



# Primary Academy

## Attendance Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Board of Directors	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	July 2020	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	July 2021	

## Statement of intent

The Boston Witham Academies Federation is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all learners. The federation believes sincerely that all learners benefit from the education provided and therefore from regular attendance. To this end the federation will do as much as it can to ensure that all learners achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted upon as quickly as possible.

Learners cannot achieve their potential if they do not regularly attend the academy.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling good attendance.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the welfare, health and safety of our learners.
- Rewarding regular attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that:  
“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:  
to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.

## Aims

It is recognised that:

- All learners of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No learner should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of learners and their parent/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Many learners and their parent/carers may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- In situations beyond the control of learners and/or parent/carers there may be an impact on attendance. We will, with the agreements and support of parent/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of learners want to attend school to learn, socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

## Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2019) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children Missing Education'
- DfE (2020) 'Keeping children safe in education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following academy policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Behavioural Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Children Missing from Education Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

## Definitions

The academy defines "absence" as either:

- Arrival at the academy after the register has closed.
- Not attending the academy for any reason.

The academy defines an "authorised absence" as:

- An absence for sickness for which the academy has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the academy has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the academy has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

The academy defines an "unauthorised absence" as:

- Parents keeping children away from the academy unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at the academy after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving the academy for no reason during the day.

The academy defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

- any learner who misses more than 10% (19 school days) schooling within and across the academic year for whatever reason (either authorised or unauthorised). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any learner's educational prospects and we need parent/carer's full support and co-operation to tackle this.

The academy define “in danger of becoming persistently absent” as:

- any learner whose attendance is 90% to 93% within and across the academic year for whatever reason (either authorised or unauthorised). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any learner’s educational prospects and we need parent/carer’s full support and co-operation to tackle this.

### **Roles and responsibilities – Governing Body**

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the academy.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the academies’ Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to ‘Keeping children safe in education’ (2020) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Ensuring there is an Attendance Policy for Learners With Additional Health Needs in place and this is regularly reviewed and updated.

### **Roles and responsibilities – Academy staff**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of the academy and distributing these to parents.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:

- Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring learners do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual learners to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated. Where there are concerns about a learner’s attendance, including patterns of absence, the Education Welfare Officer should be notified.
- Designated members of staff will take the attendance register at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Attendance is a legal requirement and therefore, staff are responsible for recording, accurately, learner attendance in the classroom for each session. Where there are any register discrepancies the Headteacher, or Deputy Headteacher (Senior Leadership Team - SLT) responsible for attendance will speak to staff regarding this.

- It goes without stating that the attendance of academy learners is the responsibility of all staff.

The academy will ensure that every learner has access to full time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of attendance.

The academy will inform the Local Authority of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Have registered at another school.
- Are to be educated from home.
- Have been permanently excluded.
- The pupil has died.
- None school attendance for 20 consecutive days (unauthorised) and is a Child Missing from Education (see CME policy).
- No longer living within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Has not returned to school after 10 days from an authorised leave of absence.
- A dual-registered pupil not attending, and main registered school has granted permission to us as the subsidiary registered school to delete.
- No longer of statutory school age. This is the last Friday in June in the academic year of which a learner turns aged 16.
- Has been medically certified unfit to attend before ceasing to be of statutory school age.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will return.
- The Local Authority have revoked or modified a School Attendance Order.

### **Roles and responsibilities – Learners and Parents/Carers**

We expect the following from our learners:

- That they attend the academy every day.
- That they arrive on time.
- That they are appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending the academy.

We expect the following from parent/carers:

- To ensure their children attend the academy every day and that they arrive punctually.
- To ensure that they contact the academy as soon as is reasonably possible every day that their child is unable to attend. This should be by 9.00am and can be by telephone, email or the WEDUC communication app.
- Parents are required to send a note on the first day their child returns with a signed explanation as to why they were absent. This must be done even if we have already received a phone call.
- To contact the academy at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any attendance issues together.

- To make medical appointments outside of school hours. If this cannot be avoided the child must attend the academy either before or after an appointment wherever possible. We will not authorise a full day's absence for a morning or afternoon appointment.
- If an appointment requires the child to leave the academy during the day, the child must be signed out by a parent.
- To provide medical evidence for an absence, this can include an appointment card, sticker or compliment slip, a copy of a prescription or a hospital appointment letter. This must have the child's name and the date of the appointment on. A letter from a GP is not necessary.
- To ensure that their child arrives to the academy well prepared for the day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To contact the academy in confidence whenever a problem occurs that affects the child's performance in the academy.
- To ensure that the academy have accurate and up to date contact details and ensuring that the academy are updated if the details change.
- To provide the academy with **four** contact numbers in case of emergency.

### Attendance register

The designated staff members will take the attendance registers at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. The register will record whether pupils are:

Present

Absent

The academy will use the national Department for Education attendance codes to enable the academy to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

/ = Present in the morning

\ = Present in the afternoon

B = Off-site educational activity

C = Authorised absence

D – Dual registered – at another educational establishment

E = Excluded but no alternative provision made

G = Unauthorised holiday

H = Authorised holiday

I = Illness

J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

L = Late arrival before the register has closed

M = Medical or dental appointments

N = Reason not yet provided

O = Unauthorised absence

P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity

R = Religious observance

S = Study leave

T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

U = Arrived after registration closed  
V = Educational visit or trip  
W = Work experience  
X = Not required to be in school  
Y = Exceptional circumstances  
Z – Pupil not on admission register  
# - Planned whole or partial closure.

When an absence is due to exceptional circumstances, the Y code will be used on the attendance register. Exceptional circumstances include when a learner is unable to attend because:

- The academy is fully or partially closed.
- Transport provided by the academy or Local Authority is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
- There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the learner from attending.
- The learner is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.
- The use of the 'Y' code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

When the academy has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant learners who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the academy has set different term dates for different years, for example: induction days.

All amendments to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of the amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

### **Responding to non-attendance**

When a learner does not attend, the academy needs to respond effectively.

The Boston Witham Academies Federation employs their own Education Welfare Officers.

- When a learner is absent and a parent/carer has not reported their child's absence, the academy will make every effort to contact parents/carers via telephone call, the instant messaging service and email
- Telephone messages, emails and WEDUC messages received from parents/carers by the academy will be recorded on the academy's MIS and filed
- The academy will always follow up any absences in order to ascertain the reason for absence, ensure that any necessary safeguarding action is taken, identify whether the absence is authorised or not and identify the correct code to be used for the absence.
- In cases where parents/carers are not contactable and the academy have been unable to ascertain a reason for any absence, one of the Education Welfare Officers may make an unannounced home visit to discuss the absence

- If no one is home, a calling card will be left asking that parents/carers contact the academy to notify us of the reason for absence.
- If a reason for absence has not been obtained a letter will be sent from the Education Welfare Officer to the parent/carer at the beginning of the following week with a reply slip that is to be returned to the academy with an explanation for the absence.
- Every learner who is absent for three or more consecutive days may also receive an unannounced home visit by one of the Education Welfare Officers.
- Where non-attendance continues, one of the Education Welfare Officers may make further home visits either by appointment or in some cases this may be an unannounced visit. A letter of concern may also be issued.
- If contact is made the parent/carer will be offered full support and guidance to ensure that attendance improves.

If there is no improvement in attendance, then parent/carers will be invited to attend a School Attendance Panel meeting. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, parent/carer and learner and will aim to identify and solve the issues that are preventing the learner from attending the academy

The parent/carer will be offered an academy action plan to target attendance. This will be reviewed in a nominated time period to continually monitor with a view to improve and ensure success. Learners may also be offered help and support through an Early Help Assessment and the Team Around the Child process.

Termly letters of concern are sent to parents/carers of all learners whose attendance is less than 90% each term.

The academy will inform the Local Authority of any Pupil Not Attending Regularly (PNAR), i.e. has been absent for 10 consecutive school days, without agreement of the school. If there is no improvement in a learner's attendance, the Education Welfare Officer may refer the matter to Lincolnshire County Council Inclusion and Attendance team who have the power to issue sanctions for poor attendance such as penalty notices or prosecutions.

### **Head of Academy and Extended Services (attendance, safeguarding and SEN) twice termly meeting**

Head of Academy meets with the Senior Education Welfare Officer, Trust Safeguarding Lead and Trust SENCO twice a term to discuss all learners who are of concern. This includes:

- Learners with attendance below 90% (Persistent Absentees) and those learners who are in danger of becoming Persistently Absent (i.e. 90% to 93%)
- Discussing and considering the level of action to be taken for each individual learner.
- Obtaining information regarding learners' academic ability that may be affected by poor attendance and liaise with the Education Welfare Officer.
- Discussing term time holiday requests and Fixed penalty Notice requests.
- Discussing any other factors impacting upon attendance, which may include safeguarding and SEN.

## Religious Observances

- The academy will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.
- Parents/carers must inform the academy at least seven days in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.
- The day(s) of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the learner's parents/carers belong.

## Young Carers

- The academy understands the difficulties young carers face and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as throughout their time at the school.
- The academy takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

## Reintegration and part time timetables

The return to the academy for a learner after a long-term absence requires careful planning with the learner and their parents/carers:

- Relevant staff will be notified of the return of a long-term absentee via email.
- A delegated member of staff will be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff should be made aware of this programme and any problems should be notified to the delegated member of staff.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual needs and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in lessons as appropriate.
- It is recognised that there may be occasions when a learner is unable to attend the academy full-time due to, for example, illness or recovery from illness, exceptional family circumstances, or returning home from a period of custody. Also, there may be instances when a learner is experiencing mental health problems that are manifesting themselves in behaviour and thus making it increasingly difficult for them to cope with full-time attendance. In such circumstances the law permits the temporary use of a part-time/reduced timetable.
- A school can introduce a reduced timetable for a learner who has a serious medical condition where recovery is the priority outcome.
- In exceptional circumstances a reduced timetable may be used where a medical need is not the main reason. The academy, parents/carers and other professionals may jointly agree that a short-term (no longer than 6 weeks) reduced timetable would support a pupil to successfully engage with the reintegration process, This would be a closely monitored intervention to address and manage a learner with significantly challenging behavioural, emotional or social needs.

- The academy have a safeguarding responsibility for all learners and are aware that even with parent/carers agreeing to any reduced timetable arrangements, the academy are still responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of all learners on roll who are off-site during school hours. If evidence suggests that the learner would be likely to be exposed to significant risk if not in school, then a reduced timetable would not be a considered option.
- The academy would seek information to ensure that the whereabouts of learners when not in school is known as part of the arrangements of the reduced timetable.

In line with the Local Authority Reduced Timetable guidance the academy will:

- Have a clear and evidenced rationale for considering a reduced timetable as an appropriate intervention
- Not pursue a reduced timetable without parental permission and will ensure that we have signed parental consent
- Ensure that if the learner is a Looked After Child (LAC) or a child with special educational needs, a reduced timetable is only considered when all other interventions have been tried
- If the learner also has special educational needs as well as a medical condition, then the academy should include in the academy/Trust SENCO
- Ensure that a multi-agency review meeting is held before a reduced timetable is implemented for a learner in Early Help or open to Social Care
- Ensure that the impact of a reduced timetable on travelling and transport arrangements or the learner's access to Free School Meals does not discriminate against the learner or impede their access to education
- complete a detailed action plan agreed with the parents/carers and learner demonstrating a clear path of planned reintegration from part time to full time provision over a maximum of 6 weeks
- notify the local authority of a learner that is on a reduced timetable as soon as the reduced timetable becomes operational and must only enter a period of six weeks or less before reviewing.

### **Responding to learners arriving late**

Punctuality is of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated. The academy gates are open at 8.40am and we expect all learners to be in class at the start of the school day at 8.50am, registers are marked at this time. If a learner arrives at the academy after 8.50am and before 9.20am they will be recorded as late (L). If learners arrive after 8.50am, they should report to the Front Office and sign in.

Attendance after the registers close at 9.20am will receive an unauthorised late mark (U) to show that they are on site, but this will count as an absent mark. Learners who are absent before they come into the academy due to medical appointment, must provide evidence of the appointment either before the appointment or as soon as they return after the appointment.

At 9.20am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Education Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them not to be on site, this

will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. The appropriate marks will be entered to record any lateness. Parents/carers are required to provide an explanation for any late attendance. A letter will be sent informing parents/carers of learners who are regularly late that this is not acceptable and in extreme cases, where no improvement has been made this may mean that parents/carers could be invited to attend a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer. If there is no improvement in a learner's attendance and lateness, the Education Welfare Officer may refer the matter to Lincolnshire County Council Inclusion and Attendance team who have the power to issue sanctions for poor attendance such as penalty notices or prosecutions.

### **Responding to truancy**

- Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from the academy, during which the academy has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.
- All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of learners, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.
- All learners are expected to be in their classes by 8:50am, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.
- Learners are not permitted to leave the academy premises during the school day unless they have permission to do so from the Headteacher.
- Any learner with permission to leave the academy during the day must be signed out by parents/carers at reception and sign back in again on their return.

### **Internal truancy**

In the event of a learner going missing during the school day:

- Immediate action will be taken when there are concerns that a learner might be truanting.
- The member of staff who has noticed the missing learner/s will inform the Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer immediately. Front office staff and the Head of Academy, or Deputy in their absence, will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A thorough search of the academy premises will be carried out including, all classrooms, all toilets, changing rooms, the library, any outbuildings and the academy grounds.
- If truancy is suspected the Education Welfare Officer will contact parents/carers after 10 minutes. The academy will attempt to contact parents using all of the emergency contacts. If the parents/carers have had no contact from the learner, or if parents/carers are not contactable then the Police will be contacted.

### **External truancy**

In the event of a learner leaving home and not arriving at the academy:

- If a learner has left home to come to school but not arrived in school, the Front Office or the Education Welfare Officer will contact parents in order to ascertain the reasons for absence. If parents/carers believe the child should be in school the Headteacher or the

Education Welfare Officer will try to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school and the child's whereabouts, if it is unknown.

- The Headteacher or the Education Welfare Officer will look into any potential friendship groups and check the attendance of any friends. In some cases, the parent/s carers if friends may also be contacted.
- If the learner has a mobile phone, the Education Welfare Officer will make attempts to try and contact the child off the academy mobile phone.
- In cases where the child's whereabouts is unknown and they are uncontactable this may result in a referral being made to the Police if the child cannot be located.
- Parents and any other agencies involved with the child will be informed immediately when the child has been located.
- If the learner has an allocated Social Worker, is a Looked After Child or has any Special Educational Needs, the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- Following on from any truancy a meeting will be held with the child and their parents/carer to ensure that they are safe and well.
- The Headteacher will take any further appropriate action and sanctions to ensure that the pupil understands that they must not truant.

If any further truancy occurs, then the academy will consider referring the matter to Lincolnshire County Council for consideration of issuing a penalty notice.

A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival to the academy.

### **Truancy patrols**

The Boston Witham Academies Federation, in conjunction with Lincolnshire County Council Inclusion and Attendance Team and Lincolnshire Police carry out joint truancy patrols as an initiative to reduce levels of truancy and unauthorised absence from schools.

The Police have the power to remove truants from public places and return them to school. The power is intended to operate as a part of a joint local approach to tackle truancy and is a key strategy to combat unauthorised absence. Other local schools in Boston and the surrounding areas are also involved in this initiative.

Where and when to exercise the power is subject to agreement between Lincolnshire Police and the schools. Dates and times of the patrols are kept confidential.

Where an unaccompanied young person is encountered during the patrols and it becomes evident that the young person is out of school without good reason, the Police and Education Welfare Officers will return him or her to school.

Where parents accompany young people, they will be warned about their paternal responsibilities, but the child will not be returned to school.

In all circumstances, full details will be taken by the patrolling officers to enable subsequent action.

## Holidays during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 (as amended) which came into force from 1st September 2013 remove references to 'holiday' from school and 'extended leave of absence' as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. (i.e. the previous arrangement whereby schools could grant up to 10 days authorised holiday/absence).

As a result, a request for leave of absence will not be granted for the purpose of a holiday **unless deemed to be exceptional circumstances.**

If parents/carers wish to seek approval for any request of absence from the Academy for their child(ren), they must apply in writing to the Headteacher, at least four weeks in advance of the period of absence.

Parents/carers should only then remove their child(ren) if the absence has been authorised, and once they have been notified in writing by the academy that the leave of absence has been authorised. Any exceptional circumstances must be clearly set out in the written request to the Headteacher who will consider each case, evidence to support any request as exceptional circumstances should also be provided.

Leave applied for because parents/carers cannot afford the holiday at any other time, medical treatment abroad or because of work commitments will not be classed as exceptional circumstances.

If parents/carers then choose to take their child/ren out of the academy during term time and it is not deemed to be exceptional circumstances and/or has not been approved by the academy, then this will be coded as an unauthorised absence and an application to Lincolnshire County Council will be made for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued for the period of absence. Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty may result in further legal action being taken against parents/carers.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children at their school under the following legislation:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Where a child is a registered learner at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or £120.00.

Please note: A Fixed Penalty Notice can also be issued if a child is seen in a public place within the first 5 days of an exclusion from their school.

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to learners subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for £60.00 or £120.00.

Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice will result in the case being referred to Lincolnshire County Council for consideration of prosecution under the Single Justice Process (SJP). This will lead to the matter being put before the Magistrates Court for prosecution.

### **Monitoring and review**

The academy monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

The primary academy's attendance target for 2019-2020 is 96%.

The primary academy's Persistent Absence target for 2019-2020 is 8.5%.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Education Welfare Officer and the Headteacher.

Any changes made to the policy will be communicated to all members of staff.