



**W A T E R T O N**  
ACADEMY TRUST®



# **Pupil Welfare Attendance Policy 2018-19**

**Reviewed: November 2018**

## **Waterton Academy Trust**

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **Policy Rationale**

All academies within Waterton Academy Trust are committed to providing a great educational experience for all of our pupils. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and expect all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the learning process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage.

#### **Pupils need to attend academy regularly and punctually to benefit from their education.**

Good attendance and punctuality are central to raising standards and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential. Missing out on lessons and learning leaves children vulnerable to falling behind (DfE – Oct 2014).

#### **The government expects academies to:**

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence and lateness

**The government expects parents to** perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory academy age who are registered at academy attend regularly and are punctual.

#### **Objectives**

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To record and monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies
- To acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- To ensure a consistent approach to the management of absenteeism
- To ensure that all of our academy communities understand and commit to our expectations and approach to attendance and punctuality

## 1 Introduction

Every day counts at Waterton Academy Trust. The Board of Directors holds firm the belief that children who miss school miss out. Lost learning through absence equates to lost progress through academy.

The 1996 Education Act states, *'If a child is registered at academy, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly'*. We therefore ask that parents and carers work with us to ensure that children attend academy regularly and punctually.

While some absences are inevitable, the academy is committed to reducing absence down to the lowest possible levels. This can be achieved through a balance of rewarding good attendance and supporting families where attendance and punctuality is problematic. The academy will be proactive in addressing poor attendance and will work collaboratively with the Education Welfare Officer to sanction families where support systems have failed to make significant improvements.

**At Waterton Academy Trust the attendance target for each academy aims for continued improvements. We aspire that each academy within the Trust has an attendance figure that is above national primary figures for all groups and cohorts.**

## 2 Aims and Objectives

We aim to achieve above average attendance through:

- Raising awareness of the importance of academy attendance
- Rewarding good attendance regularly
- Celebrating 100% attendance
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared regularly with all stakeholders

We aim to reduce absence (including persistent absence) and lateness by:

- Carrying out regular monitoring of attendance rates at or below 90% and punctuality
- Working collaboratively with the Education Welfare Officer to support families where attendance falls to or below 90%
- Providing written warnings for persistent absence and lateness, followed through by legal sanctions if necessary

### 3 Rewarding Good Attendance

Children at Waterton Academy Trust Academies are reminded of the importance of good attendance through celebrations and the curriculum.

Good attendance is rewarded in a number of ways across within our academies.

- The class winning the highest attendance each week being recognised
- Children with 100% attendance over a half term will be recognised
- Children with 100% attendance over a term will be recognised
- A special treat in the summer term for the class with the best attendance over the year.

Each term attendance is reported to parents and carers. Information on individual class attendance as well as the whole academy attendance is shared.

### 4 The Legal Powers and Duties That Govern Academy Attendance are Contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if **a child of compulsory academy age** fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the Local Authority in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Penalty Notices. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 also allow the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices on behalf of schools and academies for unauthorised pupil absence for **children of compulsory school age**.

#### 4.1 Compulsory School Age

Compulsory school age is set out in section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and The Education (Start of Compulsory Academy Age) Order 1998. A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following his/her fifth birthday (or on his/her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. The term 'summer born' is used to refer to children born from 1 April to 31 August. These children are not required to start school until a full school year after the point at which they could first have been admitted.

Admission authorities are required to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday, but flexibilities exist for children whose parents do not feel they are ready to begin academy before they reach compulsory academy age.

#### 5 The Academy Day

The Law states that **children should arrive at school on time, every day**. Each academy within the Trust will have their own time table for the day. All academies will follow the same structure of expectations for timeliness at the start of the day.

**The Start of the Academy Day.** Academy opens its doors to children and the registration period begins.

**Registration period closes.** All external classroom and cloakroom doors are closed and lessons begin.

**Children arriving after the end of Registration Period** enter the academy through the main door and report to the academy office. Academies are required to record the time of arrival and the reason for lateness.

**Arrivals within 10 minute period after Registration** will be marked in the register as being **Late (L)**. This is recorded on our system but does not qualify as unauthorised absence. It does impact on progress however because it disrupts learning and routine.

**Arrivals more than 10 minutes after the close of Registration** will be recorded as **unauthorised absence (U)**. At the point of 5 U coded sessions (within a half term) a warning letter will be issued. This is notification that a Penalty Notice may be issued if persistent lateness after close of registration continues. Persistence lateness is defined as 10 U coded sessions within a term.

**Thirty minutes after close of Registration – Academy Response.** Children’s non-attendance , when no reason has been reported by parents, is a safeguarding matter. Academies will follow up all unexplained absences by contacting parents by telephone. Parents will be asked to provide clarification for the absence. If concerns arise, then the Headteacher or other designated safeguarding professional in academy may refer matters to the Trust Education Welfare Officer, Social Care Direct or the Police.

The academy register is a legal document and as such is checked regularly by the Headteacher and Trust Education Welfare Officer. Checks ensure registers are being maintained accurately and assess the reasons and incidence of any absence.

## **6 Absence from an Academy**

Any absence is detrimental to a child’s education; it disrupts learning, routines and progress and should be avoided wherever possible.

### **6.1 Responsibilities**

When a child is not going to be attending an academy parents/carers are to:

- Inform the academy by telephone that their child will not be attending, stating the reason for the absence and when they are expected to return. Each academy will publicise the time that this call must be made by.
- Repeat this each day the child is absent from the academy.

When the child returns to the academy parents/carers are to:

- Provide written confirmation of the absence detailing dates and the reason for nonattendance. These letters will be retained with the academy register and may be requested by the Education Welfare Officer.

The academy will:

- Follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence after 30 minutes of registers closing.
- Write to parents/carers by the second day of absence where no reasonable explanation is provided

- Refer to the Trust Education Welfare Officer at the point of 6 consecutive sessions of absence where no reasonable explanation is provided (ie 3 days' absence).
- After 20 days' absence without contact, report as Child Missing from Education (CME) to the Local Authority.

The academy may also:

- Contact the Police and ask them to carry out a Welfare check on an absent pupil at any point during an absence if there are any Safeguarding concerns for the pupil.
- Ask for evidence to support any absence due to illness if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the pupil is off regularly with the same illness
- Write to parents/carers stating the concerns regarding attendance/punctuality.
- Ask parents/carers to meet with the Headteacher to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern.
- Refer the pupil to the Trust Education Welfare Officer (EWO) where there is a regular problem with attendance/punctuality.

## 6.2 Authorised Absence

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or very difficult family circumstances and these can be classed as an Authorised Absence. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or not lies with the Headteacher.

### 6.2.1 Illness

Children who are reported as absent through illness are marked with an 'I' code.

### 6.2.2 Medical Appointments

Wherever possible we request that dental and medical appointments are made at the end of the academy day or during the academy holidays. Where this is not possible, parents are required to verify the appointments at the academy office with an appointment card/letter. If verification is not provided the absence will not be authorised. Children should only be out of the academy for the

minimum amount of time for the appointment. Children who are reported as absent because they are attending a medical appointment are marked with an 'M' code.

### 6.2.3 Religious Observance

Absence due to religious observance is authorised absence. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

Children who are reported as absent due to religious observance are marked with an 'R' code.

## 6.3 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is that which is not permissible in Law, e.g. birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The Academy will monitor and discuss unauthorised absence with the Trust Education Welfare Officer and further action may be agreed.

### 6.3.1 Term Time Holidays

In line with the Government's amendments to the Education Regulations 2006, the Headteacher will not grant leave of absence for family holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **This applies to all children of compulsory school age.** In order to enforce this decision, the Trust Board, in partnership with local governance boards, has agreed to the issuing of Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of an academy during term time for holidays without permission. Parents are required to write to the Headteacher giving a reason and requesting permission for leave of absence for their child, no later than four weeks before the absence is due to commence. Parents/ carers will be notified in writing of the Headteacher's decision and of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice should the unauthorised term time holiday go ahead. Children who are absent from an academy during term time because of a holiday will be marked with a 'G' code (family holiday not authorised) on the academy registration system.

### 6.3.2 Exceptional Circumstances

The Trust Board recognises exceptional circumstances as those relating to:

- ☒ **Families in crisis; such as a terminal illness within the immediate family**
- ☒ **Pre and post operational leave for armed forces families.**

Should parents/carers feel that exceptional circumstance apply, they should write to request this to the Headteacher. Decisions are at the Headteacher's discretion following guidelines.

## **7 Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence is when a pupil misses 10% or more of academy **for any reason** and where attendance falls below 90%. Each academy works with our Trust Education Welfare Officer to ensure all pupil attendance data is monitored regularly and action taken to reduce persistent absence.

Where a child's absence is due to known illness or exceptional circumstances it will be monitored closely.

If absence is not for one of these reasons a written warning will be issued. Parents/carers will be required to show improvement within the next four school weeks.

If there is no improvement then a second letter will be issued requesting the parent/carer make an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons for the persistent absence. At this stage support will be offered and targets for improvement set.

If there is still no improvement within the next two school weeks, parents/ carers will be notified that the matter has been referred to the Trust Education Welfare Officer who will then follow up the case; this leaves parents/ carers at risk of legal action and/or a Penalty Notice.

## **8 Penalty Notice**

Penalty Notices can be issued to address unauthorised absence which may include term time holidays and poor punctuality. A Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority at the point which 10 sessions (half days) are recorded as unauthorised absence within a school term. The cost of the penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. This rises to £120 per child per parent between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty within 28 days will result in the matter being brought before the Magistrates court and could result in a criminal conviction.

## **9 Keeping Track of Attendance**

To help parents/carers keep track of attendance the academy issues a regular attendance summary for each pupil. The summary is colour coded to indicate the following:

<b>Outstanding attendance</b> <b>Blue: 98%-100%</b>	<b>The best chance of success</b> <b>Gets children off to a flying start!</b>
<b>Good attendance</b> <b>Green: 95% – 97.9%</b>	
<b>Worrying attendance</b> <b>Amber: 90% - 94.9%</b>	<b>Less chance of success because of periods of lost learning time.</b> <b>Makes it harder to progress well</b>
<b>Serious Concerns attendance Red: below 90% about</b>	<b>Significant lost learning time.</b>

## 10 Roles and Responsibilities

### Waterton Academy Trust

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole academy attendance on a weekly basis.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into academy to discuss where there is no improvement.
- Work in partnership with the LA through the Trust EWO .
- Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- Provide attendance data for parents.
- Promote attendance at all levels – within our academies, our community, regionally and nationally.
- Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

### **Parents/Carers**

- Ensure pupils arrive at the academy on time every day and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- Contact the academy as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable, and follow this up with a written explanation.
- Provide appointment cards to support medical absence.
- Avoid term time holidays, and minimise academy time appointments.

### **The Trust Education Welfare Officer (Trust EWO)**

- The Trust EWO will work in partnership with the academy to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fast Track to Attendance Programme; and at whole academy level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- The Trust EWO will work with children and families to ensure their academy attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- The Trust EWO will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education, Child Employment and Licensing.
- The Trust EWO will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- The Trust EWO will undertake legal action on behalf of the Academy.
- The Trust EWO will support the academy with networking and training events and with Academy Audits and Action Plans.

### **Evaluation and Review**

The Trust will review this policy annually and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout our academy communities and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.