

OA-Cambridge

Attendance and Absence Policy

Document control table	
Title	Attendance Policy
Approved by	OA central
Updated and approved	30 August 2025
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Updates/revisions included:	No changes
Academies to note: This is an OA template, but it must be checked for local context/times/procedures etc. The updated academy version should be returned to OA central for uploading onto each website.	

OA-Cam	
How should parents and carers report absence?	Call Catherine Osborn-Nowell by 8:30am on the first morning of a child's absence giving the reason why the child will be absent and their expected return date
Who is responsible for overseeing attendance in the academy?	Gareth Williams, Deputy Headteacher Gareth.Williams@oliveacademies.org.uk 01223 375514
Registration times	
Morning	Pupils must arrive by 9:00am
	If a pupil arrives after 9:00am they will be classed as LATE
	If a pupil arrives after 9:30am they will be classed as ABSENT for the morning session
Afternoon	Pupils must register for afternoon sessions at 12:00pm
	If a pupil arrives after 12:00pm they will be classed as LATE
	If a pupil arrives after 12:30pm they will be classed as ABSENT for the afternoon session

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Introduction

Our aim is to foster a sense of responsibility, a joy of learning and to create a community where the importance of coming to the academy to learn is recognised by everyone. In our academy, we work together with parents, carers and pupils – we develop relationships where we listen and build our understanding of barriers to attendance so we can work out the best ways to support attendance.

Legislation

This policy has due regard to the related statutory legislation including:

- [Parental Responsibility Measures](#)
- [Children Missing Education](#)
- [Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School](#)
- [Suspensions and Exclusions](#)
- [Alternative Provision](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [The European Convention on Human Rights](#) (ECHR)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- and [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

It follows the guidance set out in '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' from the DfE.

Olive Academies values and our aims

The values of Olive Academies (OA) are:

- **CONVICTION** - Everyone has the capacity to reach their potential.
- **DETERMINATION** - Not giving up on those who have not experienced success.
- **AMBITION** - All challenges can be overcome and education is an important lifelong journey.
- **REFLECTION** - Learning from experiences and developing a capacity to improve further.

These values shape our approach to supporting children to attend OA academies as much as is possible as we know that this is crucial for learning and wellbeing.

We recognise that improving attendance is **everyone's business**. Barriers to accessing education, especially in an alternative provision and specialist academies such as ours, are wide and complex, both within and beyond the academy gates. They are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that the academy is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Providing this for our pupils is our core objective in OA academies.

We recognise that to support our pupils to attend the academies, we need to build **strong and trusting relationships with parents and carers** and other partners so that we can work together to remove barriers to attendance and put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the academy efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the responsibility of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a collective effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in the academy, the trust, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the **legal responsibility** of every parent and carer to make sure, if their child is registered at a school/academy, that they ensure their child attends that school/academy regularly. This means attendance every day, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school/academy.

Categorisation of absence

When a pupil is absent from school/academy, the law categorises that as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

The law states that it is for academy leader to determine into which category any absence fits, it is for the academy to decide whether any absence is 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

Authorised absence

Examples of the type of absence which may be authorised:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (although these should be made wherever possible out of school hours.)
- Exceptional family circumstances (at the discretion of the academy)

Unauthorised absence

Examples of the type of absence which will not be authorised are:

- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Special treats
- Looking after family members
- Holidays in term time

The need for parental explanation

All absences must be explained either by telephone call, text message, email or letter by a parent or carer. However, this in itself does not automatically authorise the absence.

It is for the head of academy to decide whether or not to accept the explanation offered. You may be asked to provide evidence of a doctor's visit (e.g. appointment card or prescription).

Long term absences must be discussed with academy staff to enable them to offer the pupil access to education to which they are entitled. Where a parent/carers anticipates in advance that their child will be absent then as much advance notice as possible should be given.

Holidays during term time

Parents/carers are reminded that they do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of the academy for holidays. The DfE guidance states, '*As headteachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*' Examples of circumstances which by themselves are very unlikely to be considered as special and thus leading to a grant of permission include:

- To fit in with parental working patterns
- Economic reasons, such as cheap flights and/or accommodation
- To overlap with beginning or end of term.

Attendance will be enforced through statutory intervention (fixed penalty notice) or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education – should persistent unauthorised absence occur the head of academy may refer to the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices or prosecute (see section 6).

Children Missing Education (CME) and removing students from roll

If the academy has reason to believe the student may no longer be living at the address held on record and staff are unable to confirm the whereabouts of the student through the academy's usual processes, staff will follow the Local Authority CME guidance and make referrals as appropriate.

- If a parent/carers notifies the academy in writing that the student and family are moving out of the area and the student no longer requires a place, the academy will remove the student from roll from the date of moving and will, at the same time, notify the Local Authority (LA) using the CME referral form.

- The academy will add and delete students from roll in line with the law and will complete the local authority CME referrals and Ground for Deletion notification forms in accordance with Local Authority guidance.
- The academy will seek advice from the CME team if unsure about any individual cases: nsa.helpline@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- When removing a student from roll due to Elective Home Education (EHE) the academy will also follow the relevant LA EHE notification processes.
- In all instances, where there is an allocated social worker, we will notify them of the above. If there are safeguarding concerns around the child missing education, we will make the relevant referral to the Local Authority safeguarding team.

Our approach to improving attendance

The purpose of ensuring regular attendance at the academy is so that pupils can get the most out of their learning experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. **The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.**

Our experience at Olive Academies that some of our pupils face significant challenges outside of the academy and regular attendance gives us the best opportunity to understand each pupil's needs and to identify what support is needed to help them to achieve and grow as individuals.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently but we will always take into account the individual needs of our pupils and their families, some of whom may have specific barriers to attendance that we need to work with them to remove. As with all our work, we know that this can only be done by building strong relationships with families, by listening to them and understanding their individual situations.

We will work with families and others to treat the root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance.

How do we encourage good attendance?

At Olive Academies we promote good attendance in a number of ways: working with each individual pupil and their parents and carers; working across each academy; and working across the trust.

Supporting individual pupils to attend regularly

We work with families, parents and carers to make sure they understand the importance of good attendance. The reasons for this are outlined in this policy.

We use our staged approach to supporting attendance – this is available in appendix 1 and includes details about incentives and rewards given to pupils who attend regularly and steps that will be taken when they do not. These include working alongside parents and carers to support them as well as monitoring and putting in place plans as necessary – examples of general and specific actions include:

- information sharing and meetings with parents and carers to make sure they understand the procedures both at induction and as needed, e.g. provision of an annual attendance information leaflet

- clear information on the website and ensuring parents and carers have seen this attendance policy
- regular communication with parents and carers when attendance becomes an issue – done using the method best suited to individual carers, be it text, email, phone, face to face meeting
- home visits
- weekly conversations with tutors/coaches
- attendance boards to celebrate improvements
- weekly attendance rewards and certificates
- sign posting to other services, e.g. via a common assessment form (CAF)

Where there is **persistent or severe absence**, OA staff will put in place an individual action plan which will include input from other support services and the local authority who will work together to identify ways of removing barriers to attendance.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance will be enforced through statutory intervention (Fixed penalty notice) or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Fixed Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Attendance Service

The head of academy may refer to the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices where unauthorised absence occurs. This can include persistently being late into the academy. These are aimed at reducing the levels of unauthorised absences during a school term and can be issued by the Local Authority, schools or the Police. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as having **unauthorised absences for 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days)** within 10 school weeks. **All penalty notices are issued per parent per child.**

First offence - First Penalty Notice **per parent, per child**, must pay:

- £80 if you pay within 21 days
- £160 if you pay after 21 days but within 28 days

Second Penalty Notice within 3 years **per parent, per child**, must pay:

- £160 within 28 days

Any other offence within 3 years - Legal proceedings will be taken if:

- their child has any further unauthorised absences within 3 years

These may be issued for:

- unauthorised holidays in term time
- parentally condoned absence where the parent is deemed capable but unwilling to address attendance problems (e.g. a failure to engage with support measures)
- where a pupil is stopped by parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the academy and/or
- a parent continually fails to explain a pupil's absence in accordance with the academy's procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list, and each case will be considered individually.

Supporting pupils to attend regularly – Roles and responsibilities

Pupils

Pupils are expected to be responsible and independent. Except where there are exceptional circumstances, they are personally responsible for maintaining good attendance and being punctual.

- Pupils must attend all sessions that are agreed and outlined in their timetable
- Pupils will not leave the academy site without permission from staff.
- Pupils should arrive in time for registration
- Pupils who arrive after the registration closes will be marked as late
- Pupils who arrive over 30 mins after the academy day starts will be marked as absent for the session.

Parents/carers

- Parents/carers must telephone the academy absence line by 8:30am on the first day of any absence to explain the reason for absence and give an expected return date.
- Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance.
- It is parents and carers' responsibility to make sure their child arrives at the academy on time via the agreed transport method.
- Parents/carers must provide an up-to-date contact number and an emergency number that may be used in exceptional circumstances. It is important, that should the need arise, we can contact parents /carers without delay and that our messages are responded to as soon as possible.
- Parents/carers who do not give an acceptable reason for the absence of their child must understand that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If children have medical appointments parents/carers must supply appointment cards.

Olive Academies' responsibilities

- We follow the staged process to supporting and ensuring good attendance (as outlined in appendix 1)
- We will keep accurate records of attendance and any follow-up communication with parents and carers.
- A system of first day calling operates – where no reason for absence has been given, parents and carers will be called or a text message sent to notify them that their child is absent.
- Where a pupil has not attended the academy for two or more days and the academy has not been able to contact the parent/carers a home visit will be arranged.
- We always notify parents/carers if pupils abscond from academy premises and if necessary, notify the police.
- The head of academy reserves the right to ask for medical evidence before making a decision as to whether to authorise the absence. This must be presented within one week of the last day of absence.
- If a pupil becomes unwell whilst at the academy, parents/carers are informed. Depending on the age of the pupil and the severity of the illness a decision will be made as to whether the pupil should be collected by a parent or carer or sent home on their own.

Monitoring attendance

Within each academy and across the trust, we have in place rigorous monitoring systems to be able to track and analyse attendance data so that we can identify individual challenges **as well as trends each academy and across the trust**. Each academy has an attendance lead who works with the Trust Welfare and Attendance lead to develop action plans and target efforts at individuals and across the academy.

Attendance figures are reported at every local Academy Advisory Board (AAB) meeting and the academy leaders are asked questions about what actions are being taken and progress being made. Each AAB has a link member for Behaviour & Attitudes who has a specific focus on overseeing attendance.

Review of this policy

This policy and the procedures will be reviewed at least annually. It will be approved by the Interim Director of Standards within the trust and submitted to the AAB and the Board of Trustees.

Appendix 1

Our Attendance Procedure

Good attendance is crucial – attendance is monitored closely and when there is absence, appointed staff will follow procedures as outlined below.

