



**Attendance Champion: Susan Gadsby**

**‘Attendance is the responsibility of all staff at Esteem Valley Academy’**

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## 1. Aims

Our academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to bespoke timetable appropriate to their needs
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend the agreed timetable and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons and sessions.

Attendance is vital for progress as many pupils who attend NEDSC have had large gaps in their learning, low attendance in previous educational settings and have become disengaged in education. Positive attendance will enable pupils to take full advantage of our ethos OPSS and result in positive outcomes.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) 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:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. Academy procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools and academies (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each day and once during the second session. Start times vary due the bespoke curriculums and pupil timetables. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the academy on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 09:00 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents can notify the site by phoning in the absence and informing a member of the staff team.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents can notify the academy via contacting the site office or sending in a letter with their pupil to be handed into a staff member.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. However, all pupils receive a bespoke timetable and attended provision at different times. Pupils attendance will be recorded in accordance with their agreed timetable.

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The academy will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

### 3.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance reports are formally provided to parents twice a year via a formal educational report. However, if a pupil's attendance is reducing then parents will be informed accordingly in an attempt to support an increase in attendance.

## 4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from the academy is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if the Head Teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of academy programs such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative, if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Head Teacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Headteacher agrees to consult with the governing body prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. Evidence would be required in each case.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Term-time holiday will not be approved unless the pupil's attendance is above 95% and they have no exams or coursework deadlines within that time.

Academy procedures when targeting unauthorised attendance are as follows:

1. If pupil attendance drops below 90% and direct communication with parents / carers has not had the desired effect of increasing their child's attendance a stage 1 letter will be issued highlighting the decrease in attendance and attendance will be monitored closely over the half-term. The school will attempt to provide supportive strategies to support pupil attendance.
  2. If attendance stays below 90% but progress has been made parents / carers will be informed stating the positive percentage improvement in attendance. Parents / carers will be reminded that their child is still below 90% and that their attendance will still be monitored.
  3. If attendance stays below 90% and no improvement has been made a stage 2 letter will be sent to parents / carers explaining that the school has significant concerns regarding their child's attendance. Parents / carers will also be invited into an attendance meeting with a member of the senior leadership team. The aim of this meeting will be to discuss rationale for pupils not attending school and strategies to support increasing attendance or attending identified timetables. Strategies may include referral to the Trusts Family and Student Support Team or change in curriculum offer.
  4. If there is no improvement in attendance after the face-to-face meeting then a stage 3 formal letter will be issued to monitor improvement in attendance within a specified period of between 3 to 5 weeks. If attendance does not improve over that set period then the school will be required to follow DCC legal processes and refer to Derbyshire Education Welfare service.
- Study leave – study leave is not granted by default and is only granted to select pupils in year 11 if appropriate. Provision will still be made available for pupils who wish to revise on site.

#### **4.2 Legal sanctions**

Academies can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

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

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

#### **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

At NEDSC we reward positive attendance with certifications, rewards e.g. trips and gift cards.

Our aim is to work with parents and carers to support pupils to make the right choice regarding attendance. At NEDSC, timetables are bespoke and can be flexible to suit the needs of the pupil to support engagement and attendance. Parents/carers and pupils will receive regular feedback regarding improvements in attendance.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The site leads for each site and the Pastoral Lead monitor pupil absence on a weekly basis.

Parents are expected to call the academy in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the academy each day a child is ill.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

At NEDSC attendance data is stored via RM integris. This data is used to inform staff, parents/carers and pupils what their attendance is. Internal data is used to identify whether or not there are particular pupils or groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support. Internal data is also used to inform the academy's local governing body via the Headteachers report.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The Governing Board**

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole academy on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **7.2 The Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the academy, and for monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **7.3 ATTENDANCE CHAMPION**

Our 'Attendance Champion' is our Safeguarding Lead, Susan Gadsby. Our 'Attendance Champion' works closely with our Attendance Team (Kevin Wildrienne, Emma Beresford, Connor Bartle, Imani Lockhart-Davis & BSA's) to monitor and track attendance, ensuring the procedures set out in our 'Attendance Policy for pupils' are followed consistently, encouraging excellent attendance across all our pupils and ensuring appropriate support is in place to enable pupils to improve their attendance.

#### **7.4 The site Leads**

The Site Leads:

- Monitors attendance data at their site and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

#### **7.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the academy office.

#### **7.6 BSA staff**

BSA staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the academy system. BSA staff are also responsible for inputting the attendance data on the academy's management information system.

#### **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by a member of the SLT. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Body.

#### **9. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

#### **10. COVID-19**

Use DfE Covid-19 guidance.



## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



Appendix 3

