



## Attendance Policy

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Aims</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Legislation and guidance</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Local Governing Body</li> <li>2. The Head of School</li> <li>3. The Senior Leadership Team</li> <li>4. The Attendance and Welfare Team</li> <li>5. Teachers</li> <li>6. Parents/Carers</li> <li>7. Students</li> </ol>	
<b>Recording attendance</b>	<b>5-7</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unplanned absence</li> <li>2. Planned absence</li> <li>3. Lateness and punctuality</li> <li>4. Following up unexplained absence</li> <li>5. Reporting to parents and carers</li> <li>6. Reporting to mainstream stakeholder schools</li> </ol>	
<b>Authorised and unauthorised absence</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approval for term-time absence</li> <li>2. Legal sanctions</li> </ol>	
<b>Strategies for promoting absence</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Attendance monitoring</b>	<b>9</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitoring attendance</li> <li>2. Analysing attendance</li> <li>3. Using data to improve attendance</li> <li>4. Reducing persistent and severe absence</li> </ol>	
<b>Review arrangements</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Attendance Codes</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Attendance Flow Chart</b>	<b>12</b>

## Introduction

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At Estuary Academy Island (EAI) we know that attendance is key in terms of safeguarding, learning and future life success. Across the Alternative Learning Trust (ALT) attendance is a focus as often students join with high levels of disengagement and poor attendance. However, we are not just after an improvement from these low starting levels, we aim for our students to have comparable excellent attendance with those who have not been educationally disadvantaged. Improving attendance and ultimately having them in school every day, supports their safety and ensures they are able to make progress across all aspects of their learning.

## Aims

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We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance. It is therefore vital that this policy is read alongside all others, where we have a safeguarding first approach.

The aims of this policy are:

- To promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, including how different roles across our school team support this.
- To formalise our robust processes to promote good attendance and punctuality, including rewards and reduce absence, particularly persistent and severe absence.
- To commit to offering every student access to the education which they are entitled
- To formalise our robust processes for monitoring and analysing attendance with the aim of addressing patterns at the earliest opportunity.
- To acknowledge the need for strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place at attend school, noting the actions we take to support this.
- To commit to a collaborative approach when addressing causes for concern, liaising with relevant agencies and our mainstream school partners.
- To show how we monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

## Legislation and Guidance

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This policy meets the requirements of the ‘working together to improve school attendance’ from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on ‘school attendance parental responsibility measures’. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance.

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

- Mental health issues affecting student's attendance: guidance for schools

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

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EAI aims to promote the best possible attendance and punctuality for all students in order to:

- Ensure that students gain the greatest benefit from the education and support on offer, thus enabling them to reach their full potential.
- Ensure that students have continuity of learning and are afforded the best opportunity for success in coursework and examinations or return to mainstream education.
- Ensure that students secure good records for references for their next steps, whether returning to mainstream or moving to post-16 education or employment.
- Promote patterns of behaviour which will prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life.

This is a whole school responsibility, however, there are specific roles that take responsibility for key actions as part of this.

### **1. The Local Governing Body:**

The Local Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring the importance of attendance is promoted across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy

### **2. The Head of School:**

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy at EAI
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of strategies implemented to support attendance and punctuality
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT):**

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, through its vision, values and ethos
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building strong relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Work with mainstream school partners and other relevant agencies to ensure a collaborative approach to promoting attendance at EAI
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention to support students and families

- Welcoming and recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office while on door duty

#### **4. The Attendance and Welfare Team:**

The Attendance and Welfare Team work across first day calling, safeguarding and attendance monitoring (including some across hub working).

The Attendance and Welfare Team are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting any concerns about attendance to SLT and Head of School
- Working with the education welfare officers to tackle persistent absences
- Advising the Head of School when to issue fixed penalty notices
- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Providing parents/carers with detailed support for student attendance

#### **5. Teachers:**

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office during afternoon tutor time.

#### **6. Parents/Carers:**

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of absence and each subsequent day of absence, advising when they are expected to return
- Provide evidence to support any absences, including sickness
- Provide the school with at least 2 emergency contacts for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

#### **7. Students:**

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day and be punctual, going to each of their timetabled lessons

### **Recording attendance**

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Students are placed on to the attendance register directly following their pre-admission meeting and then undertake their assessments.

We take our register as the students walk in the door each school day and again during our afternoon reading session. It marks whether every student is:

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

Any amendments to the attendance register will include:

- The amended and original entry as well as the reason for the amendment
- The date of the amendment
- The name and role of the person making the amendment

*(See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.)*

We also record:

- Whether an absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of the circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive at school by 9.30 each day, school opens for students at 9.00. This means the register for the first session opens at 9.00 and is kept open until 9.30. The register for the second session opens at 12.45 and is kept open until 13.05.

### **1. Unplanned absence**

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of unplanned absence by 9.00 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school reception team.

This is through the school's main number, 01795 720747, this number have a facility to leave a message should the line be busy.

We ask that where possible parents/carers provide evidence of any physical or mental illness and require this evidence should an absence exceed 5 days. This evidence might include a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other form of appropriate evidence.

Without evidence, where we have concerns about the authenticity of an illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

### **2. Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. We do ask that, where possible, these are made outside of school hours. If they have to happen during school time, we ask that students are out of school for the minimum amount of time.

Evidence of such appointments should be shared with the reception team so that this can be recorded on the registers. This can be done via email, text or in person.

If requesting any other type of term-time absence (*see section: Authorised and Unauthorised Absence*), these must be put to the school with as much notice as possible.

### **3. Lateness and punctuality**

A student who arrives late will be marked with the appropriate codes.

Reports are then run by the Attendance and Welfare Team to consider where patterns of lateness or issues are arising. These concerns are then shared with SLT to take appropriate actions at the earliest possible point.

Further to this, systems are in place to send letters home to note when lateness has been noted for a specific reason, for example smoking.

#### 4. Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student’s parent/carer on the morning of any unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student’s emergency contacts, the school will then send a text message reminding the parents/carers of the requirement to inform the school. Should we still not be able to contact the parents/carers we will then consider if either a home visit or contact with external services (police/social services) is necessary.
- Ensure a home visit or contact with external agencies is made if an unexplained absence with no contact happens for more than one day.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained. Attendance and welfare staff will also record follow up communications and actions with parents/carers on CPOMS as part of our safeguarding ethos.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- Involve an Education Welfare Officer if absence from school continues.

#### 5. Reporting to parents and carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child’s attendance and absence levels, the table below lays out how this happens.

Students on a respite placement		Students on an alternative curriculum placement	
Regularity	Method	Regularity	Method
Weekly	Postcards to alert to improving or declining attendance	Weekly	Postcards to alert to improving or declining attendance
Mid-point (6 weeks)	Attendance figure shared as part of report	Term 2	Attendance figure shared as part of formal report
Endpoint (12 weeks)	Attendance figure shared as part of report	Term 4	Attendance figure shared as part of formal report
As needed	Phone call from SLT/ Attendance Team due to attendance concerns.	As needed	Phone call from SLT/ Attendance Team due to attendance concerns.

#### 6. Reporting to our mainstream stakeholder schools

As the vast majority of our students are dual registered, attendance for these students is shared weekly with their mainstream school.

### 1. Approval for term-time absence

The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as 'being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request of this nature should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence. This request should be put in a letter to the Head of School with any supporting evidence provided at the time of the request.

### 2. Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by the Head of School, Local Authority Officer or the police. The decision on

whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken during term-time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

### Strategies for promoting attendance

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Attendance is a focus for everyone in our school. The list below is some of the strategies that our Attendance and Welfare Team alongside our SLT use to respond to emerging concerns or trends, and to actively promote good attendance and punctuality from our students.

- An attendance reward system where students receive an attendance award for 100% attendance in the previous week during their Key Stage assemblies
- 100% attendance students recognised weekly in our reception area
- Postcards to parents/carers recognising improved attendance and challenging declining attendance
- SLT daily attendance monitoring, looking at each student and their attendance
- Student tracking in planners; giving ownership to students over improving attendance

- Termly summary stickers in planners, highlighting where we have concerns about attendance
- Attendance importance posters displayed around the school
- Use of Academy 21 to support re-engagement with education
- End of day tutor time used to reflect on weekly attendance and set individual improvement goals

## Attendance Monitoring

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### 1. Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistic releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average for APs and share this with the Local Governing Body.

### 2. Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Analyse comparative data on students' attendance prior to joining EAI and compare to that in their mainstream schools

### 3. Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Use regular attendance reports, to allow the Attendance and Welfare Team alongside the SLT to facilitate discussions with students and their families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### 4. Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is defined as being where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the school considers to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement in school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Use robust processes to warn parents/carers that their child's absence is at risk of causing a fine to be issued

## Review arrangements

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This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years by the Head of School. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body and published on the school website.

## Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

<b>Attendance</b>	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority – Must be face to face learning
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity – Must be face to face learning
D	Dual registered at another school
<b>Absence – Authorised</b>	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school – (Where the pupil is timetabled to attend school, the absence must be recorded using appropriate schools and not code X)
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable – Including online learning
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes – Please see T Code guidance
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
<b>Absence – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes</b>	
<b>These codes are classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance</b>	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
<b>Absence – Unauthorised</b>	
G	Leave not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Late arrival after the register is closed
<b>Administrative Codes</b>	
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure

## Appendix 2: Attendance Flow Chart

### **Stage 1 – Absence at Registration**

- Record of attendance using the correct DfE code (AM register by start of session; PM register by afternoon close).
  - If no reason is provided, mark as N (unauthorised) until a satisfactory explanation is received.
  - Absence remains unauthorised if no valid reason or evidence is received within 5 school days.
- Responsibility: Monitored by Attendance & Welfare Team.

### **Stage 2 – First Day of Unexplained Absence**

- Call the parent/carer by 10:30 a.m. on the first morning of absence.
  - If no answer, send a text message and/or email reminder to contact the school.
  - Record all calls, messages, and actions on CPOMS for safeguarding.
- Responsibility: Attendance & Welfare Team.

### **Stage 3 – Continued Unexplained Absence (Day 2 onwards)**

- Continue daily phone calls to parent/carer (by 10:30 a.m.).
  - If still no contact by Day 2, consider/conduct a home visit or contact external agencies (e.g. police or social care).
  - Update the attendance code immediately once the reason for absence is confirmed.
- Responsibility: Attendance & Welfare Team, escalating to Safeguarding Team as needed.

### **Stage 4 – Persistent or Severe Absence**

- Identify pupils with:  
Persistent absence (10%+ missed sessions)  
Severe absence (50%+ missed sessions)
  - Arrange a meeting with parents/carers within 2 weeks of concern being identified.
  - Create a support plan or reintegration plan with the pupil and family.
  - Review attendance half-termly or termly, monitoring progress against agreed actions.
  - Provide access to support services or interventions (e.g. mentoring, welfare, medical or pastoral support).
- Responsibility: Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Attendance & Welfare Team.

### **Stage 5 – Formal Sanctions and Legal Action**

- If 10 or more unauthorised sessions occur in a rolling 6-week period:  
Refer to Attendance Advisory Service (AASSA) or Local Authority.  
Issue or request a Fixed Penalty Notice:  
£80 if paid within 21 days.  
£160 if paid within 28 days.
  - If unpaid after 28 days, escalate to court prosecution under the Education Act.
- Responsibility: Headteacher / Head of School (referral or notice); Local Authority (enforcement).