



# SEATHORNE PRIMARY ACADEMY



## Attendance Policy

Approved by:

Mr. Matthew Wood  
Principal

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022

Last reviewed on:

10<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Next review due by:

November 2024

## Introduction

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

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.

## At Seathorne Primary Academy we

- 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.

## How to notify the Academy of an absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the school on each day of absence by:

- Calling the main office as soon as possible **01507 764689**
- Message via the Groupcall Xpressions App
- Emailing [admin@seathorneprimaryacademy.org](mailto:admin@seathorneprimaryacademy.org)

Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

To inform us about a planned absence:

- Complete a Leave of Absence Request Form which can be requested via the main office.

## 1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Pupils are entitled to a full-time education and we know that pupils 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.

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:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality
- Follow up absences
- Communicate and work with families to reduce absence
- Monitor absences and analyse patterns of absence
- Work with local partners to support attendance and support reduction in absence

## 2. 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.

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

At Seathorne Primary Academy, we:

- Invest time into building partnerships with families, listening to them and understanding barriers to attendance. By talking with parents/carers early on we can identify any barriers to learning, such as hunger, health, transport, bullying, extended family illness or other similar challenges. We can then provide the family with the support or resources that will help to improve attendance. Families also will then have a named contact (For Seathorne, this will be Mrs. Croxford, our Family Welfare Officer) to build up a positive relationship with.
- Keep parents up to date with our attendance policy and expectations for pupil's attendance and on-time arrival.
- Expect staff to set a positive role model for punctuality and good attendance.
- Provide individual and whole class rewards and incentives for good attendance.
- Support pupils' return to school after absence (including late arrivals) to ensure children are fully reintegrated and not at a disadvantage with their learning due to their time out of school.

## 4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Year Group	Pupils must arrive by...
Nursery	9am
All other Pupils	8:45am

The register for the first session will be taken 5 minutes after arrival and will be kept open no longer than 30 minutes after the session begins. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:45pm/1.00pm depending on staggered lunch timings and will be kept open no longer than 30 minutes.

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.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time. This means ensuring their child is in class and ready to learn by the times in the table above.
- Support their children with understanding the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- Contact the academy on Tele: 01754 764689, Email: [admin@seathorneprimaryacademy.org](mailto:admin@seathorneprimaryacademy.org) or message on Xpressions 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.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.
- Understand the importance of punctuality and good attendance.

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

Administration 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 Officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

The Attendance and Inclusion Officer 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 the Family Welfare Officer to tackle persistent absence.

The Attendance and Inclusion Officer is Mrs. B. Davies and can be contacted via telephone 01754 764689, email [bdavies@seathorneprimaryacademy.org](mailto:bdavies@seathorneprimaryacademy.org) or via Xpressions.

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the academy.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Evaluating and monitoring processes.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.
- Working with local partners to implement bespoke strategies to improve attendance for those children with persistent absence or severe absence.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr. P. Baker and can be contacted via telephone 01754 764689, email [pbaker@seathorneprimaryacademy.org](mailto:pbaker@seathorneprimaryacademy.org) or via Xpressions.

The 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.

## 5. Recording attendance

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

We will take our attendance register 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.

We will use the DfE codes to detail the attendance and absences.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### Unplanned absence

The pupil'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 calling the Academy office 01754 764689, email [admin@seathorneprimaryacademy.org](mailto:admin@seathorneprimaryacademy.org) or via Xpressions message.

We will mark absence due to 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, the academy may ask the pupil's parent/carer 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.

Medical evidence is requested for any absence longer than 72 hours. A home visit will also be carried out if no medical evidence has been provided after this time.

If we have reason to suspect that this absence should be classed as unauthorised, for example due to a term-time holiday rather than an illness, the academy will carry out a home visit to clarify this.

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 in advance.

### Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer 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 pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Parents/carers must complete a Leave of Absence Request Form which are available from the school office or Attendance Officer.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

### Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Class Teachers record children arriving late and minutes late on a daily basis. Parents are reminded throughout the year about the impact of lateness on a child's opportunities to learn.

Repeated lateness is addressed on a one-to-one basis, either with a telephone call or a support meeting with the Family Welfare Officer and Attendance Officer.

Lateness is monitored on a weekly basis.

## Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach the pupils' parent/carer calls will be made to pupil's emergency contacts.
  - If the call is not answered, a message will be left for the parent, requesting them to inform school of their child's absence. If no reply by 11pm, a second, third and fourth phone call is to be made.
  - If no contact has been made, on the second day of absence a home visit to be made by the Family Welfare Officer or a Designated Safeguarding lead on the next following school day.
- 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.

## Reporting to parents/carers

End of term attendance letter displaying child's attendance against the required attendance of 95%

In addition, the academy will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels in their end of year written report.

## 6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### Approval for term-time absence

The principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

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.

The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Exceptional circumstances are **NOT**:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Parent/carer work commitments
- Poor weather experiences during school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term/half term.

Exceptional circumstances **MAY** be:

- Grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill – and you must leave in an emergency
- Significant trauma in the family recently and a holiday will benefit the child – this must be supported by a doctor's letter
- A one-off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time, e.g. family wedding/funeral.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least one week before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the Academy office. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments

- 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 academy 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 academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

## Legal sanctions

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or not appropriate (such as an unauthorized holiday in term time), the local authority can take forward legal intervention to formalize support and / or enforce attendance. This includes fines or a penalty notice. The arrangements for these procedures are:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of up to £120.00.

## 7. How we monitor attendance

We closely monitoring early indications of pupils who are falling below 90% and contacting parents as often as needed to provide the families with information regarding attendance. By talking with parents/carers early on we can identify any barriers to learning, such as hunger, health, transport, bullying, extended family illness or other similar challenges. We can then provide the family with the support or resources that will help to improve attendance. Families also will then have a named contact to build up a positive relationship with.

### Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

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

Pupil-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. The academy will compare attendance data to the trust and national average.

### Analysing attendance

The academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### Using data to improve attendance

The academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil 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 pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Share handouts during parent's evenings/ fundraisers and celebration assemblies to continue to raise awareness and set expectations around attendance.
- Provide a "drop-in desk" during parents' evenings to target key families.
- Share leaflets promoting good attendance and punctuality to every family, particularly in December and January.
- The Family Welfare and Attendance Officers have regular meetings and are able to sign-post families who need support to relevant services.
- There is a fortnightly Inclusion Meeting which highlights any families that need additional support.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trustor DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the academy's Education Director.