

Rationale

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

DfE School Attendance July 2019

As a Trust, we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. All of our academies:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. None of our academies will authorise family holiday during term time.

Our expectations

- All DSAT academies have an attendance target that is in line with the national average (currently 95.8%). Academies are expected to have their own strategy to secure high levels of attendance by pupils and to take a proactive approach to supporting families where attendance falls below expectations.
- All academies follow the statutory guidance for the registration of pupils including the completion of attendance registers.
- Where a pupil is absent from school and no explanation has been given, administrative staff make every effort to ascertain the reason for absence by contacting parents/carers as soon as possible. Pupils who are known to be vulnerable are prioritised in this process.
- Academies have a designated member of staff who is responsible for attendance management. Parents/carers are made aware of the need for good attendance and punctuality, what the target for their child is and how this equates to days of absence. Academies ensure there are regular opportunities to remind parents/carers about this through school communications i.e. newsletters, email, social media.
- Attendance and punctuality for individual pupils are scrutinised at least monthly and action taken immediately a pupil's attendance falls below 96% or lateness becomes a concern. An agreed procedure is in place for this to provide a graduated response that is tailored to the needs of the family. This will include all or some of the following:
 - A letter of concern to be sent to parents/carers
 - Telephone contact to be made to discuss
 - Face to face meeting with parents/carers
 - Referral to parent support worker (if available)
 - Referral to Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority
 - Issue of penalty notice if local authority criteria is met

It is the aim in all our academies that no child becomes a persistent absentee (attendance of 90% or below). Where there is a risk of this happening, academies take immediate action to ascertain the reasons for this and put into place the necessary support to improve the child's attendance. This may take the form of family education, parenting support, practical intervention (e.g. arranging transport for the child) or in certain cases, a referral to an external agency or Children's Social Care.

Good attendance and punctuality are celebrated and rewarded. Examples of this might be;

- Certificates/stickers
- Class or year group rewards e.g. cup/special treat
- Attendance tracker display in central areas

Nationally, Pupil Premium eligible pupils have attendance that is lower than those not eligible for Pupil Premium. This is also the case within our Trust academies. Academy leaders utilise the Pupil Premium Grant to promote and encourage good attendance for eligible pupils where this is a barrier to their progress in school; this is a tailored approach for each individual. This is made explicit in the Pupil Premium strategy document.