Voyage
EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

Attendance Policy

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Aim

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all academies within Voyage Education Partnership take a consistent and proactive approach to promoting regular school attendance. Regular attendance is essential for pupil progress, enjoyment of learning, and overall wellbeing.

All schools in the Trust work together to maintain high attendance, recognising that it is a shared responsibility between staff, parents, and pupils. We aim to work closely with families to understand and address any barriers to good attendance, offering appropriate support when needed.

This policy works alongside other key Trust policies, including:

- Academy Specific Attendance Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Academy Specific Safeguarding Arrangements
- Behaviour
- Children Missing Education
- Supporting Learners with Medical Conditions
- Supporting learners who cannot attend due to health needs
- Alternative Provision
- Exclusion
- SEND and Disabilities Policy

It is also aligned with the Department for Education's statutory guidance, *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (Feb 2024), which sets out expectations for all schools and local authorities from August 2024.

Good attendance and positive behaviour are vital for pupils' achievement, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Missing school can lead to academic setbacks and increased vulnerability. Education is both a right and a legal requirement for all children of compulsory school age. Parents who choose to enrol their child in school have a legal duty to ensure regular and punctual attendance, with only limited, authorised exceptions.

This policy reflects national guidance and is rooted in the Trust's wider values of:

- Early support for families to address attendance issues
- Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare
- Ensuring access to full-time education
- Helping pupils achieve and thrive
- Providing broad opportunities during and beyond school life

To achieve this, our policy promotes:

- A positive school environment where pupils feel safe and valued
- Whole-school awareness of the importance of attendance and punctuality
- Clear and consistent monitoring of attendance and absence

We see attendance as a whole-school priority, embedded in all areas of school life and improvement. This policy also considers key legal frameworks, including the Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Voyage Education Partnership, we believe that good attendance habits start early, and we set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the very beginning. Attendance is a key part of our school's vision and daily life, and we know how closely it links to pupils' learning, wellbeing, and safety.

Improving attendance is something we all play a part in—trustees, school staff, parents, pupils, and the wider school community all have a shared responsibility.

Everyone has a role in helping to build a routine of regular attendance, and we're committed to working together to make that happen. To support this, we will:

- Build strong, trusting relationships and work closely with families
- Share regular updates and information about attendance with families
- Highlight the benefits of good attendance
- Keep accurate registers and have clear daily processes to follow up on absences, in line with the law
- Celebrate and share attendance successes in school and with families
- Recognise and reward improved or consistently good attendance
- Keep parents informed on how their child's attendance is affecting their progress
- Reach out to families if a child's attendance falls below our expected level
- Submit daily attendance data to the Department for Education, as required

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees focuses on three core functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
2. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the Trust and its pupils, and the performance of staff.
3. Overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance.

Trustees are responsible for fulfilling all relevant obligations under legislation and statutory guidance.

Executive Team

- The Executive Team plays an active role in driving strong attendance across the Trust. Their key monitoring responsibilities include:
- Setting high standards for daily attendance and safeguarding across all schools and stakeholders
- Appointing a Trust-wide attendance lead and senior attendance champions within each academy
- Ensuring all attendance policies comply with current legislation and that guidance is clearly communicated to staff, pupils, and parents
- Holding academy leaders accountable for their statutory responsibilities and reviewing attendance systems regularly
- Including attendance in leadership meetings, academy reviews, and data analysis discussions
- Overseeing accurate recording of attendance, including for pupils educated off-site
- Making sure timely and appropriate referrals are made to local authorities and external agencies when needed
- Promoting collaboration between academies, local authorities, and other partners to improve attendance
- Supplying accurate data to Trustees for oversight and assurance
- Analysing attendance data to identify trends, inform interventions, and guide future planning
- Providing targeted support for vulnerable groups, such as pupils with SEND, those with social workers, and those eligible for Free School Meals
- Offering training and opportunities for staff to share best practice
- Ensuring timely submission of attendance data to the Local Authority and Department for Education

Headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams (including Attendance Champions)

- Build strong relationships with families to support attendance
- Ensure engaging teaching reinforces regular attendance
- Keep staff trained and up to date on the Trust Attendance Policy and the individual academy Attendance Procedure
- Implement new statutory attendance guidance and legislation as needed
- Appoint and support an Attendance Champion with time and resources
- Accurately record and monitor attendance, including off-site learners
- Work with external agencies to address barriers
- Document all interventions to meet legal standards
- Notify the Local Authority of mid-year register changes
- Promote a whole-school culture that values attendance
- Regularly review attendance processes and ensure staff awareness

- Use data to drive and evaluate interventions
- Direct Pupil Premium funding to support attendance
- Submit attendance data to the LA, DfE, and Trust as required

Attendance Champion roles include:

- Track and analyse attendance with the Trust Lead
- Coordinate attendance actions with DSL, SENCO, and other staff
- Lead school-wide and targeted attendance strategies
- Support individual cases with the Trust Education Welfare Officer
- Follow up on absences promptly, including home visits if necessary
- Run attendance initiatives, such as rewards and assemblies
- Ensure that families are referred to external support services where appropriate

All Academy Staff

- Promote good attendance and its impact on progress and achievement
- Build strong relationships with pupils and families to support attendance
- Contribute to a whole-school culture that values regular attendance
- Deliver engaging lessons that encourage consistent participation
- Follow all relevant attendance policies, procedures, and legislation
- Accurately record attendance, including off-site learning
- Seek guidance from the Attendance Champion or Headteacher when unsure
- Document all attendance actions in line with legal requirements
- Notify the Local Authority of register changes outside normal transition points
- Support attendance strategies and interventions, including multi-agency work

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Take an active interest in their child's education and progress
- Promote regular attendance and punctuality at home
- Encourage aspirations and ensure their child is ready for school each day
- Follow academy absence procedures, including providing reasons and return dates
- Avoid unnecessary absences by arranging appointments outside school hours
- Communicate any issues affecting attendance and request support if needed

- Maintain consistent routines at home to support daily attendance
- Reinforce school messages about the importance of attendance
- Avoid term-time holidays; special requests must be made to the Headteacher
- Inform the academy of changes in address or living arrangements
- Attend meetings related to attendance when requested
- Work in partnership with the academy to improve and maintain good attendance

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Understand their academy's attendance expectations.
- Inform a staff member if difficulties arise that may impact attendance.
- Attend all lessons on time, with the appropriate equipment and readiness to learn.
- Follow the correct procedure for late arrivals to ensure accurate records and safety compliance.

Understanding Types of Absence

Consistent school attendance is fundamental to a child's academic development and overall progress. Absence from school disrupts not only the individual's education but can also impact the learning of others. It is a legal duty of parents to ensure their child attends school regularly. Permitting a child to miss school without a valid reason is an offence and may result in legal action.

Each half-day (or "session") of absence must be recorded by the academy as either *authorised* or *unauthorised*. This determination is made by the Headteacher or the designated Attendance Champion—not by the parent. For this reason, it is essential that parents provide a reason for every instance of absence.

Definition of Absence

A pupil is considered absent if they:

- Do not attend school for any reason, or
- Arrive after the official register has closed.

"Regular attendance" means being present for every session unless an authorised reason for absence has been given and accepted.

Authorised Absence

An absence may be recorded as authorised where there is a legitimate reason, including:

- Illness (with an acceptable explanation),
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments,
- Observance of a recognised religious or cultural event,
- A family emergency or other exceptional circumstances, approved by the school.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will be classified as unauthorised when no valid reason is provided or accepted. Examples include:

- Keeping a child at home for minor or non-medical reasons (e.g., tiredness or minor ailments),
- Failure to provide an explanation,
- Arriving after the register has closed,
- Absence for reasons such as shopping, birthdays, or lack of childcare,
- Term-time holidays or day trips not approved by the Headteacher or Attendance Champion,
- Leaving school without permission,
- Any other unauthorised activity during term time.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in a referral to the Local Authority and could lead to the issuing of a penalty notice or legal proceedings.

Late Arrival at School

Punctuality is essential. Late arrivals disrupt learning and may cause children to miss key information, leaving them unsettled. Regular lateness can also contribute to poor attendance patterns.

At Voyage Education Partnership, all pupils are expected to arrive on time each day. Pupils should be on site before the register is taken. Those arriving after that time must report to the main office with a parent/carer, who will be required to speak to a member of the academy staff and provide a reason for lateness.

Kindly consult the Academy Attendance Procedure document for the specific times applicable to each individual academy.

Persistent lateness may result in referral to the Local Authority for possible sanctions. If punctuality becomes an issue, a meeting may be arranged with the Attendance Champion although parents are welcome to contact the school at any time for support.

L and U codes also apply to pupils arriving late for the afternoon register.

Authorised Absences

There are limited circumstances under which an academy may grant authorised absence. These typically relate to exceptional situations, such as a close family bereavement. Wherever possible, such requests should be discussed with the Headteacher in advance to enable appropriate consideration.

Medical Appointments and Health-Related Absence

Parents should make every effort to arrange medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the school must be notified in advance. Pupils should only miss the time necessary for the appointment and are expected to attend school for the remainder of the day. All pupils leaving during the school day must follow academy procedures, and parental confirmation is required.

To authorise medical absence, appropriate evidence—such as an appointment card or hospital letter—must be provided. If concerns arise regarding the legitimacy of an illness and satisfactory evidence is not received, the absence may be marked as unauthorised following discussion with parents.

Where repeated absence is identified, a School Attendance Support Meeting may be arranged. With parental consent, the school may contact healthcare professionals to provide additional support for managing long-term illness.

For pupils with ongoing medical conditions, the school will work with families to maintain access to education and may implement an Individual Healthcare Plan, in line with statutory guidance.

Pupils with attendance below 90% (Persistent Absentees) will be required to provide evidence for all medical-related absences.

Religious observance

Voyage Education Partnership recognises the multi-faith nature of British society and that religious festivals may occasionally fall during term time. In such cases, authorised absence may be granted, provided the festival is recognised by a relevant religious authority.

Parents are expected to inform the academy in advance if their child will be absent for religious observance. Each request will be considered on an individual basis and within reasonable limits.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils

We are committed to supporting the education of all pupils, including those from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities, and we recognise the unique challenges they may face. While maintaining high expectations for attendance, we also respect cultural and lifestyle needs.

In accordance with Section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996, absence may be authorised for children of families with a travelling trade if:

- The parent's trade genuinely requires travel,
- The child attends school as regularly as that trade permits,
- The child is over six years old and has made at least 200 attendances in the past 12 months.

This applies only to families without a fixed residence who are actively travelling for work. During travel, parents remain responsible for ensuring their child receives an appropriate education.

If the family is based in or near Lincolnshire and the child can attend, full attendance is expected. [Insert school name] will be considered the base school if it is the pupil's regular school when not travelling and has been attended within the last 18 months. Temporary registration at another school while away is permitted, and the child's place at [insert school name] will be retained.

To support this process, we ask parents to:

- Notify the school of intended travel plans in advance,
- Confirm the expected date of return.

Exclusions

Periods of suspension or permanent exclusion are classified as authorised absences for attendance recording purposes.

Leave of Absence – including family holidays

Regular attendance is essential for academic progress. While family holidays and extended leave should be taken outside of term time, parents may request term-time leave in *exceptional circumstances*.

All requests must:

- Be made in writing to the Headteacher at least one month in advance.
- Include supporting evidence where applicable.

Each request is considered individually, and the Headteacher's decision is final regarding both approval and the length of authorised leave.

If leave is taken without prior written approval, or if the request is retrospective, the absence will be unauthorised. This may lead to referral to the Local Authority for a penalty notice or prosecution. (See below for further information.)

When authorised leave is granted, a return date will be agreed. Failure to return as scheduled, without contact from parents, may result in the child being referred to *Children Missing from Education* procedures.

Support systems

At Voyage Education Partnership we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is causing a concern and/or where punctuality is a concern.
- Arrange a meeting to discuss any barriers or concerns you may have regarding school attendance or lateness, so that we can provide support to help improve your child's attendance.
- Visit your home address to provide support for you and your child, understand barriers and collaborate with solutions. Home visits are often part of a proactive and supportive approach aimed at resolving attendance issues through engagement and understanding.

- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child.
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate or undertake an Early Help Assessment & Plan with you.
- Refer the matter to an external agency for multi-agency support or if you have safeguarding concerns to make a safeguarding referral
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate).
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Home Visits to Support Attendance

At times, the school may complete a home visit to help understand and improve a child's attendance. These visits are always supportive in nature and not intended as a form of punishment. They help us work together to identify any concerns and offer the right support. Reasons for a home visit may include:

- Understanding Barriers, to talk through any challenges—such as illness, emotional wellbeing, or family difficulties—that may be affecting your child's attendance.
- Ensuring safety if we haven't heard from you after an absence, a home visit helps us check that your child is safe and well, as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.
- Rebuilding communication, to strengthen communication between home and school, particularly if contact has been limited or disrupted.
- Offering support, to share helpful advice or signpost you to services such as family support, health care, or other agencies.
- Responding to ongoing absence if a child's attendance is low, we may visit as part of a wider plan to support regular attendance in line with national guidance.
- Helping with a return to school, if a child has been off for a longer period or is finding it hard to return, we can plan together with parents and carers along with the child, for a safe and supported reintegration.

We are committed to working with families in a respectful, understanding, and supportive way to help every child attend school regularly and thrive.

Part-time timetables

All schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils, and we are committed to every child's right to a suitable, full-time education offer. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, reduced timetable where a pupil's individual needs indicate they cannot currently access a full- time education, and it would not be in their best interest to do so.

We will not use a part-time timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. We will never put a part-time timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil where it is safe to do so; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family.

In line with Lincolnshire County Council guidance, we will notify the Attendance Team of all part-time timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

Persistent and Severe Absence

A pupil is classed as a Persistent Absentee (PA) if they miss 10% or more of school in a year—equivalent to 19 days (38 sessions). This level of absence significantly affects learning and requires full parental support to address.

A pupil is classed as Severely Absent (SA) if they miss 50% or more of school. These pupils often face greater barriers to attendance and may need intensive, tailored support.

We closely monitor all pupil attendance to identify those at risk of becoming PA or SA. Where concerns arise, we implement timely interventions and may refer families to external agencies for additional support.

If parents do not engage with support and attendance remains poor, we may request the Local Authority to consider legal action. This can include:

- A Penalty Notice,
- An Education Supervision Order, or
- Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Legal proceedings can be initiated without issuing a penalty notice first if attendance is significantly low.

A Penalty Notice can be issued under the following legislation:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

See below for further information:

Penalty Notice	Details
First Notice in a **3-year period**:	Issued to each parent. Charged at £80 if paid within 21 days £160 if paid within 28 days.

Second Notice in a **3-year period**:	Issued to each parent. Charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
Third Notice in a **3-year period**:	Alternative action should be taken, for example prosecution or other attendance legal interventions. Fines per parent are capped at two within any three-year period. If a parent is prosecuted for their child's non-attendance, they could face a magistrate's court appearance and a fine of up to £2,500 and/or prison. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

The Local Authority state that part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

School attendance and the law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 introduced a National Framework in England. By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National framework for penalty notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for

£160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

For further information see the Lincolnshire Code of Conduct for issuing penalties regarding school attendance. **Penalty notices - code of conduct – Introduction - Lincolnshire County Council**

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.

In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

We will work with parents and the Local Authority to ensure that parents are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

Deletions from the Register

At Voyage Education Partnership we will add and will only delete pupils from our school roll in line with the Pupil Registration Regulations. In most circumstances, we will know in advance about pupils leaving our school; this will be planned and discussed with the parent in advance of the pupil leaving. At Voyage Education Partnership we will always work with families to gain information about the pupil's next school and/or address before the pupil leaves to reduce the risk of pupils becoming a child missing education through lack of shared information.

We follow Lincolnshire County Council's Child Missing Education procedures and will inform the Children Missing Education Team of all removals from our school roll no later than the date the child is removed in line with statutory responsibilities.

If a child is removed from roll to home educate, we can only de-register the child if we receive, in writing, the parent's intention to educate their child other than at school. The pupil will be de-registered on receipt of such a letter and Lincolnshire County Council will be informed of the removal from roll as outlined above.

N.B. The exception to the above is if the child has an EHCP, or is a CIN/LAC Child. In these cases, permission for parents to home educate must be given by the local authority.

We will follow Lincolnshire County Council's https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-attendance/pupil-attendance when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown, the school will carry out joint enquiries with Lincolnshire County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

Statutory framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE (August 2024)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE (January 2015)
- Children missing education, DfE (September 2016)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2023) This will be 2025
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (December 2023)

Academic specific procedures *Please refer to the Academy's individual Attendance Procedure for specific details.*