



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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Ratified by:	Zaki Moosa, Chair of Governors
On behalf of:	The Palmer Academy Local Governing Body
Ratified on:	INSERT DATE

Values:

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

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2016

The Palmer Academy expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

Overall Aims:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

Rights and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality

The Legal Framework:

Parents’ legal obligations:

- Arrange education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, and to send them to school regularly once they are on the register.

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
99-100%	Excellent	0-4	Less than 1
97-98%	Good	5-9	1-2
96%	Satisfactory	10-13	2-3
90-95%	Unsatisfactory	14-18	3-4
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19 Equivalent to 38 sessions	More than 4

Academies must ensure:

- Appropriate staff are able to provide evidence and reports sufficient for court purposes. This will include evidence of actions taken to address attendance-related issues as agreed with the LA.
- They comply with local protocols relating to any assessment that the LA is obliged to carry out relating to a pupil's non-attendance.
- Any penalty notice issued, or requests to the LA for these to be issued, comply with the local code of conduct, including the payment of all monies to go to the LA.
- They are able to provide the LA with the required information in cases where a penalty notice is not paid and prosecution has to be commenced.

Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To deal with parental requests for absence from learning in line with Reading Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Reading Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To lead on and take responsibility for attendance and punctuality on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with parents and responding to parental enquiries.
- To oversee the analysis of weekly, termly and yearly attendance data, and respond to findings.
- To meet with the School Administrator and any other relevant staff to monitor the systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise with external agencies such as the Education Welfare Officer and make referrals where necessary.
- To ensure that rewards and incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used.
- To work with teachers to plan for the reintegration of pupils after any long-term absence.
- To revise and amend the policy, as required.

Office Administrator:

- To carry out and record the outcome of first day calls, when a child doesn't arrive at school when no reason has been received. In addition, a deputy DSL carries out additional welfare checking for the vulnerable pupils.
- To report weekly attendance data for each class or year group.
- To check the school answer phone and take messages from parents and carers about pupil absence.
- To promptly inform the SLT if there are any concerns relating to attendance or punctuality.
- To produce attendance and punctuality data for SLT as requested.
- To record reasons for absence and update class registers.
- To implement the daily checking of Arbor registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- To contact parents/carers by letter if attendance poses a concern.
- To maintain Arbor attendance records in line with this policy.
- To liaise with and report to with outside agencies such as the Education Welfare Service.
- To report to the Local Authority, as requested.
- To oversee the admission and induction of new pupils.
- To support SLT with the promotion of good attendance and punctuality, including finding or organising incentives.
- To ensure staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.
- To inform parents of school procedures, when parents have failed to inform the school of reasons for absence.

Staff:

- **To complete the daily class attendance register with the pupils.**
- To ensure quality first teaching every day with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs.
- To keep accurate and up-to-date daily records of pupil attendance through the Arbor register system taking a formal register of all pupils twice a day.
- To regularly remind children and parents about the importance of good attendance.
- To follow up on pupil absence by ensuring reasons for absence are sought.
- To provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- To establish good and effective communication links with parents and carers, and work collaboratively with them in meeting the child's needs.

- If required, to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties regarding, for example, child protection.
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- **To promptly inform the SLT of pupils who persist with poor attendance.**
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents Evenings.

Parents:

Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach aches etc. Parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away to collect them. If pupils have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should inform the school. Pupils should be brought back to school after appointments. **Pupils should miss as little school time as possible.**

Therefore, parents are expected to:

- **Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time – by 8:40am – every day.**
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time.
- Telephone to inform the school on the first day of absence for their child, and any subsequent days of absence.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on their attendance.

Pupils:

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- Ensure they are punctual, and regular attendance is maintained at the highest level.
- Attend all lessons on time and be ready to learn.
- On those occasions that they return to school from an absence, bring a written explanation to their class teacher.
- Inform their class teacher if they are experiencing difficulties with their attendance.

The Local Authority, through the Educational Welfare Service, is expected to:

- Support the school in improving attendance, through whole school initiatives and individual pupil interventions.
- Work with families and other agencies to remove barriers to good attendance.
- Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance and child protection.

Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:

Aims:

- To ensure good attendance (above 97%) and punctuality is regularly promoted and supported and remains high profile across school.
- To achieve high levels of attendance (above 97%) and punctuality through rewarding good attendance and punctuality.

Go Beanies Breakfast Club

- Breakfast Club is available every day and offered to all children from Reception to Year 6. This supports parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 7.45am ensuring they are on time for school. The club is supervised by members of school staff.

The School Learning Environment

A welcoming, organised learning environment that supports and celebrates its learners are key factors in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their learning environments are of a high quality. Regular, rigorous learning walks are carried out by the SLT to ensure this.

Staff Promoting Good Attendance

It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance with their classes. Good class attendance is attributed to good teaching and this is celebrated. Attendance is shared with staff weekly. The highest attending class of the week in KS1 and in KS2 will be rewarded with an attendance trophy (KS1) or attendance trophy (KS2). There will be an attendance raffle on a Friday where all children who have been in school that week will be entered in to a prize drawer where they will win a small prize.

Parent/teacher consultation evenings

This provides an opportunity for class teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary, a target for improving attendance may be set, which will then be monitored.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise any child's absence from school. Therefore, absences will be treated as unauthorised until the school is satisfied that it should be authorised. ***Parents and carers cannot authorise absences, and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.***

Authorised Absence

There may be some exceptional circumstances where the school will authorise absence, such as:

- Illness - High temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea, or emergency medical or dental appointments which unavoidably falls in school time. While pupils should not be sent to school if they are genuinely unwell, if their illness is not sufficient to seek medical advice then parents and carers are advised to send their child to school in the first instance, where they can be monitored. Should the need arise, parents and carers can then be contacted and arrangements made to send pupils home.
- Religious observances.
- Bereavement of an immediate family member.
- Visits to prospective new schools, external exams or educational assessments.
- Exclusion from school.

Medical or dental appointments

Parent and carers are requested to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for as much of the day as possible, and only be absent for school for the time of the appointment, and the transport time to and from the appointment. To authorise absence, medical evidence will be required in the form of a copy of an appointment card, letter, prescription, etc.

Religious observances

The Palmer Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parent and carers will be aware of these dates, and should apply for absence from learning using the school's form which can be collected from the school office. Applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

Unauthorised Absence

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping, birthdays
- Looking after other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are disabled or unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Haircut
- To get new shoes or uniform
- If there is no reason given to the school for the child being absent by the end of the session they will be recorded as unauthorised.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need the fullest support and co-operation of parents to tackle this.

The Palmer Academy monitors all absence and the reasons given for absence thoroughly. Each week the behaviour assistant headteacher looks through all absentees and works out if there are any further actions that need to take place. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Each week children who are marked as persistently absent at the stage of the year are monitored. Their weekly attendance and previous week's attendance are recorded and then number of sessions currently missed are recorded. This information is used as part of a trigger system to work out when they will require a letter, a face to face meeting with the attendance team and finally meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer. Each half term attendance letters will be sent out to those children whose attendance is under 95%. The children under 90% who are classed as persistent absentees will receive a letter saying they are being referred to the EWO and may face fines if they have many unauthorised absences. The children who are receiving these letters will then be monitored for the next month and any children whose attendance does not improve will be invited to a meeting to support parents but also state if fines will be issued. The letter to children with attendance under 95% will be given an outline of expectations for attendance and the impact on their child's education.

Date	Letter	Meeting	EWO
By September 30 th	Less than 95%	N/A	N/A
By October 30 th	Less than 95%	Less than 90% and	

		attendance not improved in the last month.	
By December 30 th	Less than 95%	Less than 90%	Any less than 90% Anyone who's attendance has not improved since September
By February 28 th	Less than 95%	N/A	Any less than 90% Anyone who's attendance has not improved since September
By April 30 th	Less than 95%	Attendance less than 90% and not improved in the last month.	Any less than 90% Anyone who's attendance has not improved since September
By June 30 th	Less than 95%	Anyone whose attendance is less than 90% to outline expectations for next academic year.	Any less than 90% Anyone who's attendance has not improved since September

Attendance Rewards

Each week the attendance of each class is celebrated on the weekly newsletter. A trophy is rewarded to the 2 classes with the best weekly attendance, one in KS1 and KS2. A weekly raffle also takes place for early years, KS1 and KS2 for the 100% attendees each week where they have chance to win a prize for turning up to school every day. Each classroom will also have a clear attendance traffic light system to show parents, carers, and children the class' attendance each week and to promote the understanding of national average being 96%. To promote attendance further, an attendance poster is sent home each week with the newsletter to ensure parents are aware of the expectations for attendance.

Monitoring and Recording Attendance & Punctuality

Class Registers

Class registers are recorded using Arbor. The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session. Registers can be re-submitted in the case of a mistake or a pupil arriving after submission, but registers must be accurate and submitted at key times.

Morning Register

Gates open at 8:40am and the bell for lining up goes at 8:50am. Register is taken before 9:00am and saved by the teacher. Class registers remain open until 9:30am – between 9:00am – 9:30am arrivals will receive a 'L' (late) mark. At 9:30am the teacher saves their final register. If arriving after 9:00am but before 9.30am children will be recorded as late (L). If they arrive after 9:30am they will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless the reason provided for the lateness is authorised.

Afternoon Register

Afternoon registers open at 12.45 (EYFS), 1.00pm (KS1) or 1.15pm (KS2), and must be completed by staff before afternoon lessons begin.

School Attendance Monitoring

The school monitors attendance of individual pupils, classes and pupil groups. We liaise directly with parents where their child's attendance is below 90%, but also with parents of any children where attendance is posing a concern, i.e. multiple unauthorised absences, repeating patterns of absence, recent decline in attendance. The Education Welfare Officer is consulted in all cases of Persistent Absence, i.e. below 90%, who will decide what action to take next; typically, parents will receive a letter to inform them of the Local Authority's concerns in the first instance. Further action from the Education Welfare Officer may be taken if attendance still falls below expectations.

Punctuality

The SLT and the Admin Officer monitor punctuality regularly. Where concerns are highlighted, a letter regarding the school's concern about lateness may be sent explaining how much learning pupils are missing. If it does not improve, parents are invited in to school, to discuss the concerns with the SLT and plan a way forward. If lateness does not improve following the meeting, then the family will be referred to the EWO who will contact parents warning them that further action may be taken.

Emergency contacts

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018) requires schools, where possible, to hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This supports good practice in ensuring that the school has multiple options to pursue for any child at risk of going missing or who poses a welfare or safeguarding concern. We ask for all parents and carers to provide two or more emergency contact number for their child/ren. We hold a list of any pupils for whom two or more emergency contact numbers are not able to be provided, and these children receive a priority response in our first day absence procedures to ensure any welfare or safeguarding concerns are promptly addressed.

First Day Absence

- If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent or carer, a first day absence call will be made. The School Office follows this system:
- Day 1: A text will be sent to the first parent or carer contact number regarding the child's absence.
- Day 2: Phone each emergency contact in turn regarding the child's absence

- Day 3: If no response has been received from Day 1 and Day 2, pass information on to SLT to make appropriate enquiries.

When contact with a parent or carer is successfully made, they are asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. The absence reason is recorded on the child's record on Arbor.

The admin team must establish a reason for every absence. No absence will be left indefinitely on the system as an 'N' (no reason given) code. Registers are checked every Monday morning for any residual N codes for the previous week, and parents are contacted again to request a reason for absence. If no response is received within 2 days, the code will be changed to 'O' (unauthorised absence)

Vulnerable Pupils

Pupils who are considered vulnerable by the school (current or historic child protection issues) are checked by a deputy DSL and followed up before 9:20am in addition to the Admin Officer.

Children Missing in Education

In line with DfE requirements and Reading Local Authority Child Missing in Education procedures, staff will act immediately on any known welfare or safeguarding concerns where a child is missing from school, including, where necessary, a CME referral to the Educational Welfare Officer, and/or a referral to Social Care. Please click [here](#) for further information for Reading LSCB's procedures for Children Missing In Education.

Absence from learning

In line with Reading Local Authority, 'Leave in Term Time Guidance' and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, leave for pupils during term time is not authorised under any circumstances. The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, where required, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.

Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- death of parent, carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent, carer or sibling of the pupil

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate, for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background to a child during times of uncertainty.

Parents experiencing what they believe to be exceptional circumstances wishing to request leave in term time for their child/children are required to complete an 'Absence from Learning' form which can be obtained from the school office. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will then make a decision on whether the leave can be lawfully authorised, and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

Legal action, including Penalty Notices

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 states: *“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.”* If a child is absent from school without the Head Teacher’s authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken. Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007 states that penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60 per parent, per child. If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120 per parent, per child. If this is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority will prosecute under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 unless it is confirmed that the penalty notice had been issued in error. The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order. Please note that penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child, and ‘parent’ includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child regardless of whether they live with the child. **These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.**