

Attendance Protocol

This document is informed by:

- The Education Act 1996, 2002 and 2011
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Amendment Regulations 2006, 2007, 2012 & 2013
- The Childrens Act 1989 & 2004
- DFE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Guidance) August 2024
- DFE Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance
- DFE Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Statutory Guidance 2024
- DFE Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance Sept 2016
- DFE Supporting Students at academy with Medical Conditions Guidance
- Regional Local Authority Penalty Notice Protocols and Early Help Pathways
- DFE Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend academy because of health needs Guidance
- DFE Guidance Summary on responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (Feb 2023)
- DFE Support for students where a mental health issue is affecting attendance: Effective Practice example (Feb 2023)

Introduction

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

The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in supporting good academy attendance so that all students are safe and able to participate fully in the life of the academy. To enable them to learn and achieve, so that they may enter adulthood and their wider community successfully.

All staff (teaching and support) at our academy have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent academy attendance and will work to provide a welcoming and supportive environment where all members of the academy feel secure, listened to and valued to prevent barriers to attending. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution. The expectation is that all students will aspire to achieve 100% attendance with a minimum of 95%, unless there are exceptional reasons for absence. Where alternative appropriate education is in place, due to barriers in attending the academy, the same expectation of attendance applies in terms of engagement with the provision.

Definition of Good Attendance and Attendance Expectations

The Isle of Wight Council v Platt case considered by the Supreme Court made it clear that 'regular attendance' shall mean attendance in accordance with the academy rules; Under this judgement **a child should attend every day the academy is open to them unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this**. Therefore, any non-attendance which is not in accordance with the academy rules and not deemed 'exceptional' will be recorded as unauthorised.

The expectation is that all students will aspire to achieve 100% attendance with a minimum of 95%, unless there are exceptional reasons for absence. Where alternative appropriate education is in place, due to barriers in attending the academy, the same expectation of attendance applies in terms of engagement with the provision.

Aims

Ensuring all students have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Students are entitled to a full-time education and we know that students 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 \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)

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 students.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student 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 students have the support in place to attend school.

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.

How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

As an academy we will:

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued
- expect students to arrive on time every day
- will support parents 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 as outlined in the DfE guidance document 2024.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletters
- Report to you regularly on how your child is performing in the academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and rate of progress
- Celebrate and reward good attendance through weekly class rewards in each phase, half termly letters celebrating good attendance. Regular attendance newsletters and celebrations will be shared with all stakeholders through DOJO, notice boards and the Academy Website to ensure the profile and importance of good attendance remains everyone's responsibility.
- Support families by working with them and other agencies and groups to help overcome barriers for students and families reach positive attendance expectations
- Where necessary we will work with families and the students' teachers to adapt and personalise a plan to enable access to lessons and achieve positive attendance and punctuality.

Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Our Academy gates open at 8.40am and students must arrive at school by 8.50 am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00 am and will be kept open until 9.10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00 pm and will be kept open until 1.10pm. Where parents 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, 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))

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the academy on 01733 821403 or email at attendancesupport@medeshamstedeacademy.org 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. If this is unavoidable you MUST supply evidence of this appointment to have the appointment recorded as authorised and it is not authorized for a whole day of absence.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting members of our Attendance and Pastoral team; Mrs Johnson (Assistant Principal for Pastoral and Safeguarding), Mrs Maker (Assistant Principal for Safeguarding and Attendance) or our Family Support Officer Miss Lockwood, who can all be contacted via phone on 01733 821403 or on the attendance email attendancesupport@medeshamstedeacademy.org

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

The Senior Leadership/Principal is responsible for:

- 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 parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required
- Working with the parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where students with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs
- Communicating the Academy's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels

The designated senior senior attendance champion is responsible for:

- 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 students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The attendance champion is Mrs Nicola Maker and can be contacted via 01733 821403 / 01733 963847 or email at nmaker@medeshamstedeacademy.org

The attendance team is responsible for:

- 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 Local Authority Attendance Officers to tackle persistent absence

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office by 9.10am and 1.10pm daily.

Admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Recording attendance

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all students onto this register.

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

We will use the national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) 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 student'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 phoning the academy on 01733821403 or emailing attendancesupport@medeshamstedacademy.org

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.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the absence is longer than 5 days, the academy may ask the student's parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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.

Planned absence.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised providing the student's parent/carers notifies the academy in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary (a whole day will not be authorised).

The student's parent / carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Parents can collect this form from the main school office, or it is available to download from the school website at <https://www.medeshamstedacademy.org>

Go to 'Authorised and Unauthorised Absence' section of this policy to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate L code (after the main gates have closed at 9.00am)
- After the register has closed it will be marked as absent, using the appropriate U code (after 9.10am)

Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the student'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 students' emergency contacts,

the academy may carry out a home visit check and or contact other services (e.g. police or social care)

- 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 support agencies

Reporting to parents / carers

The academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.

- Attendance will be shared on progress reports and at parents evening consultations.
- The academy will send positive attendance letters to those pupils whose attendance is over 95% and also to students making significant progress towards that goal.
- The academy will also action statutory letters at trigger points identified in attendance guidance to alert parents to dips in attendance percentage and offer support. (These will follow a legal timeline in frequency and stages)
- The Attendance team will also communicate by text or email through Groupcall to alert parents to positive progress in attendance or slight dips or patterns in a student's attendance.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The principal can only grant a leave of absence to a student 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 student is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a student 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 4 weeks before the absence**, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office or via the website at <https://www.medeshamstedacademy.org>. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning. We will **not authorise** any holidays, unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Legal sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions including, but not limited to, penalty notices to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis and we will use the local authority arrangements for doing so.

As an Academy we are supported by the legal processes and legislation guidance from Peterborough County Council Attendance team. More information on this can be found at:

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/attendance>

Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

Students absent due to complex barriers to attendance

All pupils attending Medeshamstede have an EHCP identifying their individual needs. We will work closely with families to support students and families to ensure positive attendance. As an academy, we work closely with Education transport teams, Early Help professionals, medical advisors, and social care to adapt, individualise and encourage students to be in school wherever possible. We work with families and students to reach the goal of full-time attendance, and this can involve bespoke adapted or part-time timetables with strict time scales for reviews on the progress towards a full-time return.

Students absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND.

Some students may have medical needs that affect their attendance, and we will work closely with the family and medical advice, nursing team and specialist hospital teams to adapt a timetable or education provision wherever possible to meet that student's needs. If there are issues that cause long term difficulties with attendance school will liaise with professionals involved to ensure that correct coding and evidence is there to support the family. The appropriate attendance codes will be used in line with the new legislation and notes against the absence will explain the circumstances.

Where a student has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the student's needs, the academy must inform the local authority.

Students returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

If there has been a long-term absence which has been caused by extenuating circumstances the attendance team and class teacher will meet with the student and family to devise a plan to help with the student's reintegration back into school. This may be a bespoke timetable building back up to full-time attendance over an agreed short term time frame.

How we monitor attendance

Attendance of all students is monitored everyday by the safeguarding and attendance team. We will contact any families on the first day of any absence if there has been no contact made with the academy.

Attendance is monitored by the attendance champion every week to look at any patterns or attendance that drop below 95%.

Attendance below 90% is classed as persistent absence and this means your child is missing 19 or more days during the academic year. This is roughly equivalent to your child missing 1 day or more every 2 weeks, or around 6 days each term. If a student has *persistent absence* the academy will be contacting the family and try to support. Medeshmstede will advise parents via letter, text or email of any concerns and work with the family and students to resolve any attendance issues.

Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

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

Student-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 students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.
- Provide all individual pupil attendance data to track against termly progress reviews to ensure attendance is not the barrier to progress.

Using data to improve attendance

The academy will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual students, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis.

Provide targeted support to the students it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to teachers to facilitate discussions with students and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and student premium lead)
- 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 student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student 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 of students 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 such as transport teams, Early Help agencies, family support, medical support and social care teams.
- Contact parents via letter to offer support and help when initial concerns are raised around absences of a student.

Medeshamstede uses the Peterborough County Council Attendance Service to support policy and strategies where attendance is becoming an issue. We follow their pathways and legal processes when required. If the attendance of a student does not improve, we will follow the legal time frames set out by Peterborough Council towards Penalty notice being issued to all parties with Parental responsibility for the student.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Principal.