



**Attendance Champion: Susan Gadsby**

**‘Attendance is the responsibility of all staff at Esteem Valley Academy’**

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<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	Susan Gadsby / Ellen Richardson / Kevin Wildrienne	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	17/10/25	
<b>Approved by:</b>	Kevin Wildrienne / Tom Bingham	
<b>Version</b>	2	

## Contents

1. Aims .....	3
2. Legislation and guidance .....	3
3. Academy procedures .....	3
4. Authorised and unauthorised absence .....	5
5. Strategies for promoting attendance .....	7
6. Attendance monitoring .....	7
7. Roles and responsibilities .....	7
8. Monitoring arrangements .....	8
9. Links with other policies .....	8
10. Covid-19 .....	8
Appendix 1: attendance codes .....	9
Appendix 2: Flow chart of absence procedures .....	12
Appendix 3: Flow chart for persistent absentees.....	13

## Aims

Our academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to bespoke timetable appropriate to their needs
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend the agreed timetable and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons and sessions.

Attendance is vital for progress as many students who attend Esteem Valley Academy have had large gaps in their learning, low attendance in previous educational settings and have become disengaged in education. Positive attendance will enable students to take full advantage of our ethos OPSS and result in positive outcomes.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the new [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. Academy procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools and academies (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each day and once during the second session. Start times vary due the bespoke curriculums and student timetables. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the academy on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 09:00 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents can notify the site by phoning in the absence and informing a member of the staff team.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask parents 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 will be notified of this in advance.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Parents can notify the academy via contacting the site office or sending in a letter with their student to be handed into a staff member.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

For our full-time on-site students, who predominantly travel by local authority commissioned taxis, and are often attending a school outside of their local area, we mark students as present ( / ) up until 9:30am. Students arriving between 9:30am – 10am are recorded as late ( L ). A student who arrives after 10am, when the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code ( U ). Due to the nature of our school, many of our students access a bespoke timetable and attend provision at different times. In these scenarios Students attendance will be recorded in accordance with their agreed timetable.

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The academy will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

### 3.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance reports are formally provided to parents twice a year via a formal educational report. However, if a student's attendance is reducing then parents will be informed accordingly in an attempt to support an increase in attendance.

## 4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from the academy is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if the Head Teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of academy programs such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative, if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Headteacher will make a decision on a case by case basis. Evidence would be required in each case.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

Academy procedures when targeting unauthorised attendance are as follows:

- If student attendance drops below 90% and direct communication with parents / carers has not had the desired effect of increasing their child's attendance a stage 1 letter will be issued highlighting the decrease in attendance and attendance will be monitored closely over the half-term. The school will attempt to provide supportive strategies to support student attendance.
1. If attendance stays below 90% but progress has been made parents / carers will be informed stating the positive percentage improvement in attendance. Parents / carers will be reminded that their child is still below 90% and that their attendance will still be monitored.
  2. If attendance stays below 90% and no improvement has been made a stage 2 letter will be sent to parents / carers explaining that the school has significant concerns regarding their child's attendance. Parents / carers will also be invited into an attendance meeting with a member of the senior leadership team. The aim of this meeting will be to discuss rationale for students not attending school and strategies to support increasing attendance or attending identified timetables. Strategies may include referral to the Trusts Family and Student Support Team or change in curriculum offer.
  3. If there is no improvement in attendance after the face-to-face meeting then a stage 3 formal letter will be issued to monitor improvement in attendance within a specified period of between 3 to 5 weeks. If attendance does not improve over that set period then the school will be required to follow DCC legal processes and refer to Derbyshire Education Welfare service.
- Study leave – study leave is not granted by default and is only granted to select students in year 11 if appropriate. Provision will still be made available for students who wish to revise on site.

#### **4.2 Legal sanctions**

Esteem Valley Academy takes a supportive approach to addressing attendance, understanding our students starting points, their individual needs and the barriers they and their families may face. We are committed to working collaboratively with parents and carers to develop a culture where positive attendance is celebrated and valued. Legal sanctions are very much a last resort, however, academies can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child where the child is of compulsory school age.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular student will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same student is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school 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.

## **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

At Esteem Valley Academy we reward positive attendance through class dojo and associated awards. We award students with certifications, rewards e.g. trips and gift cards and lunch passes and hold termly reward challenges to encourage improved attendance.

Our aim is to work with parents and carers to support students to make the right choice regarding attendance. At Esteem Valley Academy timetables are bespoke and can be flexible to suit the needs of the student to support engagement and attendance. Parents/carers and students will receive regular feedback regarding improvements in attendance.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The Heads of Centre for each site, the Student and Family Support Officer and the Pastoral Lead monitor student absence on a weekly basis.

Parents are expected to call the academy in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the academy each day a child is ill.

If after contacting parents a student's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Student-level absence data is collected each term 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 the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

At Esteem Valley Academy attendance data is stored via Arbor. This data is used to inform staff, parents/carers and students what their attendance is. Internal data is used to identify whether or not there are particular students or groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support. Internal data is also used to inform the academy's local governing body via the Headteacher's report.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The Governing Board**

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole academy on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

## **7.2 The Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the academy, and for monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

## **7.3 ATTENDANCE CHAMPION**

Our 'Attendance Champion' is our Safeguarding Lead, Susan Gadsby. Our 'Attendance Champion' works closely with our Attendance Team (Kevin Wildrienne, Ellen Richardson, Emma Beresford, Connor Bartle, Imani Lockhart-Davis & BSA's) to monitor and track attendance, ensuring the procedures set out in our 'Attendance Policy for students' are followed consistently, encouraging excellent attendance across all our students and ensuring appropriate support is in place to enable students to improve their attendance.

## **7.4 Heads of Centre**

Heads of Centre

- Monitors attendance data at their site and individual student level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

## **7.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the academy office.

## **7.6 BSA staff**

BSA staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the academy system. BSA staff are also responsible for inputting the attendance data on the academy's management information system.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by a member of the SLT. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Body.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, behaviour policy

## **10. COVID-19**

Use DfE Covid-19 guidance.



## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J1	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Authorised Absence	Absent due to participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad.
C2	Part-time Timetable	When not expected to attend school due to accessing a part-time timetable.
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend. Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Q</b>	Lack of transport arranged by the local authority.	When an application has been made to the LA asking for transport to be put in place but we are waiting for this to be actioned. Not counted in possible attendance.

<b>Y1</b>	Transport normally provided by local authority or school not available.	When the normal transport in place does not collect student. Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Y2</b>	Widespread disruption to travel due to local, national or international emergency.	Widespread disruption to travel due Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Y3</b>	School partially closed.	When one section/class or site is unable to be used. Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Y4</b>	Whole school is unexpectedly closed.	Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Y5</b>	Student in criminal justice detention	Includes, Police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial and sentencing, or detailed under a sentence of detention. Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Y6</b>	Travel or attendance contrary to public health guidance or law on transmission of disease.	Such as a situation like the lockdown due to Covid 19 Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Y7</b>	Unable to attend due to unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendance.
<b>Z</b>	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

# Pupil Absence Procedures



