

<b>The Cam Academy Trust FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMY ATTENDANCE POLICIES</b>	
<b>Approved in consultation with the Curriculum &amp; Standards Committee on behalf of the Trust Board:</b>	Curr & Stds Comm – 27.9.2022 Trust Board – 20.10.2022
<b>To be reviewed:</b>	Every two years or as appropriate
<b>Date of next review:</b>	October 2024
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Primary Executive Leader – Chris Jukes
<b>Category: 2</b>	Version: 2

**Aims and Principles**

Schools within The Cam Academy Trust aim to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled to.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- 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 regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. Each school should be aiming for attendance of 96% + across the academic year through ensuring that all pupils regularly attend school.

**Legislation and guidance**

It is important that all schools to adhere to the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refer to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures, each of 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

School attendance parental responsibility measures 2015

*Working together to improve school attendance 2022 – currently non-statutory (guidance) will be statutory by September 2023*

There is a need to use DfE's guidance on the school census to explain the persistent absence threshold and the high expectation that is set in monitoring this form of absence.

### School procedures

#### Attendance register

All schools by law are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil 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

All schools are expected to set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent. This should be the same for every session and depending on the structure of the school day not longer than either 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place.

***The DfE attendance codes and Penalty Notices information should be included as appendices.***

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

### Day to day processes

Alongside accurate recording of attendance and absence, effective schools have robust day to day processes to track and follow up absence and poor punctuality which are rigorously applied across the school. All schools are expected to develop processes that meet the needs of their pupils and contexts.

As a minimum this should include arrangements to:

- Proactively manage lateness
- Expect parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason and put in place processes to contact parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided. If absence continues without explanation, further contact should be made to ensure safeguarding.
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers) to understand why and when the pupil will return. Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, **but no later than 5 working days after the session.**

- Where reasonably possible, schools should hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This is good practice to give the school additional options to make contact with a responsible adult.
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Schools should avoid headline percentages and instead make this understandable for parents (e.g. the amount of time missed and the impact on the pupil's learning).
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

### **Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence.

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

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school 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 school 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.

### **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 pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

### **Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

### **Following up absence**

The school 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.

### **Reporting to parents/carers**

It is important that schools set up an appropriate system for reporting attendance to parents/carers to ensure that there is a clear line of communication with parents/carers

### Authorised and unauthorised absence

#### Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers of the trust school may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' – ensuring that you have indicated a definition for this term.

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 previously
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils 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 school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- There may be a need to add further examples to above, drawing on the DfE's school attendance guidance and/or indicating possible exceptional circumstances in which the headteacher may grant term-time holiday.

#### *There may be also be a need to add:*

- Examples of unauthorised absence, such as when term-time holiday will not be approved.
- Any information about targeting unauthorised attendance and how the school identifies pupils and families where attendance is poor, and what action you take (such as meetings, letters, closer monitoring).
- There will also be a need to explain other considerations relevant to your school, such as:
  - **Study leave** – study leave is not granted by default and is only granted to pupils in year 11. Provision will still be made available for pupils who wish to revise in school
  - **Flexi-schooling requests** – stating your school's processes for requesting and deciding on this

#### Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

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 consider:

- 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 pupil 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.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

### Strategies for promoting attendance

Schools should treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff should model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, schools should discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family and wherever possible the person should be kept consistent.

### Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a [daily/weekly/monthly] basis.

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

If a pupil's absence falls below 95% during the academic year, the school should contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, the school must consider involving the **trust education welfare officer**.

**The persistent absence threshold is 10%**. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10% (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

**The severe absence threshold is 50%**.

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. A

Pupil-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. Schools must share attendance data to the national average and share this with the local governing body and trustees.

Each school in the trust must collect and store attendance data to use for internal purposes – for example, to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support.

### Roles and responsibilities

#### **The Local Governing Board and Trustees**

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. We therefore expect all trusts and governing bodies to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.

### **The Headteacher/Principal**

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

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

### **Trust Education Welfare Officer**

The Trust Education Welfare Officer will work across the schools in the CAM Academy Trust to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance and welfare for pupils. They will work in conjunction with the County Council to utilise the Local Authority's statutory duties, responsibilities and powers for school attendance

### **The Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil 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
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **Class teachers/form tutors**

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

### **Office/reception staff**

Office/reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.