

**Connect Academy Trust**

# **Pupil Attendance Policy (including Term Time Leave Statement)**



**September 2016**

For Review and Approval by the Board of Connect Academy Trust,  
October 2016

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# **Pupil Attendance Policy (including Term Time Leave Statement)**

## **1. Aims**

This policy aims to set out the principles and broad practices to promote good attendance, in particularly the procedures for managing absence and improving attendance for those whom attendance is of concern. It is noted that not every situation is the same, and the Trust will exercise discretion in applying the policy, within the principles and guidelines.

It is acknowledged that most parents value education highly, and ensure that their child has good attendance and punctuality.

Further details of practice for promoting good attendance are to be found in each individual school.

In this case 'Trust' refers to schools or settings, and 'Parent' refers to anyone who fulfils parental duties including grandparents and carers.

- to maintain good attendance,
- to raise within the community the importance of good attendance,
- to support the development of a consistent approach to managing attendance,
- to exceed our attendance targets.

## **2. Principles**

- It is every child's right to an education
- Good attendance is related to academic achievement and well being
- Good attendance forms patterns for later life, so enabling pupils to become responsible citizens, and to achieve economic stability
- Parents have direct legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance and punctuality
- Pupils who are late miss vital learning, and often this affects the whole day
- Decision making about the implementation of the policy is within the Headteacher's sole jurisdiction

## **3. Attendance Expectations**

Good attendance	95% and above
'Yellow'	90 – 94%
'Orange'	85 – 89%
'Red'	Below 85%

## **4. Parental Responsibilities**

Ensure that your child is at school every day unless:

- they are too ill to attend (not minor illness)
- hospital appointment (non routine)

- Doctor or Dental appointment (urgent)
- agreed activity eg. dance exam, national sports trials
- authorised leave (see Appendix G – Term Time Leave Statement)

Ensure that your child arrives on time and ready to learn.

### **In the event of absence due to illness**

- contact the School as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- contact the School for each subsequent day of illness

### **Unacceptable reasons for absence**

- unauthorised holiday
- Birthday
- shopping
- routine medical and dental appointments which should be scheduled for holiday time
- excessive medical absence which may need investigation
- leaving early for a weekend away

### **Unacceptable reasons for lateness**

- overslept
- running late
- regular excuses relating to transport
- dropping off younger siblings
- disruption at home

Whilst it is acknowledged that there might be the odd unforeseen difficulty as above, this is not expected to be a regular occurrence.

## **5. School Responsibilities**

- endeavour to provide an appropriate curriculum to meet needs of the individual
- provide a welcoming, inclusive ethos in our schools
- endeavour to work in partnership with parents to support and encourage their child's success at school, including drawing on other agencies where appropriate
- Make every effort to meet our statutory responsibilities to ensure good attendance and therefore meet our targets for attendance
- Send in attendance figures to the Government
- Inform parents of expectations eg. our annual letter, newsletters etc
- take a register morning and afternoon
- notify parents if we are concerned about a pupil's absence (at CEO/Headteacher's discretion)
- monitor more rigorously pupils who have attendance or punctuality issues (at Yellow and Red)
- alert the Educational Welfare Service (EWO) if there are more serious concerns (Red) either by referring or through our monthly EWO visit
- provide attendance figures to each family in the annual report
- set attendance targets with the EWO

- provide a stepped approach to families where attendance, including punctuality is a concern.

NB. Where the Headteacher has discretion about the relevance of which stage, at which time.

Where the stepped letters have not had an impact, invite parents of poor attenders to an attendance meeting involving EWO (which may include a Governor present).

- In serious cases, or for poor attendance or punctuality, in partnership with the Local Authority, issue Penalty fines which could lead to prosecution of the parent
- Understand the link between attendance and pupil welfare, and consider where, in occasional cases to make a referral to Children's Social Care.

## 6. **Process for Monitoring and Responding to Concerns**

Attendance is informally monitored weekly and concerns raised informally. Attendance is monitored monthly with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

If there are queries over unexplained absence, a phone call will be made home or letter sent.

### **Stage 1**

If a pupil's attendance/punctuality is causing concern, a general letter is sent informing the parent that their child's attendance is of concern, and will be monitored for the next 6 weeks, during which time an improvement in attendance will be expected. An attendance print out will be enclosed, along with a letter requesting reasons for unexplained absence.

### **Stage 2**

If attendance does not improve after 6 weeks, a letter is sent giving specific details of absence, together with an attendance print out. This letter also requests that any further absence be verified with medical evidence. A copy of this letter is given to the EWO for information.

### **Stage 3**

If attendance deteriorates, does not improve, or is, without good reason, below 85%, or because of repeated lates, a stage 3 letter will be sent, inviting the parent to an attendance meeting at the school. This will be attended by a senior member of staff, the EWO and sometimes a Governor. An action plan will be drawn up at this meeting to agree targets and strategies for improving attendance. The consequences of continued poor attendance will be discussed e.g. Verbal Warning/Penalty Fine.

### **Stage 4**

If there is no improvement, further action will proceed, which may include a Penalty Fine being issued. (See Penalty Notice Leaflet)

NB. The timescale for the stages is a guide. Non-compliance or the occurrence of serious concerns may result in the timescale being fast tracked.

## **Appendix A - Stage 1 Attendance Letter**

Date

Re

Dear

During routine monitoring of attendance, your child has been identified as having low attendance.

Your child's attendance is currently .....

This is much lower than the Government expectation of 95%.

I am aware that there may be good reasons for your child's absence, however, as you are aware, low attendance significantly impacts upon learning, and we are expected to monitor and improve attendance.

We will next monitor attendance at the end of term, and I am sure there will be an improvement during this time. If your child's attendance does not improve during this time, I will write to you further, a copy of which has to be forwarded to the Educational Welfare Officer for further investigation.

Please find enclosed your child's attendance record. If you have any reasons for unexplained absence please complete the attached form. At this stage, I will be unable to authorise any holiday leave.

If you wish to discuss your child's attendance, or you would like us to support you in improving your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Copy - Pupil File

## Appendix B – Stage 2 Attendance Letter

Date

Dear

Further to my letter dated ..... in which I informed you of the level of attendance of ..... I am now writing to express my concern about your child's attendance record.

Your child's attendance is currently:            %

The absence is made up of (number of half day sessions missed):

Authorised holiday                                    (       )

Unauthorised holiday                                (       )

Illness (Blocks)                                     (       )

Illness (Odd days, more than usual)            (       )

Although we accept that children may have occasional days off sick, the number your child is much higher than usual, which is why we need additional medical advice)

Lates    (       )

Other unauthorised                                 (       )

As you can see this time mounts up, and your child is missing out on learning time.

Please note that due to the above:

1. We will be unable to authorise any more absence
2. We require a Doctor's letter or certificate to explain any more absence due to illness
3. You may be asked to meet with the School Nurse
4. A copy of this letter is being sent to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)
5. After 6 weeks, if there is too little improvement of the attendance issues raised above, we will make a referral to the EWO, and you will be invited to a meeting to explain why your child's attendance is so poor.

NB: 90% attendance is the equivalent of missing half day per week on average

80% attendance is the equivalent of missing 1 day per week on average

The minimum requirement for Primary School attendance is 95%

Please complete the Reasons for Unexplained Absence Form and return to School.

Yours sincerely

*Name of Senior Staff*

Copy - Pupil File, EWO





## Appendix D – Unexplained Absence Letter

Date

Re

Dear Parent/ Carer

Our records show unexplained absences on the following dates:

Date (s)	Reason

We are required by law to record all reasons for absence.

It is the School's right whether or not to accept reasons for absence.

Please complete the form above and return to School within the next five working days.

It is in your own best interest to respond promptly, as unexplained absence is regarded as truancy and has to be reported to the Local Authority as such.

Yours sincerely

Copy - Pupil File

## **Appendix E – Punctuality Attendance Letter**

Date

Re

Dear

During routine monitoring of attendance, your child has been identified as having poor punctuality.

I am aware that there may be reasons for your child's lateness, however, as you are aware, lateness significantly impacts upon learning, and from 9.05 inclusive, will be registered as an unauthorised attendance. Even being a few minutes late on several occasions can make a significant difference to how that child engages with the lesson, and can impact upon the rest of the day.

We will next monitor attendance at the end of term, and I am sure there will be an improvement during this time. If your child's punctuality does not improve during this time, I will write to you further, a copy of which has to be forwarded to the Educational Welfare Officer for further investigation.

Please find enclosed your child's attendance record. If you have any reasons for unexplained absence please complete the attached form.

If you wish to discuss your child's attendance, or you would like us to support you in improving your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Enc

## Appendix F - School Attendance Meeting

Date

Present

Focus	Key Discussion Points	
Action Plan		
<b>Parent/ Carer will:</b>		Signed
<b>Pupil will:</b>		Signed
<b>School will:</b>		Signed
<b>EWO will:</b>		Signed
<b>Review arrangements</b>		

## Appendix G - Term Time Leave Statement

The intention of this Statement is to provide a coherent, consistent approach across the Trust in managing term time leave and to maximise children's opportunities to achieve.

The Statement sets out clear expectations in relation to:

- procedures for requesting and granting term time leave
- procedures for sharing with families (and pupils) the details of the policy statement
- register coding for authorised and unauthorised leave
- procedures for a child not returning to school after term time leave

### Rationale

#### DfES Guidelines

*Can pupils go on holiday in term time?*

Under current regulations, Headteachers have discretion to grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances in term time. It is the Headteacher's decision as to the number of days authorised.

Parents are not entitled to remove children from school for holidays; leave of absence must be applied for, and the decision to authorise absence for holidays rests entirely with the Headteacher.

#### Guidance to Parents/Carers

Wherever possible they should take holidays during school holidays.

They should avoid taking a school aged child out of school at times when they should be taking exams or tests.

They should not expect their child's school to agree to a family holiday during term time. Each Trust school will carefully consider their request but it should always be assumed that leave will not be authorised.

#### Guidance to Schools:

If a Trust school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised.

If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised.

Any Trust school may delete from roll a pupil who fails to return within 10 school days of the agreed return date unless there is a good reason for the continued absence such as illness.

#### Legal Position

The legal position is as follows:

1. Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school.

2. In the event of a parent taking their child on authorised holiday a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority, leading to a fine. If the parent does not pay, they will be prosecuted, and if found guilty are liable to a larger fine, and possibly a criminal record.

### **Response to Request**

Each Trust school will consider the circumstances on an individual basis according to Local Authority and Government guidance.

The school should inform the parent in writing advising whether the leave has been authorised or unauthorised. It should be made clear the reasons why a decision has been taken and the criteria used should be re-iterated.

If the school authorises the term time leave, the register code 'H' should be used. The statistical meaning for this should be authorised absence.

If the school declines the request for term time leave, and the child is absent due to the leave still being taken, the register code 'G' should be used. The statistical meaning for this should be unauthorised absence. In this case, normal procedures for non-attendance apply and the school is likely to make a referral to the EWO Service following agreed procedures.

#### If the child does not return to school on the date agreed after authorised leave

If another reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer the pupil should be registered appropriately. In all other cases register the absence as unauthorised.

Normal procedures for non-attendance apply and the school should make a referral to the EWO Service following agreed procedures.

The EWO Service will then inform the school of the outcome of the visit and make recommendations for action.

#### Procedure for sharing this policy with families

Each Trust school will share with parents and pupils the expectations outlined in this document by the school yearly letter about leave.

New intake evenings/meetings and parents evenings can also be used to share the information.

Children with attendance below 90% will be monitored carefully, and may be referred to the EWO Service, and a comment usually made on the child's report.

Reference will be made to this policy in the school prospectus.

Specific reference to attendance will also be made in Home/School Agreements.

Signed .....  
Chief Executive Officer

Date .....

Signed .....  
Chair of Connect Academy Trust

Date .....