

Attendance Policy

Policy document provenance

Approver:	Trust board
Date of approval:	September 2025
Reviewer:	Trust Leadership Team
Policy owners:	Attendance Lead in each academy
Policy Author(s):	Head of Governance
Date of next review:	July 2026
Version Control:	V1.0 September 2025
Summary of key changes made since last review:	Move from school to trust level policy Reformatted into new trust style
Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. Should no substantive changes be required at this point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.	
Related policies and documents:	a) MARK Education Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy b) MARK Education Trust Behaviour Policy c) MARK Education Trust Complaints Policy d) Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

Attendance at school - a simple guide for parents

Why attendance at school is important: Attending school every day supports positive progress in learning and enriches your life through clubs, sports, and other extracurricular opportunities. Coming to school every day also helps children:

- Enhance learning and keep pace with their education
- Build meaningful friendships and enjoy school life
- Ensure their health and wellbeing are prioritised and supported

Even being late by a few minutes can mean missing important learning. That's why we ask all children to aim for **100% attendance** and to be **on time every day**.

What you need to do

As a parent or carer, you should:

- Make sure your child comes to school every day unless they are too ill
- Tell the school **each morning** if your child is going to be absent
- Book medical or dentist appointments **outside school hours** if you can
- Let the school know if anything is making it hard for your child to attend

Types of absence

- **Authorised absence:** This is allowed when your child is ill, has a medical appointment, is attending a religious event, or there's an emergency (if agreed by the school). Remember that authorised absence will still impact on your child's attendance record
- **Unauthorised absence:** This includes holidays during term time, being late after the register closes, or missing school without a good reason

If attendance is low

- The school will communicate with you about your child's attendance
- The school will try to help you and your child with targeted support and strategies
- If things don't improve despite this support, you may get a fine or face legal action

How schools help - schools will:

- Make learning rewarding and safe
- Reward good attendance
- Give extra help to children who find school hard
- Work with families to solve problems affecting attendance

Still need help?

If you're worried about your child's attendance, talk to their school's attendance team – the contact details can be found on each school's website or on page 15 ([appendix B](#)).

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1. Guiding principles

MARK Education Trust's mission is to provide the best possible education for its students, preparing them for life, so they can stand equally alongside their peers, locally, nationally and globally. This can only happen if the students attend school. This policy sets out MARK Education Trust's rationale and strategy for managing student attendance. It underpins each school's attendance procedures and ensure that a consistent approach is in place across the trust.

1.1 Rationale

There is considerable evidence that consistent attendance and punctuality are essential for achieving academically, socially and emotionally. Children whose attendance is good do better in their exams, are more likely to establish friendships and can be supported as they develop physically and emotionally into young adults.

It is therefore imperative that our schools and staff, families and the local authority work together to make sure all children in our community are supported to be in school.

MARK Education Trust is committed to providing high quality, uninterrupted teaching and learning to ensure that our students receive the best education possible. This means that every day at school is essential because when children are absent from school or if they arrive late, critical learning time is lost as the lesson the teacher will have planned will have to be adapted. This then impacts on the learning of those who are present in class.

Therefore, the trust expects all students to aim to attend school for 100% of the time, and to be on time and prepared for their lessons so that they do not fall behind with their learning, miss out on vital social interactions and can have their health and wellbeing supported. Collaboration with prioritising attendance and punctuality is expected from our children and young people as well as their families.

1.2 Strategy

As a trust, we will:

- **Promote and sustain a culture** that values the education on offer and reinforces the importance of attendance and punctuality.
- **Have a clear, easily accessible trust wide attendance policy** that all staff, students and their parents and carers can understand.
- **Record with accuracy** attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow up when absence occurs.
- **Use trust wide and school attendance data** to identify patterns of low attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve this before it becomes entrenched.
- **Develop strong relationships with students and their parents and carers** to understand barriers to regular attendance and punctuality, and work collaboratively to help them access the support they may need to overcome issues, be they inside or outside of school.
- **Provide formal support** where any absence persists and informal support is not working or not being engaged with.
- **Follow the DfE guidance for enforcement** where all other avenues have been exhausted and if necessary, progressing to statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the child's right to an education.

2. Definitions

2.1. "Absence" is defined as either:

- a. Arrival at school after the register has closed
- b. Not attending school for any reason

- 2.2 “Authorised absence” is defined as:
- a. An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
 - b. Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school day for which the school has granted leave
 - c. Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
 - d. An absence due to “exceptional circumstances” such as a family emergency (see section 8)
- 2.3 “Unauthorised absence” is defined as, but not limited to:
- a. Parents and carers keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without a valid reason
 - b. Truancy before or during the school day
 - c. Absences which have not been properly explained
 - d. Arrival at school after the register has closed
 - e. Absence for day trips or holidays in term time
 - f. Leaving school for no valid reason during the day
- 2.4 “Persistent absence” is defined by having attendance of 90% or below across the academic year for any reason.
- 2.5 “Severely absent” is defined by having attendance of 50% or less across the academic year for any reason.
- 2.6 “Regular attendance” is defined by the DfE as ‘attending school every day the school is open’, unless there is a reason for the absence to be authorised as stated on 3.2 above.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1. The trust board will:
- a. Set the trust-wide policy for attendance, ensuring that it meets the statutory requirements and is adopted by all of the trust’s academies.
 - b. Set high expectations of trust leaders in relation to student attendance.
 - c. Regularly review and challenge trust-wide attendance data and hold trust leaders to account for the application of the trust’s policy.
- 3.2. The local governing committee in each academy will:
- a. Monitor the implementation and impact of the attendance policy and procedures in each of the academies.
- 3.3. Each academy will:
- a. Accept that attendance is everyone’s responsibility.
 - b. Follow up on any non-attendance with no contact from the parent or carer on the first day of absence with a phone call, text message or email and or a home visit.
 - c. Intervene as soon as patterns of poor attendance are identified and before it becomes a habit.
 - d. Deal sympathetically with any problem a student or family may have which is causing attendance to decline and stay in regular contact with parents and carers.
 - e. Act swiftly to reduce persistent absence, with a specific focus on immediate support for vulnerable learners.
 - f. Work actively with children and families across all key stages, starting in nursery and reception classes, to emphasise the benefits of high attendance; to instil and reinforce good habits of attendance from the start of their educational journey.
 - g. Ensure every child of statutory school age has access to full time education.

- h. Communicate a clear and transparent process around the management of attendance to students and families.
- i. Share daily attendance data with the Department for Education (DfE) directly from the management information system using standardised codes.
- j. Involve other external agencies if it is believed there could be wider safeguarding issues surrounding the child.
- k. Senior leaders, year teams, form tutors/mentors, class teachers, the SEND team and the attendance team including the education welfare officer all play key roles in the management of attendance.
- l. Ensure absence and recording procedures are followed as detailed in **Appendix B**

3.4. Parents and carers will be expected to:

- a. Accept their statutory responsibility and commit to ensuring their child attends school every day and every lesson and has excellent punctuality.
- b. Work together to communicate and report absence in line with each academy's procedure.
- c. Parents should inform other adults with parental responsibilities of any absence.
- d. Ensure, when possible, that medical and dental appointments are made outside of the school day.
- e. Provide the academy with more than one emergency contact.
- f. Notify the school of any issue or challenge that may impact their child's attendance.
- g. Work collaboratively with the academy and co-operate if their child's attendance falls below the expected standards.

3.5. Students will:

- a. Always attend school unless prevented by a specific illness or unavoidable circumstances.
- b. Always arrive to school and to lessons on time.
- c. Let staff know if there are any difficulties at school or home that is impacting their attendance.

4. Attendance and punctuality

4.1 Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance to ensure that all students have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when students are absent or late.

Attendance %	Days lost per year	Lessons lost per year		Minutes late each day	Lost learning per year
100%	0 Days Lost	0 Lost		5 minutes	3.5 Days Lost
95%	9 Days Lost	45 Hours Lost		10 minutes	7 Days Lost
90%	19 Days Lost	95 Hours Lost		15 minutes	10.5 Days Lost
85%	28 Days Lost	140 Hours Lost		20 minutes	14 Days Lost
80%	38 Days Lost	190 Hours Lost		25 minutes	17.5 Days Lost
75%	48 Days Lost	240 Hours Lost		30 minutes	21 Days Lost

4.2 The impact on lost learning

Research on the correlation between attendance and academic progress carried out by the DfE in 2022-23 showed that:

- a. In primary school, children with attendance of 90% or below are less likely to achieve the expected progress in literacy and numeracy skills and will find it very hard to catch up.
- b. In secondary school, lost learning from 19 days of absence (90% attendance) per year correlates to (on average) losing a grade in all subjects at GCSE by the end of Year 11.

5. Absence and recording procedures

- 5.1. Absence must be reported to the academy before 8:15am following procedures set out in [appendix B](#) and on each academy's website.
- 5.2. Parents and carers are requested to make contact **on each day of absence**, even where students are absent for consecutive days, unless this has been agreed in advance with the school's attendance team.
- 5.3. If no contact has been received by the parent or carer to explain the absence, this will automatically be categorised as unauthorised.
- 5.4. The academy's attendance team will then contact the parent or carer by telephone in order to:
 - a. Ascertain the reason for the absence
 - b. Ensure that proper safeguarding action is being taken
 - c. Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
 - d. Identify the correct attendance code to use to enter onto the school MIS
- 5.5. If after three school days the academy still cannot make contact with the parent or carer, a member of staff will make a home visit.
- 5.6. Social services will be contacted by a member of the safeguarding team on the first day of unexplained absence for any child with a Child Protection Plan.

6. Recording absence

- 6.1. By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register to accurately record attendance and punctuality.
- 6.2. Registers must be completed fully and on time in the morning and afternoon sessions, and for each lesson throughout the day.
- 6.3. Each academy will use the DfE's national attendance codes as set out in [appendix C](#).
- 6.4. By law, each academy is required to close the register no more than 30 minutes after registration opened.
- 6.5. A student who is absent when the register has started being taken but arrives before the register is closed is defined as "late". Any student arriving after the register has closed will be marked as "absent" until such time as it can appropriately coded.
- 6.6. Persistent lateness will be dealt with in line with the trust's behaviour policy.
- 6.7. Attendance records for dual registered students that attend an offsite alternative provision or other school will be requested so that their data can be recorded retrospectively. All alternative provisions are monitored regularly and attendance records would form part of this.

7. Requesting term time absence

- 7.1. In line with government legislation and local authority guidelines, headteachers will not grant permission for holidays taken in term time. Any holiday taken in term time will be recorded as unauthorised and could result in a fine being issued or legal sanctions (see section 9).
- 7.2. A headteacher can only grant an authorised leave of absence during term time in “exceptional circumstances”. Requests should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and where possible **at least 4 weeks before** the absence.
- 7.3. The term “exceptional” will be considered on an individual, case by case basis. Part of the consideration will be the impact the potential absence is likely to have on the student’s education.

The headteacher will also take into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context for the request. Evidence may be required to support any request. The headteacher’s decision is final in relation to authorising exceptional absences.

- 7.4. Valid reasons for authorised absence in term time can include:

a. **Illness:**

Students should attend school on every possible day they can. Mild illnesses such as colds and coughs should not prevent a child from coming to school. [This NHS guide](#) includes a link to government guidelines to support parents and carers in making decisions around illness.

b. **Medical or dental appointments:**

Parents and carers are expected to arrange medical and dental appointments outside of school hours whenever possible. Where this cannot be avoided, they must provide appropriate evidence of the appointment to support the authorisation of their child’s absence. It is also expected that parents and carers ensure their child misses only the minimum time necessary to attend the appointment and returns to school promptly. The school is only able to authorise time for the actual appointment plus reasonable travel time, if a full day is taken, the time around the appointment will be unauthorised.

c. **Religious observance:**

Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student’s parents or carers belong, the academy can authorise **up to two days** for a religious absence per academic year and **one day** per religious event.

d. **Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes:**

Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school **in advance**. Parents and carers will be encouraged to ensure that the student can attend a school where they are travelling to and to be dual registered at that school.

- e. If in exceptional circumstances a student is on a part time timetable as part of a support plan which has been agreed separately.
- f. If a student is going for an interview with a prospective employer or other educational establishment.
- g. If a student has been granted study leave during periods of public examinations.

8. Fines and legal sanctions

- 8.1 Academies will work hard to engage with parents and carers to ensure that, where a student has low attendance, support is identified and implemented, where appropriate and where possible. It is expected that all families will engage positively with this support and that attendance will improve as a result. However, as a last resort, the academy will refer to the local authority who can issue a fixed penalty notice under the national framework.

- 8.2 If the unauthorised absence exceeds the local authority threshold for a fixed term penalty notice they may instigate legal proceedings for an offence under s.444(1) and (1A) of the 1996 Education Act. In exceptional cases this can lead to a custodial sentence of up to three months and / or a fine up to £2,500 (where the child is of compulsory school age).
- 8.3 The law allows local authorities to issue a penalty notice to each parent for each child who has unauthorised absence. If issued with a penalty notice, each parent and carer must pay £160 within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent(s) in respect of the same student(s) is charged at flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. Where the national threshold is met for a third time within three years, alternative action will be considered. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other legal interventions.
- 8.4 The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This will take into account:
- Whether support is appropriate, whether families have engaged in support and whether further support to improve attendance is necessary
 - Whether another form of legal intervention is more likely to improve attendance
 - The national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks
 - One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
 - Where an excluded child is found in a public place during academy hours without a justifiable reason

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

9. Promoting and supporting attendance

- 9.1 The trust recognises that low attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to difficulties at home and / or in school. Parents and carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, such as a family bereavement, divorce or separation, or incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.
- 9.2 The trust also recognises that some vulnerable students may be more likely to require additional support to achieve excellent attendance, for example students with special educational needs, or with physical or mental health needs, or looked after children.
- 9.3 Part of promoting and supporting good attendance at all the academies in the trust is to ensure that the students have the best possible experience on a day-to-day basis, to ensure that they are enthused to attend school, feel a sense of belonging and are supported to experience success in their learning.

This is achieved by:

- Providing high quality teaching across a broad and exciting curriculum
- Providing a positive and purposeful tutor time with a trusted adult at the start of each day
- Where available, academies provide a breakfast club each morning which gives students with a safe social space whilst providing a nutritious breakfast.
- Providing a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- A fair and proportionate behaviour policy that promotes the trust's values of Manners, Acceptance, Respect and Kindness
- Regular communication with parents and carers so that they feel part of the school community.

9.4 Supporting vulnerable students:

To support and encourage students who might find attendance at school more difficult, academies will consider a range of strategies:

- a. Using an internal or external specialist
- b. Enabling a student to have an adapted provision.
- c. Ensuring a student can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and break times
- d. Temporary late starts or early finishes
- e. Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- f. Tailored support to meet their individual needs

9.5 Working with parents and carers to support attendance, academies will:

- a. Work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and carers and work to build trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with students and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- b. Liaise with other agencies working with students and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.
- c. Regularly inform parents and carers about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents and carers are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.
- d. Always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for student absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

9.6 The attendance team in each academy will address attendance and punctuality concerns by working collaboratively with the student and their parents and carers by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the student from being able to attend school regularly.

This may involve:

- a. Communication with parent and carers either by letter, telephone or email
- b. Meeting with the student in school to discuss any concerns
- c. Meetings with parents and carers and/or externally involved professionals
- d. Setting attendance targets and using attendance support plans
- e. Pastoral support and onward referrals to specific services
- f. Liaison (with permission) with external medical professionals to evidence specific conditions/needs and consider supportive strategies that could be implemented
- g. Making announced or unannounced home visits
- h. Working with outside agencies to support attendance

10. Rewarding good attendance

Recognising and rewarding good attendance is key and celebrating improvements in attendance is also important and each academy has a range of different ways of rewarding and incentivising good attendance and punctuality. These range from class teacher recognition to withdrawal of privileges such as an invitation to the school prom.

11. Attendance monitoring and analysis

- 11.1. Each academy will monitor and analyse attendance and absence data weekly, termly and annually across by cohort, specific groups and at individual student level to identify students, cohorts or specific groups that require additional support with their attendance and will use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families, and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- 11.2. Student level data will be collected and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school level absence data is published alongside national statistics, and this will be used as a benchmark to measure progress.
- 11.3. Attendance data is also reported termly to each academy's local governing committee and to the trust board so that they can hold trust leaders to account for levels and patterns of attendance across the trust.

12. Review of this policy

- 12.1. This policy will be reviewed annually by the trust's leadership group and approved by the board of trustees.
- 12.2. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all the trust's staff.

Appendix A

Legal Framework

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

- a. Education Act 1996 and 2002
- b. Equality Act 2010
- c. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- d. DfE (2016) Children Missing Education
- e. DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- f. DfE (2025) Keeping Children Safe in Education
- g. DfE (2024) 'Sharing daily pupil attendance data'
- h. School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- i. Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

This policy operates in conjunction with the following trust policies:

- a. MARK Education Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- b. Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy
- c. MARK Education Trust Behaviour Policy
- d. MARK Education Trust Complaints Policy

Appendix B: - Absence Reporting Procedures

	Beacon Academy:	Beacon Academy Sixth Form	Uplands Academy:	Hailsham Primary Academy:	Hailsham Secondary Academy & Sixth Form:
Arrival time:	8.35am	8.50am	8.35am	Between 8:45am and 9:00am	By 8:40am for 8:45am mentor
Report absence by:	Before 8.15am	By 8.15am	By 8.15am	By 8.15am	By 8.15am
How to report an absence or medical /dental appointment	Online: via Edulink Phone: 01892 603053 Email: attendance@beacon-academy.org	Phone: 01892 603066 Email: 6thformabsence@beacon-academy.org	Online: via Edulink Phone: 01234 567890 Email: attendance@uplands-academy.org	Online: Via ARBOR account Phone: 01323 841468 Email: attendance@hccat.net	
How to request a planned absence:	Complete the ESCC "Withdrawal from Learning" application form on the academy's website (link below) and send to Headteacher	Provide details to Reception in advance and provide evidence as required	Complete the ESCC "Withdrawal from Learning" application form on the academy's website (link below) and send to Headteacher	Complete the ESCC "Withdrawal from Learning" application form on the academy's website (link below) and send to relevant Headteacher	
Further information found on website here:	Attendance - Key Information - Beacon Academy	Sixth Form Life and FAQs - Beacon Academy	https://www.uplands-academy.org/key-information/item/25/attendance	https://www.hailsham-academy.org/mesmerize/attendance/	

Appendix C – National Attendance Codes (updated 2024)

Each academy will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

= Planned whole school closure

/ = Present in the morning

\ = Present in the afternoon

L = Late arrival before the register has closed

C = Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

C1 = Leave of absence granted by the school for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad

C2 = Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made

I = Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

M = Medical or dental appointments

R = Religious observance

S = Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

T = Parent travelling for occupational purposes

G = Unauthorised holiday

N = Reason not yet provided

O = Unauthorised absence

U = Arrived after registration closed

D = Dua registered at another school

B = Attending any other approved educational activity

J1 = Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

K = Attending education provision arranged by the LA

P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity

Q = Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

V = Educational visit or trip

W = Work experience

Z = Prospective pupil not on admission register