Attendance Policy

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1.Introduction

Sunnyside Primary Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

At Sunnyside Primary Academy we:

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued
- expect pupils to arrive on time every day
- will support parents/carers in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances.

2.Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the Academy. Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life. This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026.

The aim of this document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance. It includes how we aim to:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

The Academy will always prioritise support for pupils and families to improve attendance before considering legal enforcement. We work collaboratively with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance.

3.Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

4.How we Promote a Culture of High Expectations in Attendance and Punctuality

To promote a culture of high expectations around attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Set an aspirational whole school target that will be shared with all stakeholders
- Share our attendance progress both positive and negative in the weekly newsletter and via social media accounts
- Celebrate whole school, year group, class and individual attendance weekly, half termly and termly via the celebration assembly
- Regularly communicate with parents/carers regarding attendance and punctuality
- Ensure the Attendance Officer/Family Support Worker is on hand daily to support parents/carers and pupils will attending school
- The Academy works closely with the local authority and other partners to support attendance and address persistent absence.

5.Our Expectations of Attendance and Punctuality

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

The attendance register will be taken at these designated times for all pupils. The register for the first session will be taken when the school opens to pupils at 8:45am and will be kept open until 9:15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:30pm.

Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must attend every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the Academy.

(Note - where this policy refers to a parent/carer, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person

Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

The Academy expects all pupils to achieve at least 96% attendance.

- Attendance below 95% is a cause for concern and will be monitored closely.
- Attendance below 90% is defined as persistent absence.
- Attendance below 50% is defined as severe absence.

The Academy recognises that absence may be linked to underlying barriers such as:
- SEND or medical needs
- mental health or anxiety
- family or safeguarding concerns
- transport or logistical challenges

We will work with families and external agencies to identify and address these barriers.

Any part-time timetable will be agreed with parents/carers, have a clear review schedule and intended end date, and be recorded using the appropriate attendance codes. Where applicable, the academy will involve the pupil, social worker and/or local authority in planning and reviewing the arrangement.

The Academy will consider its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will make reasonable adjustments where attendance difficulties arise from disability, medical needs, SEND or mental health needs.

6.Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal

- Implementation of this policy at the Academy
- Monitoring Academy-level absence data and reporting it to the Trust
- Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies
- Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases
- Working with local partners when formal procedures such as attendance/ parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the Academy's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels

The Designated Senior Leader (also known as the Attendance Champion)

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The Attendance Champion is Miss Katie Ridnell and can be contacted via 01604 842958 and/or admin@sunnysideprimaryacademy.org.

The Attendance Officer

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance and the Principal
- Working with education welfare officers or equivalent bodies from the local authority to tackle persistent absence

The Attendance Officer can be contacted via 01604 842958 and/or admin@sunnysideprimaryacademy.org.

Administration Team

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the Academy system

- Answer emails and voicemail messages from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis via the school email system recording the reason for absence with the Academy's system
- Encourage parents/carers to bring their child/ren to school wherever practicably possible to support the school in ensuring all children are regular attenders
- Remind parents/carers about the importance of regular attendance the impact poor attendance can have on a child's education

Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Attendance is completed daily in the classroom setting by the Class Teacher using the Academy's system. The register is completed at 8:45am and 1:00pm.

Parents/Carers

- Make sure their child attends every day and is punctual
- Contact the Academy on 01604 842958 option 1 to report their child's absence before 8:45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the Academy with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Ensure that all holidays are taken outside of term time and during periods of school closure
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Attendance Officer/Family Support Worker and can be contacted via 01604 842958 and/or admin@sunnysideprimaryacademy.org.

Pupils

- Attend school every day on time

7.Recording Attendance

The Academy will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, and one at the start of the afternoon session.

The Academy uses DfE statutory attendance codes in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the Academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45am or as soon as practically possible by calling the Academy on 01604 842958 option 1 and leaving a voicemail on the automated system or speaking with a member of the administration team.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the Academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The Academy may request reasonable evidence where there is a genuine and reasonable concern regarding the authenticity of an illness, where absences are frequent, prolonged, or where evidence would assist in identifying appropriate support.

If the Academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

The Academy operates a first-day response system, contacting parents on the first day of absence where no reason has been provided.

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the Academy in advance of the appointment and provides suitable evidence of the appointment, such as an appointment card etc. Parents/carers can notify the school of such appointment by calling or emailing the administration team.

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary e.g. attending school prior to the appointment and returning to school once the appointment has finished.

The pupil's parent/carer must apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Parents/carers should complete the Leave of Absence Request Form found on the Academy website, paper copies can be obtained via the School Office.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the Academy can authorise.

Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The Academy continues to monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year. Parents/carers will be regularly informed of their child's attendance and punctuality. Where there are concerns around your child's attendance and/or punctuality, school staff and leaders will contact you to discuss this in more detail.

Following Up Unexplained Absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend does not, or stops attending without reason, the Academy will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the Academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the Academy may conduct a home visit as a safeguarding precaution. If there are any genuine concerns, the school may contact the Police or Social Services for further support/guidance.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the Academy will consider involving an education welfare officer or similar service at the local authority and follow their procedures.

Where a pupil's whereabouts become unknown, the Academy will follow Children Missing Education procedures and work with the local authority.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

The Academy will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels.

This is completed via half termly written reports which are provided to all parents/carers. Regular emails are sent via the Academy's communication system to keep parents/carers updated on their child's attendance and punctuality.

8.Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval for Term-Time Absence

The Principal can only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be ***'exceptional circumstances'*** and if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

The Academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or a paper copy can be obtained from the School Office. The Principal will require evidence to support any request of leave of absence. The Academy may request evidence to support a leave of absence request where appropriate. Once the request has been considered by the Principal, a response will be given in writing, informing the parents/carers of the outcome, as well as informing them of the possibility of incurring a Fixed Penalty Notice (see Legal Sanctions).

Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning. The Academy will not normally authorise leave of absence during term time unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Legal Sanctions

Our Academy will make use of the full range of potential sanctions including, but not limited to;

- a Penalty Notice payable up to £160 fine
- prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000
- prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment

Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis and we will use the local authority arrangements for doing so.

For further information regarding the legal sanctions about school non-attendance please see West Northamptonshire Council webpage: Penalty notices for school non-attendance | West Northamptonshire Council (westnorthants.gov.uk).

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (90%) over a period of 10 weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action.

9. Supporting Pupils who are Absent or Returning to School

The return to school for a pupil after a long term absence requires specific planning to ensure it is a successful return. To ensure this is the case the Designated Senior Leader/Attendance Champion, Attendance Officer/Family Support Worker and Class Teacher will meet with the pupils parent/carer to support reintegration planning. Programmes may need to be tailored to meet the individual needs and may involve a phase/part-time timetable. On some occasions it may be appropriate for the SENDCo to attend this planning meeting.

Where appropriate, remote education may be used as a temporary measure alongside a reintegration plan. Remote education will not be regarded as an alternative to school attendance except in exceptional circumstances.

10. How we Monitor Attendance

School attendance targets are set each year by the Principal and the Designated Senior Leader (also known as the Attendance Champion). These targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved from the previous academic year, as well as national level data.

All absence and lateness will be monitored for individual pupils so that appropriate action can be taken where it does not meet the Academy's expectations. Absences will also be monitored to analyse possible trends.

The Academy will engage in Targeting Support Meetings with the Local Authority where attendance concerns require coordinated intervention.

Monitoring Attendance

The Academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the Academy and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases.

Analysing Attendance

The Academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using Data to Improve Attendance

The Academy will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and school leaders (including Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, Designated Safeguarding Leads and Pupil Premium Leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The Academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the Academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The Academy's Education Director will receive regular attendance reports and will monitor attendance trends, vulnerable groups and the impact of attendance strategies.

11. Escalation Process

Attendance Home Visits

Home visits will be completed to ensure a pupil is safe. This may be required if one of the below scenarios apply to a pupil or other circumstances suggest that this would be useful to ensure that we can ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils.

- There is an open Early Help Assessment (EHA)
- There is an open Child in Need Plan (CiN)
- There is an open Child Protection Plan (CP)
- The pupil is currently/ was previously looked after by the Local Authority
- The pupil's attendance falls in the category of persistent or severely absent
- It is the pupils third consecutive school day of absence (this includes absences immediately before or after a Leave of Absence request)
- The Academy did not receive contact from the parent/carer to inform us of the pupils absence

Following the home visit, if no one is home, the Academy may follow up with an email to let the parent/carer know that a visit had been conducted.

Attendance Notification Letters

Where a pupils attendance is below 96% communication will be sent to parents/carers informing them that their child's attendance is not yet meeting the required standard.

- Stage 1: Attendance Letter is sent when a child's attendance falls below 96%
- Stage 2: Attendance Letter is sent when a child's attendance continues to fall following a stage 1 letter
- Pupils with an attendance below 90% (persistently absent), parents/carers will invited to draw up a Attendance/ Parenting Contract
- If attendance continues to fall the school will contact the School Attendance Support Service from West Northamptonshire Council

Attendance/ Parenting Contract

At a Attendance/ Parenting Contract meeting, the Attendance Officer/ Family Support Worker will meet with you to discuss the school's ongoing concern with your child's attendance and/or punctuality.

During this meeting, the parent/carer will be issued a Attendance/ Parenting Contract, which will outline any support that the school will put in place to support the parent/carer and child with increasing their attendance in school, as well as any additional steps and measures that can be put in place at home.

A target for improvement and a timeframe will also be set and agreed by all parties and added to the contract.

Referral to the Local Authority

Penalty Notices may be requested in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and local authority procedures.

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (90%) over a period of 10 weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action.

This could include:

- a Penalty Notice payable up to £160 fine
- prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000
- prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment

The National Framework for Penalty Notices

National Threshold
There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (a school day is 2 sessions - morning and afternoon) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. Increasing to £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

Second Offence (within 3 years)
The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)
The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.

Prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000. Prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

12. Policy Accessibility and Communication

The Academy ensures that this Attendance Policy is clear, accessible, and understood by all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents. The policy is published on the school website and is available in hard copy from the school office upon request. Each academic year, the policy is re-shared with staff during induction and annual training, and key expectations are reinforced through regular briefings. Parents and carers are informed of the policy at the start of each year and at relevant points through newsletters, electronic communications, and school events. A pupil-friendly summary of the policy is shared through assemblies and classroom discussions to ensure all pupils understand attendance expectations. The Academy will provide accessible formats or additional support where needed, including for families with SEND or English as an additional language, to ensure full understanding of the policy and its procedures.

13. Training and Awareness

All leaders, staff, and relevant partners receive regular training so they understand and can confidently apply the Attendance Policy in line with statutory DfE expectations. Annual whole-staff training takes place at the start of each academic year, with refresher updates provided through staff briefings, professional development sessions, and targeted training for roles with specific attendance responsibilities. New staff receive policy training as part of their induction to ensure consistent practice across the school. Training covers legal duties, attendance procedures, use of attendance codes, communication expectations, and early-help approaches for supporting families. Leaders monitor staff understanding through regular reviews of practice, ensuring the policy is implemented consistently and in accordance with DfE requirements for schools to have a clear, well-understood attendance policy.

14. Monitoring Attendance of Pupils with a Social Worker

The Academy recognises the additional vulnerabilities faced by pupils who have an allocated social worker, including those who are subject to Child in Need (CiN) plans, Child Protection (CP) plans, or who are Children Looked After (CLA). To support their safety, wellbeing, and educational outcomes, the Academy will monitor their attendance proactively and work in close partnership with social care and other relevant agencies.

The Academy will:

- Identify all pupils with an allocated social worker and ensure this information is securely recorded within the attendance and safeguarding system (CPOMS).
- Closely track the daily attendance of these pupils, with missed sessions or patterns of low attendance receiving prompt analysis and follow-up.
- Notify the pupil's social worker of any unexplained absence, emerging concerns, or attendance patterns that may indicate risk, in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Share attendance information regularly with social workers, Virtual School Heads (where applicable), and any other relevant professionals to support coordinated planning around the child.
- Contribute to multi-agency meetings, providing up-to-date attendance data and offering support strategies where attendance is a barrier to progress.
- Work with families to address challenges affecting attendance and ensure early help or wider support is offered when appropriate.
- Ensure attendance is integral to safeguarding practice, recognising that pupils with a social worker may require enhanced monitoring and swift communication when absence occurs.

15. Monitoring Attendance of Pupils who are Young Carers

The Academy recognises the additional responsibilities that young carers may have. Attendance data for identified young carers will be monitored carefully and appropriate support will be provided to reduce barriers to attendance.

16. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Trust and/or the DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Principal. Once reviewed this will be distributed to all stakeholders.