

Reach Academy Trust

Attendance Policy 2020-21



Reach Academy Feltham works in partnership with parents, children and the Education Welfare Service in Hounslow to monitor and ensure good attendance for all children.

Attendance is critical to achieving our ambitious vision. We aim to create an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach for excellence. For pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital they attend regularly - this policy sets out how we will ensure that pupils will be at the Academy, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Approved by:	Rebecca Cramer, Executive Headteacher	Date: 18th January 2021
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Last reviewed on:	January 2020
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Next review due by:	September 2021
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1. Introduction

All children of school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability or any special need s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Reach Academy Feltham takes the responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its students very seriously. It acknowledges that irregular attendance can disrupt continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement/low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

The Governors and staff of Reach Academy Feltham recognise that we have duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the school community to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. We believe that the whole school community should take responsibility for attendance. This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed.

The Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to ensure that children attend. All Academy staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure a high level of attendance as possible.

We will do all we can to ensure that this policy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly. We shall do this through regular monitoring and evaluation of the policy and practices. On review we shall assess and consult relevant stakeholders on the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of race equality, equality for disabled persons, gender equality and community cohesion using an appropriate Equality Impact Assessment. The policy may be amended as a result of this assessment.

2. Aims of the Policy

Attendance To raise the importance of good attendance

Monitoring To ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently

Punctuality To raise the importance of punctuality and ensure effective monitoring.

Celebration Promote opportunities to celebrate and reward children for attendance and punctuality achievements

3. Promoting regular attendance

It is important that all stakeholders see attendance as their responsibility. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility.

A range of actions will help to focus on promoting regular attendance.

Actions to promote regular attendance	
Celebrate and display	Celebrate 100% daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly by displaying names of deserving students around the Academy and in phase updates/newsletters.
Report	Weekly attendance report for all students (including payslip for students in Key Stage 3 to 4).
Reward	Reward good attendance through individual rewards such as certificates and payslip points, and group rewards such as form group trips.
Communicate	Encourage open, honest and regular communication between the Academy, parents/carers, students and EWS around all issues concerning attendance and punctuality.

4. Absence guidance

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the Academy (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Students need to bring evidence that they pass to the Front Office/Attendance Officer on the day that they return to school. This could be:

- a copy of a doctor's note
- a copy of a prescription/appointment card
- a receipt for over the counter medicine
- Form tutors need to pass all evidence to the School Attendance Officer. SLT has the discretion to authorise absences.
- Absence notes need to be filed by the School Office/Attendance Officer
- School Attendance Officer will check daily and inform the School Office whether the absence needs to be changed to 'authorised' in School Base.

5. Targets and triggers

All of the targets and triggers below apply to all key stages including foundation stage and apply to both attendance and punctuality. It is important to note that at early stages of the year when each absence has a disproportionate effect on attendance percentages, targets and triggers will be adapted as appropriate.

Target/ trigger	Potential action	Level of support	
Target	100%	Reward and celebration	Universal support

Minimum target	96%	Reward and celebration	Universal support
Trigger 1	Below 95%	Letter of Concern	Targeted support
Trigger 2	Below 93%	4 week home-school attendance contract Parent meeting with HOY/Attendance Officer Support to implement targets in the contract.	Intensive support
Trigger 3	Below 91%	Referral to EWS External Agency Support Penalty Warning Penalty Notice Prosecution	Intensive support

Universal support = support that the Academy feels all families will benefit from

Targeted support = support that the Academy feels only some families will need and will usually only involve the Academy and up to one external agency

Intensive support = support that the Academy feels only a small number of families will need and it will almost always involve external agencies.

6. Referrals to Education Welfare Service

There are three circumstances where Reach Academy makes referrals to EWS. These are as follows:

- A student has less than 90% attendance with persistent unauthorised absences, despite the attempts of the school to engage the child/family
- A student is absent for 3 consecutive days and we have had not been able to establish any contact with the parent/carer
- A student takes unauthorised term-time leave (for e.g. going on holiday during term-time).

7. Process for tracking and following up on non-attendance

Throughout the Academy year we monitor absences and punctuality. Each week we assess attendance and punctuality for the week just gone and apply the trigger criteria, act accordingly.

The people responsible for matters relating to attendance at the Academy are:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Heads of Year/Phase
- Attendance Officer

The section below outlines the process for monitoring and addressing attendance issues

7.1 If students have been absent for 3 consecutive days and we have had no contact with the parent/carer:

The Attendance Officer is responsible for informing Heads of Year and SLT if there is any occasion where a student has been absent for 3 consecutive days and there has been no contact with the parent/carer.

The Attendance Officer will complete a CFAN and send this to Hounslow Children's Services and EWO, copying in the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion as applicable.

7.2 If a student takes unauthorised Term-Time leave (for e.g. going on holiday during Term-Time):

The Attendance Officer will inform HoY, SLT and Assistant Headteacher for Culture and Relationships and log on CPOMS. They will then complete a CFAN form (Pages 1-3) and send this to the EWO, copying in the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion in Primary/Secondary as applicable.

7.3 If a student has less than 95% attendance:

The Attendance Officer needs to send a weekly update of students with less than 95% attendance to the relevant Year Team.

The Attendance Officer needs to send a letter home to inform parents/carers that their child's attendance has fallen below expected levels and that we are monitoring. Parents are invited to request a school meeting to discuss if they feel this is required.

If attendance fails to show improvement in two weeks, a meeting is arranged where barriers to attendance are discussed and a 95% target over four weeks is set. Students are required to improve their attendance and average over 95% over a 4 week period.

If this target is not achieved, a referral to Education Welfare is made alongside any other referrals for additional support service that may be required.

The Attendance Officer sends weekly updates to each Year Team. If the child meets their target, the Attendance Officer will communicate with parents and inform them of this.

7.4 Once referred to Education Welfare:

Education Welfare receives a referral from school (Non-complex) or the Front Door Social Care (complex) for the unauthorised poor school attendance at 90% or below. The referral is entered on to the Education Welfare Service recording system, and the Education Welfare Officer conducts checks with the following for involvement: Children's Social Care, Youth Offending Service and CAMHS.

7.4.1 For non-statutory age children:

Nursery:

When a child is unwell or won't be attending nursery for any reason we ask parents to telephone to let us know that they won't be attending and the reason why. We would ask them to let us know for how long the child won't be in and ask them to call us if this changes for any reason.

If we do not hear from a parent we endeavour to phone them on the first day of absence to clarify the reason for the absence and the expected return date.

If a child's attendance falls below 95% we write a letter to the family informing them of the importance of regular attendance and the impact on the child's learning.

If attendance fails to improve, targets will be set in conjunction with Nursery and failure to meet the targets will result in parents attending the school's Attendance programme with the Hub Team.

Alongside this we also offer support with any difficulties the family may be having or complete an Early help referral with their consent or sign post them to other professionals for guidance.

Sixth Form:

Attendance is hugely important. It sets good routines, demonstrates to employers and universities that you are serious about your studies and that you are organised and reliable.

Attendance at Sixth form is measured slightly differently to the rest of the school. Attendance will be reviewed regularly and students and parent/carers will be warned if attendance, without good reason e.g. serious accident/illness, falls below 95%. If a student does not improve the school will invite parent/carers to a meeting with the student where targets will be set and additional support discussed. Should attendance fail to improve, the school reserves the right to charge the student for the examination fees or the school may withdraw the student from exams.

Any further disciplinary proceedings will be decided by the Head Teacher.

8. Practices to secure good attendance

The Attendance Officer is responsible for checking that the registers are completed each morning and afternoon during each lesson. It is also the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure that where another code is appropriate to denote an absence, that this is altered and recorded in the electronic registration system.

Every morning and afternoon if registers are incomplete or inaccurate the Attendance Officer is to send an email to the Primary/Secondary SLT and the relevant form tutor.

It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the registers are completed for each lesson – the Attendance Officer's role is to check not complete.

The accuracy of the register is of paramount importance both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions that may be required. Reach Academy Feltham acknowledges that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers. Head Teachers may be called to Court as witnesses and explain their registration processes and in particular the marking of a register in question. The Student Registration Regulations, Keeping Student Registers (Guidance on applying the Regulations) and Guidance on the use of the Attendance and Absence Codes will all be read and followed by Reach Academy Feltham (Ensuring Children's Right to Education, DfE).

It is also the role of the Administrative team to ensure that paper registers are printed and kept to hand for circumstances such as the failure of ICT systems or a fire alarm or drill. In these instances it is the role of the Attendance Officer to hand the paper registers to the form tutors, collect them in after the agreed time period taken to complete them and enter the data onto the electronic system at an appropriate time, as close to the closing of the registers as possible.

9. Authorising Absence

IN SECONDARY: Where a child is absent for over 3-5 days, the Front Office will collect in a note to authorise the absence and pass this to the Attendance Officer and consult with the Head Teacher to decide whether the absence should be authorised. The Head Teacher or SLT has the discretion to authorise absences.

IN PRIMARY: Where a child is absent for over 3-5 days the parent should hand in a note to the office to authorise the absence and this will be passed to the Attendance Officer who will consult the Head Teacher and decide whether the absence should be authorised.

Parents/carers need to request term-time leave in writing at least 3 weeks in advance. Term-time leave will only be authorised under exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher has the discretion to authorise Term-Time absence.

10. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences will be followed up immediately.

Schools are legally required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the Head Teacher has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory Academy age to be absent, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences, including persistent lateness, must be treated as unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by a person designated to do so by the proprietor [see The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI No. 2006/1751) – reg 7(1)].

Students will be referred to the EWS when there are cases of: unauthorised term-time absence; persistent unauthorised absence (below 90%); 3 consecutive days of absence with no contact from parents/carers.

11. Attendance Updates

Attendance updates are the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to produce. Each week updates on absence will be produced for all relevant staff to investigate.

In addition 100% attendees each week, month, half term, term and year shall be displayed prominently in each form room and on the communal attendance notice-board. Attendance is also a major feature of payslip which shall be explained fully in the behaviour section below.

12. Late Pupils

It is the role of the Attendance Officer to ensure that late students are registered, monitored and placed in detention. Each morning primary students will be considered late if they are not in the Academy building by 8.30am. Due to Covid-19 plans we have a staggered start for students in Phase 3. They are considered late if they are not in the building by 8:10am and for Phase 4 the gates close at 8:25am. A member of staff will be on at the reception each morning (usually the Attendance Officer and HOY/SLT). This staff member will record the child's name and send them to their form room where they will participate in normal morning routines. If a student arrives late to school, they must provide a valid reason to the Attendance Officer. Traffic conditions will not be accepted as a valid reason for lateness. London traffic's network is congested every day and will cause delays – this time must be factored into the student's morning routine.

At 8.45am the member of staff will cease to be on 'late duty' and late children will instead sign in at the front office and then go to their class.

The reason for high staff presence to monitor and record late students is that it will enable members of staff to have meaningful one to one conversations with students about the importance of being on time and the factors that are preventing them from being on time at the moment.

Just as with attendance, form tutors shall be given a weekly update on punctuality for their form.

13. Unplanned Absences

If absence is unplanned, for example due to sickness, parents will call the Academy by 8.30am. At 10.00am it is the role of the Attendance Officer to phone the parents of all absent students and ascertain the reason for their absence. The Attendance Officer will use the call to stress the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

If a child is due to be absent for an extended period of time then it is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to inform the staff who teach that child.

14. Unplanned School Closures

If the Academy were to be closed during the day for whatever reason, for example due to dangerous weather conditions, then it is the role of the Attendance Officer to send a group text to all parents to inform them and to update the Academy website.

In a situation such as closure due to extenuating circumstances it would be advisable for all staff to liaise and send one message rather than two (e.g. collaborate across phases).

15. Working with the Educational Welfare Officer

The Attendance Officer is also responsible for liaising with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), in conjunction with the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion in Primary/Secondary as relevant.

The Attendance Officer may refer students to the EWO and will be the contact person for the EWO in the Academy, along with the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion in Primary/Secondary.

16. Process when a child is absent

16.1 Authorising student absence because of illness:

- If a student is ill and/or unable to attend school for an unplanned reason, the parent/carer needs to contact the school office to inform them before 8.30 am on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day unless the period of absence is definable at the beginning, in which case the parent/carer must inform the Academy of the date of their child's return.
- The school Attendance Officer will text the Primary contact asking them to contact the school, if no contact has been made to inform of the absence the school Attendance Officer will call all contacts on the child's record to determine why the child is absent.
- If no contact is made after 2 days absence, the schools Attendance Officer and/or Head of Year will conduct a home visit.
- Parents/carers must contact the school office rather than the child's form tutor, Head of Year or any other member of staff.
- Reach Academy will only 'authorise' the student's absence if there is sufficient evidence that the student is not able to be, or should not be in school.
- This means that when the student returns to school within 3-5 days, they need to bring in any one of the following, and give this to the Front Office:
 - a doctor's note;
 - a copy of a prescription/appointment card;
 - a receipt for over the counter medicine.
- If the student does not bring sufficient evidence, their absence will be marked as 'unauthorised'. Persistent unauthorised absences will have further consequences, see Section IV below.

16.2 Authorising student absence for Term-Time Leave:

- Parents/carers need to contact the school Attendance Officer in writing to request Term-Time leave at least 3 weeks in advance.
- Term-time leave will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, as our aim is to ensure students do not miss important learning time. Holidays are never exceptional circumstances.
- Parents/carers will be informed if their request for Term-Time leave has been authorised within 1 week of submitting their request.
- If parents/carers decide to take the child on holiday/off school even when this has not been authorised, this will be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence'.
- Details on unauthorised absences are passed onto Reach Academy Feltham's designated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) at the Education Welfare Service (EWS) in Hounslow.
- The EWO will send parents a Penalty Notice Warning Letter (PNWL) if this is the first time in the child's whole school career that they have been referred for taking unauthorised Term-Time leave. If there is a second (or more) time in the child's whole school career that they take unauthorised Term-Time leave, and if attendance has fallen below 92% then the EWO will send parents a Penalty Notice (PN). See details of the PN below:

- The FPN is £60 (per parent/carer, per child) if paid within 21 days.
- If paid after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is doubled to £120 per parent, per child.
- If payment is not received, then parents/carers may be prosecuted for the offence and could be subject to a fine of up to £2500.
- In addition, pupils may be removed from the school register if the pupil has failed to return following authorised leave of absence exceeding 10 school days for the purpose of a holiday providing all of the following three conditions are fulfilled:
 - The pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted
 - There are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend due to sickness or any unavoidable cause
 - Both the school and the Local Authority have made reasonable enquiries and failed to ascertain the child's whereabouts.
- The EWS statutory process, outlined above, highlights how seriously the Local Authority takes unauthorised Term Time leave. We advise parents to take this into account and avoid planning holidays during Term Time.
- Pupils are entitled to two days authorised for religious observance per academic year. Parents should complete the online form as well as telephone the Front Office to advise when these days will be taken. Front office will record this on a spreadsheet shared with the Attendance Officer.

16.3 Absence for three consecutive days:

If a student has missed school for a consecutive period of three days, and we have had no contact with the parent/carer during this time, we will refer the student to the EWS.

As a result of this referral, the EWO will conduct a statutory home-visit to speak to the parent/carer and child to establish the reason for absence.

For students who have persistent low attendance, further action will be taken (see section 17).

17. For students with persistent unauthorised and low-attendance:

Students are expected to have 95% attendance or above. Where a student's attendance is irregular and drops below 95% for whatever reason, the school Attendance Officer will notify the parent by sending the parent/carer a letter advising them of our attendance concerns and will be monitoring closely in the next two weeks. Should attendance deteriorate, further communication will follow.

Should attendance fail to improve within two weeks, parent/carer are invited to a meeting in school to discuss attendance and a 4 week 95% target is set. This is confirmed in writing to parent/carer.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss any difficulties and put in place a plan to improve attendance.

If parents/carers are not responsive and do not come for the meeting, the Attendance Officer will telephone the parent to discuss attendance and support. If a parent fails to engage and there is no evidence of support required, and the target is not achieved, a referral will be made to EWS with supporting paperwork attached as we have a duty to refer all students who are deemed Persistent Absentees to EWS.

A student becomes a Persistent Absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. It is a parent/ carers' responsibility to ensure that every measure is taken to immediately improve their child's attendance.

If there is persistent absenteeism between 90-95%, the school will continue to work with the family to raise attendance levels.

In cases where attendance drops below 90% with unauthorised absences, Reach Academy will make a referral to EWS. Following our referral:

- Family will work with the EWO to help raise the child's attendance levels.
- Every effort will be made over a 2-3 month period to help the family improve the child's attendance.
- This could include: signposting the child/family to appropriate support services; facilitating partnerships with other professionals; referring the family for Early Help/Families First Intensive Support Service or Children's Services if required.

If attendance still fails to improve after these interventions, as a last resort the Local Authority may have to consider taking legal action against the parents through the courts or issuing a Penalty Notice as mentioned above:

- The penalty is £60 (per parent/carer per child) if paid within 21 days.
- If paid after 21 days but within 28 days the penalty is doubled to £120 per parent, per child.
- If payment is not received, parents/carers may be prosecuted for the offence and could be subject to a fine of up to £2,500.

Of course, the objective of EWS and Reach Academy is to work proactively with families to ensure good attendance, and we expect that such measures would be extremely rare.

18. Lateness

If your child is late to school they will be asked to sign in at the Front Office, (a reason why your child was late and the time they arrived at school must be logged). Your child will be marked as L if they arrive up to 15 minutes after their scheduled start time, if your child arrives after this time they will be marked as U which is an unauthorised late.

If your child is late more than three times in any two week period, the parent/carer will receive a phone call from the school Attendance Officer inviting them to a meeting with HOY/SLT where additional support can be discussed.

If your child is Persistently Late (more than 6 lates in a term) you will receive a letter from the school Attendance Officer that will place you on a four week target during which we would expect to see an improvement.

If no improvement, then the school Attendance Officer will invite you to a meeting with HOY/member of SLT to discuss additional support.

19. Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

Pupils at school with medical conditions should be properly supported so that they have full access to education, including school trips and physical education.

Reach Academy Feltham will ensure that arrangements are in place in school to support pupils with medical conditions. We will also consult health and social care professionals, pupils and parents to ensure that the needs of children with medical conditions are properly understood and effectively supported.

Local Authorities are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils, and for other children who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such provision. This means that where a child cannot attend school because of health problems, and would not otherwise receive a suitable full-time education, the Local Authority is responsible for arranging provision. There will be a wide range of circumstances where a child has a health need but will receive suitable education that meets their needs without the intervention of the Local Authority – for example, where the child can still attend school with some support; where the school has made arrangements to deliver suitable education outside of school for the child; or where arrangements have been made for the child to be educated in a hospital by an on-site hospital school. We would not expect the LA to become involved in such arrangements unless it had reason to think that the education being provided to the child was not suitable or, while otherwise suitable, was not full-time or for the number of hours the child could benefit from without adversely affecting their health. This might be the case where, for example, the child can attend school but only intermittently.