ACT MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Attendance Policy (Simplified Version)

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Field	Detail
Name of document	Attendance Policy (Simplified Version)
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VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	May 26	CEO	Creation of simplified policy

Attendance Policy

1. Why we have this policy.

High attendance at school is important for children to do well in their learning. Children need to be on time and here every day. We need you to work with us to help make that happen. We expect children to be at school unless there is an unavoidable or exceptional reason, or unless there is a health problem that happens for a long time and means they cannot come. Children from Reception to Year 6 are all part of this policy.

This is the Government's information about how children must attend school: Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026

We have this policy so we can try to:

- Support children and their parents/carers to be at school every day and on time.
- Make sure all children can access school.
- Make sure that parents/carers know about the laws to do with attendance.

At school, we know that attendance is important and we will do all we can to support parents/carers to get children into school every day. Making sure children attend school is part of the work we do to make sure children are safe – called **safeguarding.**

2. What Everyone Must Do

Parents/carers:

- Make sure your child comes to school and know that you have a legal responsibility to make this happen.
- Make sure your child is on time for school with all the things they need in time for the register. If your child is late, it might be marked as an 'unauthorised' absence.
- Tell school if your child has a medical appointment during the school day. We would like appointments to be after school if possible please. We might ask to see the text message, email or appointment card just to check that the appointment is happening.
- Make sure you contact school before 08:30am if your child cannot attend school, telling school the reason.
- Tell school if your child is unhappy coming to school, so that we can help you and your child solve the problem that is making them unhappy.
- Fill out the form if you need to take your child out of school during term time. We won't authorise the absence unless it is for an exceptional reason. This means it has to be unavoidable and really important. If you take your child out of school even when school have said it will be unauthorised, you might be given either a penalty notice (which is a fine you have to pay) or a prosecution.

- Tell school if your phone number, email address or home address changes. Make sure we have more than one person's details in case we need to ring someone for your child in an emergency.
- If we suggest some things to help your child with attendance or problems, try and work with us to let them happen.
- Talk to us about any problems with attendance. This could be face to face or on the phone or email. It's better face to face if you can.

A child registered with a school has to attend school in the term after they are 5 years old. This is called 'statutory school age'. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to make sure their child comes to school.

2.1 School:

- Be a safe place to learn.
- Keep regular and accurate records of when your child is in school and if they are on time.
- Check children's attendance and do something if they are not in school regularly. Find patterns quickly when children are not attending so that we can all work together to improve it before it becomes a habit.
- Contact parents/carers when a child is not in school if we have not had a message to say why from a parent/carer.
- Find out why a child is not in school if you have not given us a reason. Your reason may not mean we authorise the absence. If your child is off school for a long time or lots of times because of a medical condition, we might ask you for some information from a doctor to help us support your child.
- Aim for excellent attendance from pupils and parents and make the school a place where all children want to come to school and are ready to learn.
- Meet with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer at Cambridgeshire County Council (AIO) to help us check attendance and see what else we need to do.
- Tell Cambridgeshire County Council if a child is not attending school enough.
- Decide what we think will help a child who is not attending school and put that help and support in place.
- Work with other services to help a child's attendance. E.g. other schools, Cambridgeshire County Council, Social Care, Early Help, and the local community. This means listening to what they say about children and working together to make a child's attendance better.
- Share the information about how much your child is coming to school with you and explain what good attendance is. Make this easy to understand for everyone.
- Have the same rules for everyone about coming to school every day and on time.
- Have special support and follow the Local Authority Medical Needs Policy for children who cannot come to school because of medical or behaviour needs. This follows Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

- Think about having an Individual Healthcare Plan if a child has medical needs.
- Work with the Access and Inclusion team at Cambridgeshire County Council to support children with medical needs who cannot come to school every day.
- Support pupils back into school after they have been off school for a long time (more than a few days) and give them help to build their confidence back and learn the things they missed.
- When a pupil goes to Secondary school, talk to the new school about attendance and share information about what helps families attend school well.
- If a child has any brothers or sisters at a different school, talk to those schools so that everyone can work together to support a family with attendance.
- Send information about pupils' attendance to Cambridgeshire County Council and the Government (Department for Education – DfE). We have to do this by law.

The Attendance Champion for our school is Mrs King. She is a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Their phone number and email address is head@smsn.act-academytrust.org Telephone: 01480 398048

All staff at school have to work hard to make sure attendance is good. The Headteacher is in charge of it. If we are worried about your child, we will tell you on the phone or by letter and you will be invited into school to talk to us about it.

2.2 Children:

- Come to school every day.
- Be here on time every morning.
- Have what they need for a day in school.
- Talk to their teacher about any problems they have that make them want to stay at home.

2.3 Governors:

- Look at the information about attendance every term.
- Make sure the Headteacher does everything in this policy.

2.4 The Local Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council):

- Support school and give us information and guidance by having meetings with us about attendance.
- Work with us when a child misses a lot of school.
- Work with schools to decide what legal sanctions (penalty notice or prosecution) would be appropriate.
- Work out what support a child needs to be able to access education if they have medical needs.

3. What School Does for Attendance

Mrs King is our Senior Attendance Champion, but for day-to-day attendance issues, please contact our Attendance Officer Sarah Wren, on 01480 398048

We make sure all children can come to school every day, and other services help us to offer support. Some children, e.g. Young Carers, might need more help to be able to come to school. We show families where they can get extra help if they struggle with coming to school. Sometimes Social Care help us to decide if a child needs support. We will work with families in many different ways to help them come to school every day. We have a special person for safeguarding called a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Anyone can talk to that person at school if they need help.

School has to look at all pupils' information and see who is coming to school every day. We use this information to see what we need to do to help groups of children. We share this information with different staff to make sure everyone knows how to support the children.

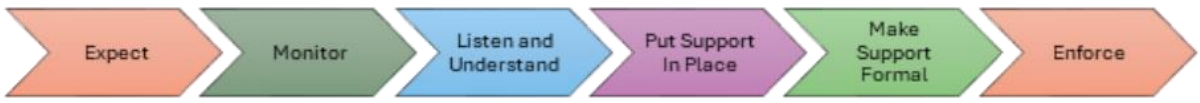
We have to share our attendance information with the Department for Education (DfE) so that we can see whether our children's attendance is as good as other schools, both nearby and in the whole UK.

We look at the information and if a child is not coming to school regularly, we will work with them to help it get better and we will contact you directly. Children who miss 10% of time at school might get a fine or penalty notice and we call them **'persistently absent'** (absent a lot of the time). Children who miss half their time at school (50%) are called **'severely persistently absent'** and if this happens, we will ask parents/carers to do lots of work with us to help and support the child.

We train every staff member to understand attendance so that everyone knows how to support children to come to school, and everyone knows who can help. We train, remind and support all staff to follow this policy. Good attendance is celebrated with children and families and reported to parents/carers at Parents Evenings and in end of year reports. You can see your child's attendance Arbor too.

Part of our work means we decide how to spend school money and how we use our staff to support attendance. We check how this is going by looking at our data to make sure the money we spend has a good effect and is helping to improve attendance.

4. Supporting Attendance



As a school, we try to work together with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will **listen to you and support you. However, if this doesn't work, we may think about using the legal options below:**

When we need to, we will put support in place to help improve a child's attendance or lateness. If this doesn't work, and your child doesn't meet a target for attendance set by school, we will send your details to the Local Authority Attendance Team. This might mean you get a Penalty Notice/fine, or may be prosecuted by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This could be a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison. We can decide to do this if your child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 school weeks.

If there are reasons for absence that the school can't control, everyone involved with the child will work together to help parents get support. This will include meeting with pupils and their parents to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions to help. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. We will review these actions to see if they are working.

If parents do not accept or take part in the support that is offered to them, and attendance is still low, school and other people who are supporting will explain what might happen next. This might be a penalty notice fine or prosecution in court. We will let you give your views about this. We will also still try and help you so that it doesn't end up with a fine or prosecution.

Lateness and attendance are checked every day by the **school attendance officer** who will:

- Look at pupil attendance for certain groups in school.
- Look at pupil attendance for children with medical needs.
- Check for pupils who are 'Children Missing in Education' and tell the Local Authority about them.
- Follow certain actions for parents who have requested to home educate their child.
- Follow certain actions to take children off the school roll if they need to.
- Look at the registers every day, checking authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons parents/carers have given for pupils who are not in school.
- Send a 'Late Letter' to parents/carers when their child is late a number of times.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to find out why a pupil is not in school.
- Tell parents/carers if their child's attendance is too low.
- Talk to parents and listen to them to understand why there is a pattern of absence. Agree on ways to solve it with everyone's help.
- Help parents to find the support they need from other places to solve any problems with attendance. This might include an Early Help Assessment.
- Offer support or tell you where you can find support in the community.
- Share information and work together with other schools in the area and Cambridgeshire County Council if a child's attendance gets low.
- Step One. Phone parents/carers and tell them that we are worried about a child's attendance/lateness.

- Step Two. Send a letter to offer support and explain the effect the absence/lateness is having on the child.
- Step Three. Send an invitation to attend a meeting to make an **Attendance Contract**. This is a supportive meeting, that you choose to agree to. We discuss the needs of a pupil and family and find ways to support you so your child can attend school.
- Step Four. If the Attendance Contract does not improve attendance, or if the parents/carers do not work with the support even when the school asks them to, then we will ask the Local Authority to decide if a penalty notice/fine or prosecution can be used.
- At Step Three or Four, school might choose to use a **Notice To Improve** letter. This is sent by the school and the Local Authority. It is a final try to improve attendance before using fines and prosecutions. It is used when parents/carers do not engage with us to support the child.
- After using an Attendance Contract or a Notice To Improve, if attendance does not get better, school will refer to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine or prosecution.
- Report pupils to the Local Authority when they have 10 'O', (unauthorised absence) sessions in school in a row. 10 *sessions* in a row = 5 days.
- Report pupils who have been off for 10 *sessions* of 'G' codes (meaning they asked for leave but the Headteacher did not agree to it) in a row to the Local Authority. We will ask them to use a penalty notice/fine or prosecution (it depends on how many times your child has had unauthorised term time leave – we explain this later on).
- Report pupils with 15 *days* of 'I' (illness) codes in a row to the Local Authority.

5. Registers

5.1 Reception to Year 6:

- The classroom door is opened at 08.40am.
- All outside classroom doors are locked at 08:50am.
- After the outside classroom door has been closed, you must come into school through the main entrance.
- Registers are open at 08:30am and close at 9am. They are open for 30 minutes. Pupils who arrive at school after the register has been taken, but before it is closed, will be marked as 'L' - late on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after registers close at 9 am, without an unavoidable reason, will be marked as 'U' - unauthorised late. This affects their attendance level.

Classroom door open	Register is being taken	Outside classroom door locked	Register has been taken	Register closes
08:40 am	08:50am	08:50am	9am	09:01am
On time 😊	**On time** 😊		**Late** ☹	**Unauthorised** ☹☹

It is the law that we do the register every morning and afternoon at school. If we don't know why a child is late, we have to mark it as unauthorised until a parent/carer gives us a reason. This must be no later than 5 days after the mark is made. Only the Headteacher may authorise or unauthorise an absence. The register can only be changed when we don't know the reason but then a parent/carer gives us the reason. If we make a change, the register has to show the original mark, the changed mark, the reason for the change, the date the change was made, and the name of the person who made the change. Registers are kept for six years as a record.

5.2 Lateness

When children arrive late at school, it means the child, the teacher and other children are disturbed and miss learning. Where pupils start to be late a lot, we will phone, email or write a letter to you to explain what is happening and offer you support. If the lateness continues, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

If the lateness still does not get better, even with the school's support, we may ask the Local Authority to use one of the legal options.

5.3 Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parents/carers must contact school on the first day their child is not in school by 08:30 am. You must ring again every day that the child is not in school.

For any pupil not in school when the register closes at 9 am, and school does not know the reason, a member of staff will try and get hold of the parent/carer.

The member of staff will ring every person on your child's record, starting with the first one, until we find out why the child is not in school. We will leave a message on voicemail if you do not answer. We will make a note of any conversations. Staff will mark the registers using one of the codes (see appendix 1 at the end of this policy).

If a parent/carer does not tell us why a child is absent, we will mark it as unauthorised. If we do not know where a child is, we might come to your house and knock on the door to see if your child is safe. This is because we have to follow our Safeguarding Policy as well as our Attendance Policy. If you have a Social Worker for your family, we will let them know if your child is absent and we don't know why.

5.4 Illness

If your child has had sickness or diarrhoea, they can return after they have not been sick or had diarrhoea for 48 hours.

Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezes and runny noses can come to school. However, if they have a temperature over 37.5 degrees, they should stay at home until their temperature has come down and they are well enough. This is a good website that the NHS and Government has made which tells you if your child is well enough to go to school or not: Is my child too ill for school? - NHS (www.nhs.uk).

Children should come to school unless they are too unwell to do basic things. We will ring you if they need to go home.

5.5 Medical Needs and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

If a child cannot go to school because they are physically or mentally unwell, we will offer support to try and make it possible for the child to attend. The support starts with what is available for all children and goes up in levels if children's needs get more complicated.

If a child needs things that are a little bit different with their uniform, transport, timetable or at lunchtime, we will consider that. If a child cannot come to school at all because of their medical needs, then we will work with the Local Authority **Access and Inclusion Team** to work out what can be provided. We might need medical information from your doctor to do this but we will talk to you about that if we do.

If a child has an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan), we will work closely with the child's SEN Caseworker to support them with coming to school.

We can make changes to our policies and the way we do things in school to help meet the needs of pupils who find it hard to attend school, under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 (where a pupil has a disability). We will do this together with parents/carers.

5.6 General Non-Attendance

This is different to being absent due to illness or other authorised reasons, or for unauthorised term-time leave. General non-attendance is when a pupil is absent from school, without it being exceptional circumstances and without it being authorised by school. If your child does not attend school regularly, the school will work with you to find out why it is happening, and how school can help. If your child continues to be absent without authorisation from the school, then we may send your details to the Local Authority to consider a penalty notice or a prosecution. A pupil would need to be absent for 10 sessions (a morning or afternoon mark in the register is one session) over a period of 10 or more school weeks. Before school refer to the Local Authority for non-attendance, we will work with you and offer support. We may offer you an Attendance Contract Meeting where we discuss the barriers to attendance and try to break them down. If you do not join in with the support from school, we may choose to set targets for your child's attendance

instead. We do this together with the Local Authority. This is called a Notice to Improve and is a last try at improving attendance before fines or a prosecution is asked for.

You can find details of the National Framework for Penalty Notices in the DfE's document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026). This is the document that all schools have to follow, by law.

6. The Different Types of Leave

6.1 Authorised leave

This is if a child has been off school for a reason that we agree with. For example:

- Illness or a medical appointment. If they are well enough, children should be at school for the rest of the day if they go to an appointment.
- Religious Observance – official religious days which are decided by the religion. E.g. Eid.
- The absence has been authorised by the Headteacher because it is short, exceptional and unavoidable.

6.2 Unauthorised leave:

This is when a child is away from school when school would say no. E.g.

- Shopping, hair appointments, visiting family, taking part in a protest or birthdays.
- A parent/carer has not given a reason for the child not being in school.
- A parent/carer has not completed an Absence Request Form.
- Being off school for something that the Headteacher does not think is exceptional.

The code given to a child in the register is the Headteacher's decision. They will use guidance from the Government (DfE) to make their decision.

6.3 Term-Time Leave

Parents may not take their child out of school for a term-time holiday. If you want to ask for time off school, you must fill in a Term-Time Leave Request Form (Appendix 2). This has to be filled in **before** you take your child out of school and no later than 10 days before.

If school think you have taken your child out for term time leave, we will write to you and ask you to explain why your child was not in school. If you can't give school a reason, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised, and we may send your details to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine.

Exceptional circumstances (*this means **rare, unavoidable, short***) will be looked at by the Headteacher.

If you request term time leave for any of these, they will **not** be allowed. We would send details to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.
- Trip of a lifetime.
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Extending the time off if a pupil has not come back to school after an agreed absence.
- Leave taken because some transport might be affected by things and might not run.
- Leave taken to try and relieve travel distress for family members with additional needs.

7. Penalty Notices and Prosecution

If a pupil takes unauthorised term-time leave for 10 sessions in a row or more (normally 5 days or more) they will receive a penalty notice.

The fine for a penalty notice is £80 per child, per parent/carer. If you haven't paid after 21 days, it goes up to £160. If you haven't paid after 28 days, you may be prosecuted in court. This could mean a fine of up to £2,500 and/or prison for up to 3 months per parent.

If you take **another** term time leave of 10 sessions (5 days) or more with the same child, in a three-year rolling period, the fine is £160 per parent, per child and you have 28 days to pay it. If you do it a third time, in a three-year rolling period for the same child, your details will be sent to the Local Authority for a prosecution (Section 444 Education Act 1996).

Three-Year Period		
First Term Time Leave 10 sessions (5 days) or more.	**Second** Term Time Leave 10 sessions (5 days) or more.	**Third** Term Time Leave 10 sessions (5 days) or more.
E.g. if two parents take 3 children away, the fine would be £80 x 3 = £240 per parent. **The total would be £480.** If you pay after 21 days it rises to £960. **£80** for each child per parent. If you don't pay after 28 days = a prosecution.	E.g. if two parents take 3 children away, the fine would be £160 x 3 = £480 per parent. **The total would be £960.** **£160** for each child per parent. If you don't pay after 28 days = a prosecution.	Prosecution.

If a child is absent for term time leave for 20 school days or more not authorised by the school, we may refer the parents for prosecution rather than a fine (Section 444 Education Act 1996).

If a child has 4 days of unauthorised leave (and school uses a G code for it) and then your child is absent on another day around it, school may decide to unauthorise the extra day. The Headteacher will decide whether the absence is authorised or not depending on the reason you give. Things like jetlag would not be accepted. If they unauthorise it, that will make 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence and they may refer you for a penalty notice.

8. Children Missing in Education

If a pupil fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days, without explanation, and the school does not know where the pupil is, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us. During this 20-day period, school will continue to try and contact you and will liaise with any other services that your child is open to. The Local Authority will conduct investigations into the location and educational provision of the child.

9. This Policy

We will be fair when we do the things set out in the policy and will help all pupils in the same way. However, we will also consider each child as an individual and all needs are different.

We have thought about the laws we need to follow for attendance, and what we have to do under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We will send this policy to all parents when a child joins the school, and we will remind parents of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is changed.

Appendices

Register Coding:

Term-time Leave Request Form:

Examples of absence letters: