



Hamilton Academy

Attendance, Punctuality and Late Collection of Children Policy

Committee:	Local Community Governance Committee
Approved on:	15 December 2022
Next review date:	July 2023
Updated/Reviewed on:	Approved by Trust Board on:

Aims

Our Academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to attendance by:

- Working in partnership with parents/ carers, all staff, the Trust, Governing body, Local Authority, Education Welfare and all other local partners to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Improving attendance to a minimum of 96% and reduce unauthorised and persistent absence through regular reviews of attendance data.
- Ensuring all staff, Governors and parents/ carers understand procedures relating to attendance and fulfil their statutory duties.
- Improving punctuality at the beginning and end of the school day. Removing any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Having a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents/ carers understand and follow.
- Ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Following DFE guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance' May 2022.

We will work with all partners, as set out in 'Working together to Improve school attendance' May 2022, to:

- **Expect:** Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritizing attendance improvement across the school.
- **Monitor:** Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve the, before they become entrenched.
- **Listen and understand:** When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- **Facilitate support:** Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome barriers outside of school. This might include early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
- **Formalise support:** Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.
- **Enforce:** Where all avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupils right to an education.

Parents and Carers

It is the legal duty of parents/carers to ensure their child's daily attendance in education and they may be prosecuted if they fail in this duty. Parental responsibility also extends to ensuring that children are punctual, dressed appropriately, are well prepared for school each day and ready to learn. This is essential for children to get the most out of their school experiences, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. *The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.*

Parents/ carers will be informed of the Academy's policy on attendance and punctuality when their child starts at our Academy and are reminded annually. [This policy is also available on our Academy's website.](#) Our Safeguarding and Attendance Officer (SAO), Senior leadership team (SLT) and the Academy office monitor children's absences regularly. As a result, parents/ carers are swiftly informed when attendance concerns are raised and our Academy works with parents/ carers to 'listen and understand', 'facilitate support', 'formalise support' and 'enforce' attendance. As a minimum, all parents/ carers will be made aware of their child's attendance three times a year, during parents evening and on their child's end of year report. Where there are attendance concerns, staff will outline the impact of poor attendance on the child's academic attainment and progress as well as any other wellbeing or behaviour concerns.

Pupils

Pupils will be made aware of the importance of regular attendance, as it is a central part of our Academy's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. Our Academy will visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance to our children. This will be done through displays, assemblies and within class. Praise and rewards will be used to celebrate good, and encourage improved, attendance. This includes, but is not limited to, individual, group or class rewards including stickers, certificates, prizes, reward playtimes and events.

Academy staff and Governors

Good attendance requires a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the Trust and Governing body, therefore all Academy staff will endeavor to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example and high expectations. All staff will understand and follow the attendance policy and will support and challenge parents/ carers when there are concerns for a child's attendance or punctuality, by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Attendance will be monitored regularly by the Safeguarding and Attendance Officer as well as senior leaders and will be reported at Trust level half termly. The Safeguarding and Attendance Officer and senior leaders will also provide up to date attendance information to teaching staff and provide training and support where necessary. At a minimum this training will cover:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers,
- the academy/trusts' strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
- the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

Mrs Y Glaister (Principal), with the support of Mrs C Robinson (Deputy Principal) and Mrs R Orbell (Safeguarding and Attendance Officer), is the academy's senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance. Mrs Y Glaister will ensure the academy follows its statutory duty on attendance and prosecution with the support of the Education Welfare Service. Attendance will also feature as part of the Academy School Improvement plan, underpinned by an Attendance Action plan to target attendance improvement efforts in line with the academy's attendance data.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) works for the Local Authority and has a statutory duty with regard to attendance.

Expectations, Procedures and Responsibilities

Punctuality - Start of the Academy Day

Punctuality will be monitored as closely as attendance. Children who arrive after the start of the day and before the official close of the register (**30 minutes** after the session starts) will be marked as late.

Please see table below for year group gates and start times.

	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Gate open's	8.40am	8.40am	8.45am	8.45am
Session starts	8.50am	8.50am	8.55am	8.55am

Parents/ carers are required to sign their child in at the electronic screen in the school office, after gates have closed, with a reason for their late arrival. Children who arrive after the registers have closed (30 minutes after the session starts) will be marked as an unauthorised absence. As a result of receiving an unauthorised absence, the Academy attendance process will be applied. In cases of persistent lateness (3 times or more within a half term) the academy will work with parents/ carers to improve punctuality. In the first instance, the parent/ carer will be notified in writing that their child's punctuality has fallen below the expected standard and as a result will be monitored for the remainder of the academic year. If a child's punctuality remains a concern, a further three occasions of lateness within a half term, then the parent/ carer will be notified in writing to attend a punctuality clinic with our Academy's Safeguarding and Attendance Office. This clinic provides an opportunity for academy staff to 'listen and understand' and 'facilitate support'. This meeting will be followed up with a written outcome, (voluntary parent contract), outlining the discussion which took place and identify any agreements made between the parent/ carer and academy. At this point, the Safeguarding and Attendance Officer may follow the early help process.

Discretion to this process may be granted by the Academy in extenuating circumstances e.g. when the Academy is aware that a child has to attend hospital for a prolonged period of time.

If you require any further information or more detailed support please contact Mrs R Orbell (Safeguarding and Attendance Officer) on 01782 234420.

Absences

Every half day absence has to be classified by the academy as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions missed for genuine reasons such as:

- Illness (where we have sent the child home, or parents/ carers have informed us of their child's illness (in the majority of cases))
- Medical appointments (parent/ carers are invited to provide an appointment card/ hospital letter)
- Authorised leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
- Birth of a sibling
- Death of a close relative
- Religious observance*

* As a multi- cultural academy, we recognise the importance of the observation of religious festivals and therefore, will authorise 1 day's absence for religious observance. (Please see leave of absence request section which provides information on how to do this).

Unauthorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions missed where no explanation for a child's absence has been received. This can include, but is not limited to, when:

- The academy has not been suitably informed of the child's absence
- Medical appointments, where there is doubt surrounding the absence or a child has excessive amounts of days off for medical appointments
- Illness/appointments of a parent/ carer prevents a child attending
- Parent/ carer thought that the academy was closed
- Head lice is being treated
- Holidays are taken

If a child is unable to attend school, parents/ carers should notify the Academy as soon as is reasonably practicable **every day** of the child's absence, by telephoning the academy office on 01782 234420 (voicemail available) or messaging the Academy office on Class Dojo. (Parents/ carers should not notify any member of staff directly as this information may not be received and could result in your child's absence being recorded as unauthorised). If no contact has been made with the Academy regarding a child's absence, then the Safeguarding and Attendance Officer telephones home to clarify the reason for absence. If we do not receive a satisfactory explanation on the day of the absence, or are unable to make contact with parents/ carers, this will be marked as unauthorised and no amendments will be made. It is vital that parents/ carers inform the academy office in writing of any change to their details, in particular, contact telephone numbers.

To ensure the safeguarding and welfare of our children, if the whereabouts of a child remains unknown to the academy, then staff will follow further safeguarding measures, including completing door knocks at the child's registered address, and may also inform children's social care and the Police as required. For any child who is vulnerable e.g. already known to social care or has risk factors identified in our safeguarding policy, door knocks will be completed on the first day of the child's absence if the whereabouts of the child is still unknown by 11am. For any child who is non-vulnerable, door knocks will be completed by day 3 of the child's absence if the whereabouts of the child has not been determined.

Monitoring absences

As an academy we promote good attendance and have high expectations, therefore our rigorous attendance processes begin at any point at which a child's attendance falls below 96%. In the first instance the parent/ carer will be notified in writing via a letter of their child's current attendance percentage and encouraged to improve their child's attendance. The child's attendance will then be monitored.

If a child's attendance remains a concern and declines further, parents/ carers will be notified in writing to attend an attendance clinic with our Academy's Safeguarding and Attendance Officer. This clinic provides an opportunity for academy staff to 'listen and understand' and 'facilitate support'. This meeting will be followed up with a written outcome (Voluntary parent contract), outlining the discussion which took place and identify any agreements made between the parent/ carer and academy. At this point, the Safeguarding and Attendance Officer may follow the early help process.

If the child's attendance continues to fall, following the attendance clinic, this could result in the child becoming a persistent absentee and further measures will be put in place. (See below – persistent absenteeism).

Discretion to this process may be granted by the Academy dependent on individual circumstances e.g. when the Academy is aware that a child has to attend hospital for a prolonged period of time.

If you require any further information or more detailed support please contact Mrs R Orbell (Safeguarding and Attendance Officer) on 01782 234420.

Requests for Leave of Absence and fining

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. The Academy will consider each application individually taking into account specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If the leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the child can be away from school. As headteachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

Any request for leave of absence must be made on the Leave of Absence Request Form, which is available from the academy office or on our websites and must be made at least **4 weeks prior** to your requested dates. All requests must be accompanied by evidence to support the exceptional circumstances. Parents/ carers will be informed in writing of the outcome of their application and the reason(s) for the decision. This could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

Should the Academy suspect that a leave of absence has taken place without following the process outlined above then a penalty notice for leave of absence will still be issued.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason (attendance falls below 90%). Absence at this level is a statutory concern and is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. We need parent/ carer's full support and co-operation to tackle this. Any child who is persistently absent, or near that level, has their attendance tracked and monitored closely by our class teachers, Safeguarding and Attendance Officer and Academy Principal.

Our approach to managing persistent absenteeism, in line with our aims to 'formalise support' and 'enforce', is as follows:

- Regular meetings with parents. (Continue to invite parents to regular attendance clinics until the threshold for Education Welfare support is met, 12 sessions missed within 12 weeks).
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50%).
- Parenting contracts. (Implementation of a formal written agreement between parent and either the academy or Local Authority, including details of the requirements the parent is expected to comply with, a statement from the academy or Local Authority agreeing to support the parents and a statement from the parents agreeing to comply).
- Education Supervision Orders. (Made through the Family or High Court by the Local Authority).
- Attendance prosecution. (Parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted in the Magistrates court, by the Local Authority).
- Parenting orders. (Imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine or community order).
- Fixed Penalty Notices. (Served to parent/ carers as an alternative to prosecution. These can be issued to each parent liable for attendance).

These approaches will be decided upon on a case by case basis after considering the individual circumstances of a family. Appendix 1 sets out the implications of these processes in more detail.

If you require any further information or more detailed support please contact Mrs R Orbell (Safeguarding and Attendance Officer) on 01782 234420.

Punctuality – End of the Academy Day

All parents/carers should be onsite ready to collect their child at the end of the Academy day. Please see table below for year group finish times.

	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Collection time	2.40pm	2.45pm	2.50pm	2.55pm

Upon entry to our Academy, all parents provide **at least 2 contact names and numbers**, in the event of an emergency. Parents will also create a password that is required upon collection if somebody staff do not know is collecting. Parents/ carers are required to notify the academy office, that an adult other than parents is collecting, this person will need to provide the correct password in order for staff to dismiss the child.

All our children should be collected by someone aged 18 or over, however, if parent/ carers wish for an older sibling to collect who is not yet 18 but over the age of 12, we require written permission in our academy office. Parent/ carers are advised that once dismissed, the **welfare and safety** of the child is **their responsibility**. If the academy has any safeguarding concerns regarding the collection arrangements, we will follow our robust procedures set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and reserve the right to withdraw sibling collection at any time following these concerns.

If a child remains uncollected, half an hour after the year group finish time, and no contact has been made with parents, the Safeguarding and Attendance Officer and/or senior leadership team may make a referral to social care and/or the Police. This will be made at the discretion of the safeguarding team.

The Academy reserves the right to charge parents/ carers for childcare after the end of the school day.

Admission and Attendance registers

Each academy holds an admission register by law and all children, who attend our academy, have their name placed on this register. Each academy also holds an attendance register where each child’s attendance is recorded on this register. Both registers will be held by the academy for 3 years from the date of entry. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in a fine.

Admission register

The admission register contains specific personal details of every child in the academy, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents/ carers and details of the school last attended.

A child’s name can only lawfully be deleted from the admissions register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.

Our academy is legally required to share information from our registers with the Local Authority. As a minimum this includes:

- Every time a child's name is added to, or deleted from, the school admission register outside of standard transition times (including the statutory reason for deletion). For deletions this must take place before the deletion, and for additions it must be no later than 5 working days after the addition.
- The name and address of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has missed school for an extended period of time without the absence being recorded as authorised, the child will be formally considered as a 'child missing in education' and the Local Authority will be notified.

Further information on the contents of the admissions register can be found in section 7 of 'working together to improve school attendance' May 2022.

Attendance register

Our Academy will take the register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each session our academy will record whether every child is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. As the attendance register is a record of the children present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it was taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, we must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name and title of the person who made the amendment.

Further details on the contents of the attendance register, including the register codes used by our academy, can be found in section 8 of 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' May 2022.

Appendix 1 – Explanations taken from 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

Attendance Prosecution

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or

directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

Non-compliance with a parenting order

- Any breach of the order could lead to a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

Fixed Penalty Notices

- Fixed penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. All schools and the police must send copies of fixed penalty notices issued to the local authority.
- Fixed penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.
 - The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice.
 - If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made.
 - There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.
 - Monies collected through fixed penalty notices can only be used for the administration of the fixed penalty notice system or for prosecuting for the original offence in cases of non-payment. Any surplus at the end of the year must be returned to the Secretary of State.