) ‘Working together to improve Academy Attendance Guidance’ (for maintained academies, academies, independent academies and local authorities) Working together to improve academy attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Trips

Pupils going on trips should have their register taken by the trip leader. They should NOT be sent to get their mark from the classroom teacher. Trip leaders must also ensure that all pupils' names are given to the attendance officer on standard form lists before they leave.

Rehearsals/Music lessons

Rehearsals should always be marked in the rehearsal space/Theatre/drama studio – pupils should not be sent to class teachers to get their mark. The reason for this is simple – the pupil may get their mark and then truant. Safeguarding should always be our priority.

If a pupil is timetabled for a music lesson part way through your lesson, you should mark them in your lesson and allow them to go to it. It is the responsibility of the music department to check with HOL/Classroom teachers if the pupil does not attend at the allocated time and yet appears to be in academy. Pupils should always have a pass or a note will be written on Synergy.

Absence / Lateness

Regular attendance at academy is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an **offence** if the child does not attend academy regularly. ***If your child cannot come to academy because of illness you should advise the academy on the first day of absence by telephone and every subsequent day they are absent.***

If no message is received we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you. The academy requires where possible **two** emergency contact numbers. It is essential that the academy is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. Please inform us of any changes in writing through the Synergy messaging functions or letter to your child's Head of Learning. This information can also be updated using the data checking sheet on parents' evenings and review days. Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a note confirming the reasons for the absence when the child returns to academy. Once contact (verbal and/or written) has been made with the parent the academy will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.

The academy will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The academy has the right to request medical evidence if a parent rings the academy to confirm the pupil is unwell. This may include: a medical appointment card with one appointment entered, slip with date, pupils name and surgery stamp, signed by GP Receptionist, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The Principal may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside academy hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in academy time are unavoidable, parents should inform the academy in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not. If an appointment is authorised the pupil should be in academy before the appointment and return following the appointment.

The Academy has invested in the 'Synergy' system. Each morning parents/carers of any pupils absent from Academy will receive an automated phone call/text message requesting them to provide a reason for the absence. There is a 'staged approach' with regards to phone calls; attendance officer and the Pastoral team also have an identified cohort – identified through Attendance AIM.

If parents are unable to return a call for whatever reason, a written explanation for the absence is

necessary upon a pupil's return to Academy. There is a facility for parents to be able to leave a message stating their son/daughter's reason for absence. Parents are informed of this information through reminders on the Academy website.

If any absence, whether covered by a note or not, is considered as an unauthorised absence by the Academy, it can result in a Fixed Penalty Notice. Parents will also be informed by a HOL or the Attendance Officer of our concern.

If a pupil is absent for more than two days and there has been no communication from the family regarding the child's absence after an Attendance Officer home visit then we may consider reporting our concerns for the safety of the child to Social Care. This should be managed by going through the appropriate safeguarding channels.

Where a pupil has truanted academy or a lesson then a sanction will be issued to ensure the time missed is caught up. For persistent truancy a pupil may be placed in our isolation as a sanction or even suspended from the Academy.

Pupils arriving after 8.30am receive a late mark from their Learning Coach if it is before the close of the registers, if late post the closure a 'U' code will be issued. A note should be brought in to explain the circumstances for arrival after these times. Persistent lateness to the Academy can result in an FPN for lateness.

Failure to complete a register will result in an SLT callout and possible further disciplinary action.

Fire registers will be completed by the attendance team when registers close.

Absence from Academy

Unauthorised absence is where a academy is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. This is an offence by the parent. Where pupils' attendance drops below 97% a staged approach to attendance will be implemented in an attempt to improve the pupil's attendance and avoid a parent facing an FPN or prosecution.

Birches Head Academy will robustly monitor and analyse attendance data to promptly identify and address possible concerns and allow for early interventions to support the child/family's underlying needs. This will include;

- Daily and Weekly attendance code analysis
- Specific cohort and group monitoring
- Monitoring of lesson attendance across all subjects
- 'Welcome back' meeting for all pupils that have been absent– to check wellbeing and ensure there are no ongoing needs that will impact on attendance
- Attendance AIM meetings every Learning Programme

When a pupil's attendance falls below 97% and depending on the number of absences a parent will be sent a stage one letter. If there is no improvement in the pupil's attendance, parents are invited in for a stage two meeting with a member of the Pastoral team or Attendance Officer. Where parents fail to attend or there is still no improvement in the pupil's attendance the Academy will apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

The Academy will request penalty notices to address unauthorised absence. A minimum evidential requirement of ten (10) academy sessions, lost to unauthorised absence by any pupil in the current term will be required to trigger the process.

The Local Authority may:

- Issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued.
- In the same letter, set a period of 20 academy days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence.
- Issue a penalty notice through the post at the end of the 20-day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

Further information on the Stoke-on-Trent protocol for FPN can be found at:

https://www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/232/pay_a_truancy_penalty_notice#:~:text=Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20issuing%20Penalty%20Notices&text=In%20recognition%20of%20this%2C%20the,the%20agreement%20of%20the%20school.

Medical Absence

Absence due to illness should be reported to the academy by phone on the first day of absence and any subsequent days. BHA will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received. The academy will ask about the child's symptoms in order to record their absence accurately.

In the majority of cases, a parent's notification that their child is ill can be accepted without question or concern. Academies should not routinely request that parents provide medical evidence to support illness. Academies are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily as it places additional pressure on health professionals.

Only where the academy has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. In instances of long-term or repeated absences for the same reason, however, seeking medical evidence may be appropriate to assist in assessing whether the child requires additional support to help them to attend more regularly, and whether the illness is likely to prevent the child from attending for extended periods. If a parent proactively seeks out a note from a GP, it does not imply a need for absence unless this is explicit in their letter.

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, then we will offer support in accordance with the academy's policies and statutory guidance relating to Children with health needs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-academy-with-medical-conditions--3>. As an academy we need to plan how children can access Education and how and when the child will return to academy. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the academy must also demonstrate that reasonable adjustments are made to meet child's Educational Needs.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend academy, the academy will refer to the Stoke-on-Trent medical team.

Their policy states that referrals must come directly from the child's academy and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- consultant paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist
- consultant child psychiatrist
- hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

As from 19th August 2024 academies must make a sickness return to the Local Authority and provide the full name and address of all pupils who have been recorded with the code I (Illness) and who the academy has reasonable grounds to believe they will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. This

is to help the academy and Local Authority to agree any provisions needed to ensure continuity of education of pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance on Education for Children with health needs: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-academy>

Early Identification and Intervention: assess, plan, do and review

Every pupil has a right to a full-time education and Birches Head Academy sets high attendance expectations for all pupils. Birches Head Academy will consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and will consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For any child / child person who is absent from academy it is essential to fully understand the reasons for this so that targeted, evidence-based interventions and support can be put into place. All staff have a part to play in promoting attendance. We recognise the importance of ensuring that key members of staff from across the academy, including Form Tutors, attendance, pastoral and SEND staff work in collaboration to consider and identify the holistic needs of the child/young person and to overcome barriers to attendance. In accordance with the principles of early intervention, a graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review will be followed utilising a range of academy-based resources, evidence-based interventions and seeking advice and support from external services at an appropriate stage, when needed. These strategies are discussed in Guidance And Support meetings.

Appropriate assessments will be important to help understand the underlying reasons that may be contributing to attendance difficulties. This may be an assessment that focuses on the individual child's needs such as an SDQ, SEND assessments and wellbeing assessments or may include the holistic needs of the family, such as a TAF assessment. Assessments will include the views of the child/young person as well as parents/carers, and identify strengths (what is working well) and needs (what is working less well).

Assessments undertaken may identify that a child/young person is experiencing underlying emotional based needs that are contributing to non-attendance. Stoke-on-Trent council has developed guidance for academies - Emotionally Based Academy Non-attendance: Good practice guidance for academies (revised November 2021). This is a whole academy framework with a graduated approach to support the early identification and intervention of children/young people who may struggle to cope in academy/attend academy.

Information from assessments will inform a SMART action plan with focused targets developed in partnership with families, and other services as appropriate. For example, Early Help and Prevention and Social Care may have a part to play in the delivery of support and intervention to promote engagement and attendance. SMART plans should be personalised to effectively meet a child / young person's needs and improve attendance and wellbeing outcomes.

Regular reviews of support and attendance plans are essential to monitor the impact of interventions and to adjust these accordingly. If, despite targeted support and intervention, attendance and wellbeing concerns persist, we may seek further advice and support from external services including mental health services, specialist teaching and education services.

Absence Codes

Appendix 3 - Absence Codes: According to the DfE guidance the following codes are used on the register.

New Attendance Codes from 19th August 2024

Attending a place other than the academy.

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as attending an approved educational activity.

Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Code V	Attending an educational visit or trip

Code P	Participating in a sporting activity
Code W	Attending work experience
Code B	Attending any other approved educational activity
Code D	Dual registered at another academy

Absent leave of absence - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
Code M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
Code J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
Code S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
Code X	Non-compulsory academy age pupil not required to attend academy
Code C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory academy age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
Code C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
Code R	Religious observance
Code I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
Code E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend academy because of unavoidable cause. - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance

Code Q	Unable to attend the academy because of a lack of access arrangements
Code Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the academy premises being closed
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole academy site being unexpectedly closed
Code Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Code Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as unauthorised absence.

Code G	Leave of absence not granted by the academy
Code N	Reason for absence not yet established
Code O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Code U	Arrived in academy after registration closed

Academy attendance, safeguarding and children missing education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Academy staff will follow the academy's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, serious crime and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future (Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated September 2022) and Children Missing in Education Nov 2013, updated Sept 2016). concerns of this nature should also be passed to the Academy DSL.

Notifying the Local Authority

The Academy notify the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend academy regularly after making reasonable enquiries, or has been absent without the academy's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12.

The Academy must also notify the Local Authority of any pupil who is to be deleted from the admission register.

Our Academy will demonstrate that we have taken reasonable enquiries to ascertain the whereabouts of children that would be considered 'missing'.

Where a child leaves our academy without a destination or another academy is not identified we will follow Stoke-on-Trent Children Missing Education Procedures.

Reluctance to attend academy

Sometimes a pupil may seem anxious about leaving home to go to academy. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case please contact the academy as soon as possible to speak to your child's Head of Learning.

Leave of absence in term time

As of 19th August 2024, the law ceases to include a leave of absence for a family holiday. A leave of absence should not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Head Teachers are only empowered to approve a leave of absence when it is requested in advance by the parent or carer with whom the child resides and when circumstances of the requested leave are 'exceptional'.

The Principal and the Governing Board will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must write a letter addressed to Mr P Masher. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then the academy may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carers.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carers' working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to academy. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid. The Governing Board is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with academy policy.

Religious Observance

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance.

- falls during academy time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify BHA in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

Persistent Absence

The academy has a responsibility to reduce the number of pupils whose attendance is below 90% over the academy year. **Pupils with attendance below 90% fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category.**

According to the DFE guidance 'If a child of compulsory academy age fails to attend regularly at a academy at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority'. In addition, 'Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a academy attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a academy (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

In order to avoid a pupil falling into this category a staged approach will be used where possible to ensure that attendance below 97% improves. This includes letters to parents, staged meetings and action plans to ensure that attendance improves. These meetings will also help to identify any concerns which may be causing the pupils absence and allow staff and parents to identify strategies to improve this.

When a pupil's attendance falls below 90% at any stage of the year a staged meeting will be held with Academy pastoral / Attendance staff. In addition, pupils will be monitored by the Form Tutor, Head of Learning, Learning Coach and SLT who will track their attendance on a weekly basis. Staff will contact parents to discuss the attendance concerns and formalise an **Action Plan** to secure an improvement in attendance.

This will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the academy to support the child and their family. Parental failure to comply with the contract may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to issue an FPN or prosecute parents.

Where an attendance meeting is called, the reasons for absence will be identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered

- A supportive action plan will be agreed.
- An attendance target date for improvement will be set.
- The pupil's attendance will then be closely monitored for a period of no more than 4 academy weeks.

If the parent fails to attend this meeting without reasonable justification this could result in an FPN being issued to parents/carers or court proceedings under the 'Single Justice' process. Under section 444, an FPN will be **issued for £80 to both parents**. Each parent will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £160 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. Failure to pay the Penalty Charge Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts, with the maximum fine currently £2,500 or three months in prison.

What happens next?

Whilst the intention of the Academy Attendance meeting is that attendance will improve, if the attendance deteriorates by the target review date the Local Authority may recommend legal action is taken. This could include prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, Education Supervision Orders or Parenting Orders.

Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

no reason for absence has been given
medical evidence is not received when requested
a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
a pupil arrives at academy after registration has closed.

Parents/carers should be aware that Birches Head Academy may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 10 week period with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action. The Fixed Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at academy. The Penalty is £80 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days rising to £160 if paid within 28 days. Non-payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court.

Application for Exceptional Circumstances

In September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any Leave of Absence (holiday) during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'

The Principal and the Governing Board will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the academy office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then academy may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to academy. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Board is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with academy policy.

Religious Observance

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance.

Where a day of religious observance falls during academy time and has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs, we ask that parents/carers notify Birches Head Academy in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

Enforced Academy Closure

If Birches Head Academy was forced to close for a period of time, we have the facility to operate an online virtual academy. The expectation is children will still engage with ALL activities when work is set on

'Synergy'. Procedures for online learning will be sent to parents as and when required.

Impact

All pupils will achieve well by developing knowledge and skills on their journey through academy. Due to robust monitoring of attendance, all pupils, including vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), will have fair and equitable access to academy in order to achieve the best possible outcomes. Pupils will leave Birches Head Academy ready for a successful transition to their next steps in education or employment.

Issuing Penalty Charge Notices: Each parent receives a penalty charge notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £80 or £160 depending on how soon payment is made. Failure to pay the penalty notices may result in prosecution.

Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence: Education Act 1996 Section 444 - court can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.

Punctuality

As you may be aware, the law treats some persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents may be prosecuted by the Local Authority if late arrival is not resolved. Poor punctuality can lead to your child:

- Feeling embarrassed in front of their friends
- Missing the beginning of vital lessons
- Missing important instructions for the rest of the academy day
- Learning bad habits which could affect their employability in the future.

Minutes late per day during the academy day	Equal days' worth of teaching lost in a year
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	20.7 days

Late Procedures

Pupils who arrive after the academy gate closes will have to enter the academy through the main entrance where they will be met by their year group Learning Coach to register or sign a late register at the reception desk. Pupils who arrive late to academy will receive a late mark which will result in them receiving a same day after academy detention for 20 minutes. If the pupil arrives after the close of the registers they will be given a 'U' code unless an authorised reason is provided. Parents will be alerted to this through the academy text system. Under rules set out by the Government 'Academies don't have to give parents notice of after-academy detentions or tell them why the detention has been given' available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/academy-discipline-exclusions>

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should be signed out at the main office by their parent/carer or appropriate adult. This is strongly discouraged. Parents are requested to make dental or medical appointments

Roles and responsibilities

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

- Provide where possible two emergency contacts to the academy.
- Notify the academy on the first day of absence.
- Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of academy time. Obviously, this is not always possible but, in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards OR a late afternoon appointment so that she can complete most of her timetable before leaving.
- A child should attend academy before and after their appointment.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for academy ensuring they have a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for academy. Equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's planner can help you to do this.
- Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
- Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. If there are special or exceptional circumstances please contact the Principal and decision will be made if the absence can be authorised or not.
- Talk positively about going to academy.
- Monitor your child's Internet and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend academy.
- Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact academy before the concerns escalate.

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT ACADEMY DOES:

- Mark the registers twice a day.
- Informs any parents / carers who have not contacted the academy of the absence of their child on a particular day.
- Maintains records and monitors attendance of pupils on a regular basis.
- Authorises absences in accordance with the Government guidelines. Please note that only the academy can authorise absence.
- Contacts parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- Undertake an Early Help Assessment where it is deemed appropriate.
- Monitor pupils who are supported by the In Year Fair Access Panel and those who attend alternative provision.
- Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the pupil / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to academy.
- Provides reintegration support for pupils returning from absence.
- Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- Inform parents of individual pupils' attendance record each term at Parents' Evening.
- Works with relevant external agencies if a pupils' attendance becomes a concern, ie – Social Care, Early Help Services, Police, YOT, SEND.
- Make referrals to the Academy Nurse team where appropriate to seek advice to support the pupil.
- Works in partnership with the Local Authority to improve academy attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism sometimes utilising legal interventions.
- Hold stage meetings to support and improve attendance.

Communication with parents

The academy uses a text-based system to inform parents of absence where there has been no reason provided. Parents should contact the academy 01782233595 and select option 1. Please ensure you leave the pupils name, year, DOB and reason for the absence. Further phone communication through phone calls,

text and parental meetings will also be used to address attendance concerns.

Rewards and incentives

Positive attendance will be celebrated at both Form Tutor and Head of Learning on a regular basis. Pupils with good attendance will also be celebrated at weekly assemblies and at the Academy awards ceremonies.

Attendance Additional Intervention Meeting (AIM)

Attendance AIM meetings take place as scheduled every Learning Programme as per the Academy calendar. AIM meetings may be called as needed to address concerns identified in particular year groups. These meeting will be chaired by the Vice Principal and attended by the Head of Learning, Learning Coach and Attendance Officer. In these meetings action plans will be agreed and cohorts and strategies identified to improve pupil attendance.

Appendix 1 – Sample stage 1 letter

[Date]

[Addressee]
[Address]

Dear [Salutation]

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

Re: Attendance

Our records show that [Pupil Forename]'s attendance is [attendance figure]%. This is below the national expected minimum of 97% and is therefore a cause for concern. Good attendance is key to ensuring that pupils progress well at academy. In addition, your child's attendance record has to be conveyed in any future reference provided by the academy.

We are hopeful that your child's attendance will improve. However, if this is not the case, you will be invited to come into academy to discuss the matter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Yours sincerely

Head of Learning Year X

Appendix 2 – Sample stage 2 letter

Date

[Addressee]
[Address]

Dear [Salutation]

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

Re: Invitation to Stage 2 Attendance Action Plan meeting

Records show that [Pupil Forename]'s attendance is [attendance figure]%. This is well below the minimum national expectation of 97%. Good attendance is key to ensuring that pupils progress well at academy. In addition, your child's attendance record has to be conveyed in any future reference provided by the academy.

As [Pupil Forename]'s attendance is a cause for concern, I would like to invite you to come into academy on [Day], [Date] at [Time] when we will discuss the matter and form an Action Plan.

Please note that parents who refuse to cooperate with Academy Attendance Panels may be referred to the Education Social Welfare Service who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid within 28 days. Parents who do not pay the Fixed Penalty Notice may be prosecuted under Education Act 1996, Section 444 or the Local Authority may also apply for an Education Supervision Order.

I look forward to seeing you at this meeting. If this is inconvenient, please contact me as soon as possible to rearrange a more suitable time.

Yours sincerely

Head of Learning Year X

Appendix 3 – Sample Attendance Action Plan letter

Date

Addressee

Address

Dear <Salutation>

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

I am writing to you regarding the recent meeting which we had concerning <insert pupil name> attendance at Birches Head Academy.

I have enclosed a copy of the Action Plan for your information and attention.

May I take this opportunity to inform you that: under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, you have a legal responsibility to ensure that <insert pupil name> attends Birches Head Academy regularly. Failure to do so may lead in legal action being taken against you by the Local Authority resulting in prosecution.

Thank you for attending the recent meeting; it is only by all working together that we can achieve the best possible educational and social outcomes for our pupils.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Learning Year X

Appendix 4 – Sample Medical Evidence letter

Date

[Addressee]

[Address]

Dear [Salutation]

Re: Medical Evidence

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

Birches Head Academy places great emphasis upon every pupil achieving their full potential. It is important therefore that every pupil attends the academy regularly and participates in the academying that is offered if they are to make good progress and benefit from the opportunities that academy offers.

It is expected that parents/carers support their child by complying with the law which imposes a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their son/daughters are properly educated.

I am aware that there have been reasons provided for these absences **however to enable us to authorise any future absences due to illness medical evidence will be required.**

This can be in the form of:

- Copy of prescription relating to the illness
- A dated note from the GP's receptionist confirming your visit to the GP
- A medical appointment card
- Evidence of medical prescribed by the GP

May I remind you that after 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence you may receive a fixed penalty notice warning.

If there is anything that you feel the academy should be aware of, or that I can help you with, I would be grateful if you could telephone me at academy to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Learning Year X

Appendix 5 – Sample stage 3 letter

Date

Addressee
Address

Dear [Salutation]

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

FINAL WARNING – STAGE 3

[Forename]'s attendance at Birches Head Academy is currently [percentage]%. This is below the 97% minimum BHA attendance target which we expect every pupil to register within the academic year. Obviously such a record is not acceptable and I now have to warn you that unless there is immediate improvement in «forename»'s attendance, the Local Authority will have no option but to instigate one of the following options:

(a) Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1) Education Act 1996.

If convicted under this section, you may be fined up to £1000.

(b) Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S444(1A) Education Act 1996.

If convicted of this offence you may be fined up to £2,500 or be sent to prison for up to 3 months.

You are therefore invited to attend a meeting to on [Day] [Date] at [Time].

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer

Appendix 6 – Sample Final Warning letter

Date

Addressee

Address

Dear [Salutation]

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

We have previously wrote to you concerning <insert pupil name> irregular attendance at Birches Head Academy.

Unfortunately, I now have to contact you again as <insert pupil name> has continued to be absent from academy.

Obviously, such a record is not acceptable, and I now have to warn you that unless there is an immediate improvement in <insert pupil name> academy attendance, the Local Authority will have no option but to instigate one of the following options:

- a) **Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1) Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you may be fined up to £1000.**
- b) **Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted of this offence you may be fined up to £2,500 or be sent to prison for up to 3 months or both.**

Please contact me to discuss.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer

Appendix 7 – Sample flyer to parents

Attendance

Regular attendance is an important part of academy life.

Good attendance shows potential employers that you are reliable.

Do we ever really consider the impact of having a day off academy? The chart below shows the number of days and lessons 'lost learning' for pupils with different percentage attendances. The chart is based on a academy with a 190 day year and shows a five period day.

You can help by:

- making sure that your attendance and punctuality are as good as possible
- not missing academy for minor things, think about whether you would expect to miss a day at work for the illness
- Making sure appointments for dentist etc are made outside academy hours

Attendance	95%	90%	85%	80%
Number of days lost learning	9.5	19	28.5	38
Number of lessons lost learning (for a five period day)	47.5	95	142.5	190

Is 95% attendance good? This means that you have still missed nearly 10 academy days in one year. Over five years that would be nearly 50 days, this is almost a academy term.

Appendix 8 – Sample Stage Action Plan

Attendance Stage _ Targets

Pupil Name Attendance	Tutor Group	Date of birth	Current
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Date	Discussion between
------	--------------------

Issues discussed/Parents perceived barriers to attendance	
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For info:

The Government attendance target is 96%. When a pupil falls below 90%, they fall into the Government's Persistent Absentee (PA) category. Additionally, medical evidence will be requested for future absence.

Aim – To increase academy attendance

Action required by Pupil:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Action required by Parents:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Action required by Academy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Agreed by:

Pupil:

Parent:

Academ

Appendix 9 – Academy FPN warning letter

Date

Addressee
Address

Dear [Salutation]

[Pupil Name] - [Form]

During our last academy attendance review we noted that [Pupil Name] attendance and punctuality has continued to be a cause for concern.

This academy year he has been absent for 18 sessions, 8 of which have been authorised and 10 unauthorised. You have a legal responsibility as the parent to ensure that <pupil> attends academy regularly and punctually.

Due to the unauthorised absences, the academy will now request a Fixed Penalty Notice Warning Letter from the Local Authority. The current penalties payable by parents are £80 when the penalty is paid within 21 days and £160 when the penalty is paid within 28 days. This penalty is per parent/carer per child.

If the fixed penalty is not paid this could lead to you being prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court.

If you feel this decision has not taken into account any relevant exceptional circumstances, please contact the academy immediately for further discussion.

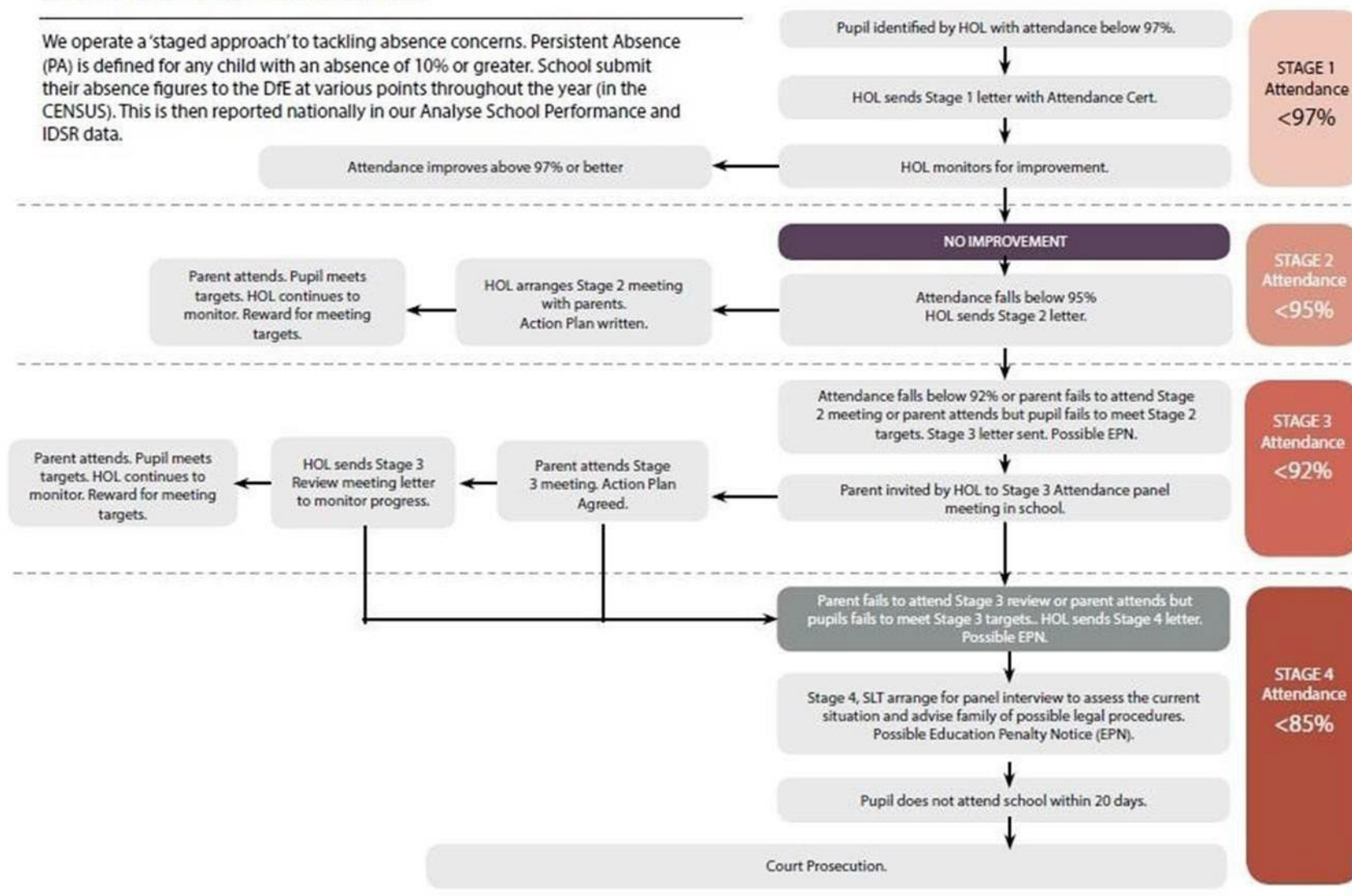
Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer

Appendix 10 – Staged Approach

Persistent Absence

We operate a 'staged approach' to tackling absence concerns. Persistent Absence (PA) is defined for any child with an absence of 10% or greater. School submit their absence figures to the DfE at various points throughout the year (in the CENSUS). This is then reported nationally in our Analyse School Performance and IDSR data.



Appendix 11 – Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)

Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)

1. A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
2. A maximum of two FPNs may be issued in an academic year and these FPNs may be issued against each parent/carer of a child. Once two FPNs have been issued, should there be further unauthorised absences, the Local Authority are able to move to prosecution immediately.
3. A FPN may be issued per parent per child.
4. Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if:
 - Unauthorised absences of at least 10 consecutive academy sessions (five academy days).
 - Sessions either side of a weekend or academy holiday will be counted as consecutive academy days.
 - For poorly attending learners, at least 10 sessions (five academy days) lost due to unauthorised absence during a academy term. These do not need to be consecutive.
 - For poorly attending learners, persistent late arrive at academy in a term. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of late arrival.
 - The presence of an excluded child in a public place in the child's first five days of exclusion.
6. The academy must notify parents of the Attendance Policy and clearly state that parents may receive an FPN for an unauthorised leave of absence relating to holiday in term time.
7. Academies and the Education Welfare Services will take into account any exceptional circumstances when determining whether to issue a FPN.

Appendix 12 – Local Authority Guidance for academies – Attendance case working. (Academy only)

These stages should be followed once a pupil has reached 10 sessions of unauthorised absence and the academy is considering the Education Welfare Service's involvement as current strategies are not improving attendance.

Stage 1 (within 30 days)

- ☐ Ensure usual attendance policy procedures are being followed
- ☐ Continue normal first day contact etc.
- ☐ Conduct investigative safeguarding home visits.
- ☐ Gather information from teaching and support staff regarding the pupil's strengths and needs – this may include a round robin
- ☐ Meet with pupil to elicit their views about academy (eg. what is working well / working less well)
- ☐ Develop a shared action plan in collaboration with parents / carers, pupils and key staff (informed by assessments and to address specific factors underlying non-attendance)
- ☐ Continue to follow assess, plan, do and review cycles focussed on targeted intervention and support – eg. Support and Attendance Plan
- ☐ Make an initial single assessment (simplified TAF assessment)
- ☐ Refer to other agencies as appropriate (e.g iART)

If parent/carer does not engage with support offered

- ☐ Arrange an Attendance Panel Meeting to discuss barriers to attendance, record the voice of the child and complete and ESO checklist
- ☐ Consider an irregular attendance FPN (10-26 sessions unauthorised)
- ☐ Consider a first warning letter for prosecution for more entrenched cases (26+ sessions)

Stage 2 (within 60 days)

- ☐ Continue with usual contact in line with attendance policy
- ☐ Conduct further home visits
- ☐ Discuss case with attendance lead in academy
- ☐ Consider Attendance Planning Meeting if there is no improvement following the prosecution first warning letter
- ☐ Issue a final warning letter if no improvement following the Attendance Planning Meeting
- ☐ Consult with Education Welfare Officer to support in preparing witness statement and exhibits of evidence

Stage 3 (within 90 days)

- ☐ EWO will support in setting up Court File as follows:
- ☐ Statement of evidence S9
- ☐ Exhibits (labelled and numbered)
- ☐ Head teacher certificate
- ☐ Recent registration certificate

Links to other academy policies

This Policy will be read in conjunction with other policies regarding the safety and welfare of children.

These together make up the suite of policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in this academy.

The policies listed below are all available on the website:

- [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Staff Conduct Policy](#)
- [Anti-Bullying policy](#)
- [Behaviour and Safety policy](#)
- [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment in Academies policy](#)
- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- [ICT Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- [Managing allegations against staff Policy](#)
- [E-Safety Policy](#)
- [First Aid Policy](#)
- [Attendance and Punctuality Policy](#)
- [Relationships and Sex Education](#)
- [Safer Recruitment](#)