



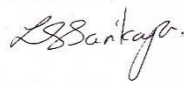
ST. BART'S
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2024

St. Bart's Multi-Academy Trust

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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01/09/2024	Added St Bart's Sustainability/ Updated Legal Framework / Roles and Responsibilities/Definitions/Leave of Absence / Monitoring and Analysing Absence / Vulnerable Pupils / Legal Interventions	S. Cope



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St. Bart's Mission

Our moral purpose is to provide the best education and curriculum in all our academies, enabling every child to realise their full potential.

St. Bart's Vision and Values

Releasing Potential together through



We have a **Passion** for releasing potential in all our children and staff through the **Encouragement** and development of **Ambition**, aspiration and excellence in all aspects of our work. Our commitment is to place children at the centre of everything we do. Working in **Collaboration**, we strive to provide the highest quality of educational experiences and outcomes for young people in an inclusive environment. Through the **Enjoyment** of learning, we live life together in all its fullness through **PEACE**.

We believe this vision empowers children with the skills to make a positive impact on the future of the communities they serve.

Our Trust Christian ethos is also captured by the **PEACE** values and all schools work in close partnership (whether C of E or community) to ensure that all children, adults and the communities they serve flourish just as Jesus encouraged us to do in John 10:10 –

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

St. Bart's Sustainability

We are committed to educating our pupils about environmental concerns and the importance of living sustainably. We recognise our responsibility to ensure that pupils are prepared for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.

We encourage both pupils and staff to think about the environment and how their actions will impact upon their local surroundings, as well as the global environment.

We will ensure pupils are taught about environmental sustainability, promote an eco-friendly attitude, and ensure that the Trust itself is as sustainable as it can be.

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Statement of intent

St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust is committed to developing and implementing policies and practice which support good attendance, in partnership with parents/carers, pupils, governors, local authorities and with other outside agencies.

St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full academic and social potential if they do not regularly attend school. All children should be at school, on time, every day the Academy is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the Academy gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment across all our Academies, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole Academy community. Excellent attendance is a pre-requisite of academic success. Each Academy will ensure that parents are kept well informed about the link between attendance and attainment and that when academic progress is jeopardised, this message is clearly reiterated, and support is offered to remove any existing or emerging barriers to attendance.

Our Academies will take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium - can have on improving pupil attendance.

St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust is committed to working together to ensure all pupils receive the best education possible and to enable them to make progress and do as well as they can. For this to happen, we need pupils to be in our Academies accessing teaching and learning and personal growth opportunities.

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regard to school attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, especially persistence and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil 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 that pupils have the support in place to attend our Academies well
- Creating networks and partnerships within our Trust and with outside agencies to share good practice, to draw on success and to sustain and improve our whole Trust attendance

1. Legal framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Education Act 1996

- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory or Trust framework. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to the Local Governing Committee and the Principal of each Trust Academy.

In addition, **St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust** has overall responsibility for:

- Setting high expectations of all Academy leaders, staff, pupils, and parents
- Devising and reviewing the Trust Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation
- Making sure that Academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the Trust Academies record attendance accurately in the register, and share the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the Trust Academies work effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of attendance across the Trust and Academy policies and ethos
- Making sure every Academy has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping Academy leaders to focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Advising Academies on matters related to attendance and support as required
- Ensuring all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance

- That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
- The Academy's legal requirements for keeping registers
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the trust and providing regular opportunities for staff from different schools to come together, learn from each other and share resources

The **Trust attendance lead** is responsible for:

- Driving attendance improvement across the Trust
- Working more intensively with Academies who require support to improve attendance
- Acting as a central contact point for Academies with attendance queries

The Trust attendance lead is Claire Tomlinson and can be contacted via email - ctomlinson@sbmat.org.

The **Local Governing Committee** has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the Academy
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the Academy's ethos and policies
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Trust's Complaints Procedures
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

The **Principal** is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy, determining local processes and systems appropriate to context
- Appointing a member of the Senior Leadership Team to the Senior Attendance Champion role
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the Academy's high expectations for attendance through regular communications across a range of channels
- Ensuring that every pupil accesses their full entitlement to high quality education and acting as early as possible to address patterns of absence
- Alongside the Attendance Champion, creating a personalised strategy for attendance for the Academy and monitoring the impact of the applied strategies
- Developing and maintaining a positive culture across the Academy where all staff understand the link between behaviour, attendance, and inclusion
- Managing staffing resource to effectively promote, support and monitor high levels of attendance through pastoral teams and delegation of responsibility to attendance officers for specific activity
- Evaluating and reporting attendance and punctuality, via reports from the senior leader responsible for attendance, using this to develop strategic plans for improvement, reporting actions and impact to the Trust and the Local Governing Committee as required
- Ensuring that all Academy staff receive effective, targeted attendance training dependent on role

- Determining, in collaboration with the senior leader responsible for attendance, whether to authorise any proposed absences during term time requested on the Academy's official request form ([Appendix B](#))

The **Designated Senior Leader (Senior Attendance Champion – Sue Spence)** supported by the **Attendance Officer (Jayne Lyall Brookes)** is responsible for:

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Leading initiatives to promote the profile of attendance throughout the Academy including a package of rewards that is valued by pupils and is responsive to pupil voice
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Interrogating and analysing attendance and punctuality data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement and preparing reports, as required by the Principal
- Ensuring data on attendance and punctuality is displayed in prominent places visible to pupils and is communicated to parents/ carers on a weekly basis
- Ensuring attendance is recorded accurately and promptly on Arbor and where absence is recorded as unexplained in the Academy attendance register, the correct code is inputted as soon the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues, particularly parents/carers of pupils who have been identified as at-risk or have persistent poor attendance, to challenge absences and encourage an early return to the Academy
- Leading pastoral / attendance review meetings and developing an attendance improvement plan involving the child, parent/carer and, where appropriate, other agencies for pupils whose patterns of absence / punctuality are a concern
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Preparing case studies to demonstrate the impact of interventions
- Complying with the Department for Education Statutory Guidance on Children Missing Education (CME) by informing the local authority of the details of children who are regularly absent, missing from the Academy following a leave of absence and prior to removing a child from the roll of the Academy
- Where appropriate, visiting the home and/or making a referral to the local authority's education welfare service or equivalent contracted service
- Co-ordinating the collation of all the documentary evidence required by the local authority for pursuing a legal intervention
- Informing the local authority of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers
- Co-ordinating the support plan for pupils returning to the Academy following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps

Administrative staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring registration on a daily basis and ensuring any missing marks are quickly resolved to ensure pupils are safe, including making phone calls to parents / carers where a pupil's absence

is unexplained in accordance with Academy agreed timings and receiving calls from parents/carers about pupil absence day-today

- Being the first point of contact for parents/carers and relevant Academy staff regarding pupil absence and appointments
- Transferring calls to the principal/Senior Attendance Lead/attendance office/home-school link worker where appropriate, when more detailed support on attendance is required
- Ensuring that the correct codes have been used to record absence
- Collating and issuing all attendance and punctuality data on a daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annual basis to the attendance officer / Principal
- Maintain a record of all applications for leave of absence during term time and requests for issuing a penalty notice

ALL Staff are responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining a positive culture where all pupils are effectively supported
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently
- Upholding and reinforcing expectations for good attendance and punctuality
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be reported
- Completing registers on time and accurately (both morning and afternoon sessions)
- Communicating effectively with parents/carers regarding concerns at the earliest point, working together to eliminate barriers
- Identifying absence trends or concerns and raise with the relevant member of administration team/pastoral team staff

Pupils are responsible for:

- Arriving at the Academy on time every day, unless there are reasons such as illness, specific family circumstances or other extenuating factors which preclude this
- Coming to the Academy well prepared and with the right attitude; to enjoy and achieve
- Speaking to a member of staff if there are any problems that may affect attendance, punctuality and/or learning

2.1. Legal Duty and Parent Responsibility

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that 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 school.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details
- Providing the Academy with a minimum of two up to date home and emergency contact details

- Updating the Academy if their details change
- Ensuring their child attends every day the Academy is open except when a statutory reason applies
- Ensuring their child arrives in the Academy on time and prepared for the day
- Contacting the Academy as soon as possible to notify of absence, and advise on when they expect them to return
- Contacting the Academy to discuss any emerging concerns / barriers that might prevent their child from maintaining good attendance or arriving promptly at the Academy.
- Proactively engaging with attendance support offered to prevent the need for more formal support when applicable.
- Submitting in writing, requests for exceptional leave of absence in good time to the Academy Principal prior to making any arrangements.
- Providing medical evidence for an absence when requested by the Academy
- Ensuring that all appointments, where possible, are arranged outside the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the Academy and/or local authority

3. Working with Parents to Improve Attendance

Through working closely in partnership with parents/carers, each Academy aims to establish positive routines for attendance and punctuality from the earliest age. Due to the established impact of lost education on progress and achievement, the Academy will always provide comprehensive support to children and families to endeavour to overcome barriers, but will implement a robust response where concerns emerge. Each Academy will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The Academy will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The Academy will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend the Academy every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the Principal in advance.

The Academy will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at the Academy can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the Academy will work collaboratively with parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend the Academy regularly.

The Academy will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in the Academy, e.g. bullying, the designated senior leader / attendance officer will work with the Principal and any relevant Academy staff, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the Academy's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the Academy will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

4. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

4.1. Absence:

- Arrival at the Academy after the register has closed
- Not attending the Academy for any reason

4.2. Authorised Absence:

The Principal will authorise pupils to be absent from the Academy site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#).

Circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- A pupil is prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including suspension or exclusion. NB The Academy reserves the right to ask for medical evidence of an illness as stated by the parent/carers
- A pupil has been granted leave of absence by the Principal of the Academy
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school day, which the Academy has approved and evidence of the appointment has been provided
- The absence was on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong and the Academy has granted leave
- Parent(s) 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
- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

Reference should also be made to [Section 8 Leave of Absence](#) below.

4.3. Unauthorised absence:

Circumstances include, but, are not limited to:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without good reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that have not been approved following a parents/carers request
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at the Academy after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children (including siblings) or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed

- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Academies will never authorise the unilateral withdrawal of pupils by their parents as a result of a parental concern or complaint. Such absences can be damaging to children's education, are unnecessary, do not allow staff to deal with the issue efficiently, and, as a consequence, will be unauthorised.

It is the responsibility of the Principal, not the parent/carer, to decide whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Such decisions will be made in accordance with government regulations and guidance. An Academy can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to the Academy it is suspected that they have been on holiday.

4.4. Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing **10** percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason

4.5. Severe Absence (SA):

- Missing **50** percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason

4.6. Missing Education

- Not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school

5. Attendance Expectations

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive full time education. Legal action may be instigated against parents/carers whose child's attendance is irregular or / and at an unacceptably low level and where parents/carers are failing to fulfil their legal responsibility.

Each Academy has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend the Academy punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The Academy day starts at 8:40am, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, pupils will be expected to be on the school site from 8:30am

All pupils should be punctual at arriving at the Academy in line with the starting time detailed above. Those pupils who arrive after the starting time, but before the end of the registration period will be marked as late. Those arriving after the registers close, but before the end of the session will be issued with a mark of unauthorised absence. It is important that children arrive at the Academy on time to avoid missing key learning, information and the impact on routines and relationships.

Each Academy requires late arriving pupils to be signed in. The reason for the lateness will need to be provided.

Each Academy monitors the late arrival of pupils. Persistent lateness will be monitored the designated senior leader / attendance officer who will arrange to meet with parents, to overcome any barriers, to improve punctuality.

Ultimately, continued unauthorised lateness, that which is coded as unauthorised could result in statutory action being taken by the Local Authority.

6. Absence Procedures

On the first day of absence and all subsequent days, parents/carers should telephone the Academy office before 8:40am to inform them of the reason for the pupil's absence and the likely duration of the absence. Personal or written communication to the Academy is also acceptable.

Parents/carers should then contact the Academy every day until the pupil returns or alternatively indicate the length of the absence and the reasons why it is known the pupil will be unable to attend e.g. recovering from an operation. In these circumstances, a 'check in' date must be agreed when the absence will be reviewed.

Where no information has been received by 8:40am on the first day of absence, the Academy will telephone the home of the absent pupil to enquire regarding the absence.

The Academy will (before 10:00am):

- Make a phone call
- Send a text
- Request a Safe and Well call/visit from the Education Welfare Officer

The Academy will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the register

Should no reason for absence have been ascertained, the Attendance Officer or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) another member of staff may complete a home visit to gain the reason for the absence. A home visit may also be completed if:

- the Academy receive any additional contradictory information
- the staff are concerned about the pupil's absence

The Academy will not normally request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the Academy reserves the right to request supporting evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence, where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness or in circumstances where an absence due to illness is longer than 5 days. If the Academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified.

When a pupil with a social worker is absent without good reason, the social worker should be informed of unauthorised absences and support improved attendance. Where Academies are considering the use of legal interventions, the view the relevant social worker should be considered although the final decision will be taken by the Academy in liaison with the local authority.

7. Attendance Register

Each Academy uses Arbor to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the Trust and other appropriate authorities.

This register will record whether pupils are:

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

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register opens and will be marked by 8:40am. From 8:50am, pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time
- The morning register will close at 9:10am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend the Academy before this time
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1:10pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The afternoon register will close at 1:30pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend the Academy before this time

The Academy will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. See [Appendix A](#). The cause of each absence is always required.

Pupils who are absent from the Academy but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for six years from the date the data was entered.

8. Leave of Absence

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 prohibits the Principal of an Academy from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an **advance application** has been made by the parent/carer and the Principal considers that there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application.

In order to have requests for a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances to be considered, the Academy will expect parents to contact the Principal **in writing using the appropriate Academy form ([Appendix B](#)) at least four weeks prior** to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur. The form is available from the Academy office.

The Principal will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request, as well as taking into account the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education. It is up to the discretion of the Principal to make a decision about whether a request may be considered an exceptional circumstance or not. The Principal will inform the parent in writing as to the decision made regarding the request. The Principal's decision is not subject to appeal. As Principals should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday or to attend a wedding for example.

If a leave of absence is granted, the Principal will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from the Academy and the agreed date of return. Should a leave of absence be granted, regulations are clear that any lateness in the return to the Academy from the granted period, may be recorded as unauthorised leave of absence.

If parents decide to take their children on holiday where the absence is unauthorised, the academy will follow the relevant home **Local Authority's Code of Conduct for Schools (Appendix C)** on leave of absence during term time, and inform the Education Welfare Service who may, on behalf of the Local Authority, issue a penalty notice

If a parent does not apply for leave but we believe that the pupil has been taken on holiday, then we will write to the parent to express our concern. The parent will be expected to provide contrary evidence to be received at the Academy by a specified date. Should the supporting documentation not be provided then the absence will be coded as unauthorised leave of absence and the Local Authority Education Welfare Service will be informed as above.

The Academy cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the Academy in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

8.1. Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents/carers should provide advance notice by way of a medical card and/or appointment letter for any time off school required for medical appointments. Time away from the Academy as a result of an appointment must be kept to a minimum. Children should not be absent for the whole day/whole morning/whole afternoon where this can be avoided.

No evidence of the appointment may lead to the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

8.2. Performances and activities, including paid work

The Academy will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the Local Authority which authorises the absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the Academy for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve remote teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the Local Authority (LA) who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil. Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the Academy. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the Principal to authorise the leave of absence for each day. Where a licence has not been obtained, the Principal will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

8.3. Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least four weeks advance.

The Academy will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The Academy will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The Academy may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

8.4. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least four weeks in

advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

9. Monitoring and Analysing Absence

The designated senior leader (Senior Attendance Champion) supported by the attendance officer/home-school link worker will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The Academy will collect weekly data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence for:

- The whole Academy cohort
- Individual year groups
- Individual pupils
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Looked after children (LAC) and pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)
- Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)
- Pupils at risk of severe absence (SA)

They will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on a regular basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes
- Particular days of poor attendance
- Historic trends of attendance and absence
- Barriers to attendance

Regular reports (verbal or written) will be provided to staff across the Academy to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The designated senior leader (Senior Attendance Champion) supported by the attendance officer/home-school link worker will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The Local Governing Committee will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the Principal in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Academies across St Bart's have granted the DfE access to their management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

The Academy supported by the Trust will also benchmark its attendance data against national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other Academies.

10. Persistent Absence

According to the Department for Education guidelines, a pupil will be considered as a persistent absentee if their attendance is 90% or lower (i.e. 10% or more sessions are missed). There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- Children in need / Children subject to Child Protection Plans
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Pupils who are part of traveller communities
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

We will work proactively with parents and pupils to improve their attendance. The Academy will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend the Academy. These may include:

- Meeting with pupils and parents to listen, and understand barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having
- Explain the help that is available
- Review any existing actions or interventions
- Establishing attendance improvement plans to remove barriers and provide additional support
- Leading regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the Academy will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the Academy's duty of care. The Academy will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

11. Severe Absence

According to the Department for Education guidelines, a pupil will be considered as a severe absentee if their attendance is 50% or lower (i.e. 50% or more sessions are missed).

Any pupil who is at the severe absence threshold is at serious risk of harm. There should be an intensive level of support and where appropriate challenge, including the use of legal interventions to secure improvement. We recognise that these children may find it more difficult to be in the Academy or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

Our Academy attendance teams will make this group a top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by the Academy, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g., an education, health, and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, we recognise that it is likely to constitute neglect and would therefore be treated as a safeguarding issue. The Academy will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

12. Vulnerable Pupils

We recognise that each case is different and there can be genuine barriers that result in a pupil's absence. We will work with families to remove any such barriers. If initial contact does not work with Academy staff, we will use other agencies to support the families. We will also use other agencies as appropriate as part of our approach to safeguarding. This includes early help.

Pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and we will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending the Academy difficult.

In line with the Academy SEND Policy and SBMAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the Academy will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The Academy will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the Academy has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend the Academy for long periods of time due to their health, the Academy will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the Academy for more than 15 school days over a school year
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work
- Help the pupil reintegrate at the Academy when they return
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about Academy events and clubs
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence

The Academy will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending the Academy may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the Academy may consider:

- Holding regular meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework

- Using an internal or external specialist
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and break times
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out
- Temporary late starts or early finishes
- Short term phased returns to the Academy where there has been a long absence
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs

Where a child is returning to the Academy following a period of hospital education or alternative provision (including home tuition), the Academy will work in partnership with parents/carers and external agencies (if appropriate), to assist a smooth reintegration back into the Academy, ensuring a flexible approach to meeting the pupil's needs. All relevant staff will be informed of the child's circumstances and a member of staff will be nominated to oversee the pupil's return. The pupil's peers will also be included to ensure they welcome the pupil back to the Academy and support the reintegration process.

13. Celebrating Good Attendance

We recognise the importance of acknowledging and celebrating good attendance however we also do not penalise children who have been unable to attend due to medical conditions, illness, or other exceptional circumstances. We also value where attendance has shown sustained improvement over time. The Academy will acknowledge excellent attendance and punctuality / improvement in attendance / punctuality in the following ways:

Daily Attendance and On Time Tokens

Termly 100% attendance rewards

Annual 100% attendance rewards

The Academy will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

14. Attendance Intervention

At frequent intervals, the designated senior leader (Senior Attendance Champion) supported by the attendance officer/home-school link worker, will review the pupils whose attendance (or punctuality) level is less than that of the Academy's attendance target. There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels. However, a decision may be made to intervene earlier at any stage if there is particular concern about a child's attendance. The Academy will use attendance data to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

Attendance Stage 1	<p>Attendance below 96% or 3 or more days absence during the first half of Autumn term:</p> <p>A standard letter is typically sent to any parent whose child's attendance has dropped just below 96% or where a child has been absent for 3 days or more during the first half of the Autumn term. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent of this attendance level and explains that the Academy will continue to monitor the child's attendance. Where the cause for a child's attendance dropping below 96% is very specific and clearly known and evidenced to the Academy, it may decide that such a letter is not required or appropriate. For</p>
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	<p>example, where a child has had a known and confirmed medical issue and where this is the only substantial cause for the lower attendance. In such circumstances, the child's attendance will be closely monitored – further reduction in attendance may prompt this initial letter, without the need to wait for the next formal half- termly audit.</p>
Attendance Stage 2	<p>Attendance between 90% and 95%</p> <p>The standard letter described above may be used again where a child's attendance sits at this level. This letter may be used twice in succession but if attendance remains at this level for a third time, it will be treated as for attendance which is below 90%. Alternatively, the Attendance Officer / Learning Mentor will telephone the parents to discuss concerns and offer support.</p>
Attendance Stage 3	<p>Attendance which is below 90%</p> <p>Attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year and is therefore a cause for concern. In such circumstances, parents will receive a specific letter which very clearly identifies that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except in exceptional circumstances where the attendance is not a cause for concern, such as known medical conditions). Parents are requested to attend an Attendance Clinic, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for the child's low attendance and agree appropriate support. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an attendance improvement plan, which will be shared with the parents and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting may vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the Attendance Officer, SENCo and pastoral staff. The Academy may also invite the Educational Welfare Officer. At this stage, the Academy should make it known and confirm in writing that absences cannot be authorised without medical evidence unless there are exceptional reasons which render this inappropriate (for example, a known medical condition); and that the Academy cannot routinely authorise absence where a child's attendance has reached this level of concern. A review date no longer than three weeks from the start of the plan will be agreed.</p> <p>Attendance which continues to decline below 90%</p> <p>Unless there are specific circumstances, the Academy will not be authorising absences at this stage. If attendance is not showing reasonable improvement within three weeks of the last communication with parents, then the Academy will take further action which will involve further meetings with the parents. It is likely that a referral for intervention by the Local Authority will be appropriate; advice from VIP Education / Local Authority will be sought.</p>
Lates Stage 1	<p>3 lates (code L or code U) during a half term</p> <p>A standard letter is typically sent to any parent whose child arrives late on at least 3 occasions during any half term. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent of this punctuality level. Where the cause for a child's lateness is very specific and clearly known, the Academy may decide that such a letter is not required or appropriate. In such circumstances, the child's punctuality will be closely monitored – further lateness may prompt this initial letter, without the need to wait for the next formal half- termly audit.</p>
Lates Stage 2	<p>Ongoing lateness (code L) despite previous letter or persistent lateness (code U) on more than 4 occasions</p> <p>Ongoing late arrivals or lateness resulting in unauthorised absence is a cause for concern. In such circumstances, parents will receive the relevant letter. Parents are requested to attend a meeting, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for the child's late arrivals and agree appropriate support. A punctuality improvement plan will be shared with the parents and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting may vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the Attendance Officer, SENCo and pastoral staff. The Academy may also invite their Education</p>

	Welfare Officer. A review date no longer than three weeks from the start of the plan will be agreed.
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The impact of interventions will be recorded in the form of a case study as directed by the Principal. Each Academy should produce at least two case studies per academic year.

15. Legal Intervention

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at the Academy at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority (LA).

Where there is persistent unauthorised absence, despite support being provided, and all avenues being exhausted, then the Academy will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

15.1. Attendance Contracts

An Attendance Contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the Academy or LA to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. This intervention identifies clear actions, with all parties named being accountable for their roles and responsibilities. It is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. Where the parental actions agreed at the Parenting Contract Meeting are not complied with and unauthorised absence continues, legal intervention may be instigated against the parent(s)/carer(s).

There is no obligation on the Academy or LA to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution.

15.2. Notices to Improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the Academy / LA may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve are issued in line with processes set out in the code of conduct for the Local Authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

15.3. Penalty notices

The Principal (or someone authorised by them) can in liaison with the Local Authority fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from an Academy, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the Academy/ LA will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the Academy has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the LA. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £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 the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the Academy has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, are not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

15.4. Education Supervision Order (ESO)

Where interventions have not been successful, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. LAs will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward.

Once an ESO is secured, a supervisor from the Local Authority will decide any actions or requirements. These may include:

- Requiring the parents to attend support meetings.
- Requiring the parents to attend a parenting programme.
- Requiring the parents to access support services.
- Requiring an assessment by an educational psychologist.
- Review meetings involving all parties to be held every 3 months.

Where parents persistently fail to comply with the directions given under the ESO, they may be guilty of an offence. Local Authorities can prosecute in the Magistrates Court for persistent non-compliance with the Order and parents (upon conviction) will be liable to a fine of up to £1,000.

15.5. Attendance Prosecution

If a child fails to attend school regularly at which they are registered then the parents/carers may be guilty of an offence and may be prosecuted by the Local Authority. Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. Where it is decided to pursue prosecution, only Local Authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including in the preparation of court documentation. Parents who are prosecuted and attend court because their child has not been attending school may be fined up to £2,500, a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

15.6. Parenting Order

The order requires a parent to comply with the arrangements specified in the order by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order which can include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions (e.g. parenting education or parenting support classes) where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's attendance for up to 3 months. Any breach of the order can lead to a fine of up to £1000.

16. Training of Staff

The Academy will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools and academies, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The Academy's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The Academy's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

17. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Trust.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix A – Attendance Codes used in our Academies

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	<p>Pupil is unable to attend as they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix B – Leave of Absence Request Form (below)

St. Bart's Academy Trust

Nantwich Primary Academy Leave of Absence Request

Leave of Absence Guidance Notes

- The granting of leave of absence in term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the Principal. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#).
- Parents are asked to consider very carefully the implications for their own child and others before making a decision to remove their child from the education that is provided in Academy term time. Children should only be removed in **exceptional circumstances**.
- Parents wishing the Academy to consider granting leave in term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send to the Principal the request form below. This form should be sent to the Academy in time for the request to be considered before the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any planned absence before receiving the Academy's decision regarding their request. In any event the request form must be received by the Academy **at least four weeks** before the leave in term time requested dates to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration. Completing this form **does not** mean your request has been approved.
- For medical absence, please attach an appointment card or letter.
- Where requests for a grant of leave in term time are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all parents are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent may receive a penalty notice.
- Should the Academy decide to grant the leave but, the child does not return to the Academy at the time s/he was expected to (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave in term time period) and, no information is available to the Academy to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, the Academy reserves the right to remove your child from the roll of the Academy. Where this happens, please be aware that it may not always be possible to re-admit your child to the Academy.

Penalties for unauthorised absence
<p>First Offence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Irregular Attendance or leave in Term Time the amount will be £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days. • This is reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
<p>Second Offence (Within 3 Years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Irregular Attendance or leave in Term Time the amount will be £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.
<p>Third Offence (Within 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The third time a Penalty Notice is issued for leave in Term Time or irregular attendance, the case may be presented to the Magistrates Court, where fines of up to £2500 per parent, per child can be imposed under Section 444 (1a). • Note: Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on Parents future DBS certificates as a 'Failure to safeguard a child's education'.

- If your leave of absence is either approved and you fail to ensure that your child returns to the Academy by the agreed date **or** your child takes leave when your leave of absence request is not approved, then the absence will be marked as 'unauthorised' on the attendance register.



St. Bart's Multi-Academy Trust Leave of Absence Request Form



Academy:	Nantwich Primary Academy and Nursery				
Name of Child:			Class:		
Date of Absence(s):	From:		To:		Total number of days:
My child will be accompanied during the leave by:					
(parent/carer) and (parent/carer)					
For Medical / Dental appointments during the school day:					
Time of Appointment:		Time child to be collected:		Time child will return:	
<i>If you are taking your child out of school for a medical appointment, you will need to provide a copy of the appointment letter/card / text</i>					
The exceptional circumstances and reason for this request are:					
<i>If necessary, please continue in a separate sheet and attach it to this form.</i>					
I have considered the implications for both my child and others in making this decision.					
Signed:			Date:		
Please return the completed form to the Academy office. The Academy will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether your request is authorised or not. Please do not confirm any holiday booking until you have confirmation of permission for the leave in term time from the Principal.					
For Academy use:					
Date request for leave in term time received by the Academy					
Authorised	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unauthorised	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Reason absence declined:					
Signed:			Date:		
Notification of decision - Date letter sent to both / all parent(s)					

Appendix C – Local Authority Code of Conduct

[Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

Local code of conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024

1. The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that penalty notices for school absence are issued in a manner that is fair and consistent across Cheshire East. The code sets out the arrangements for administering penalty notices in Cheshire East and must be adhered to by anyone issuing a penalty notice for school absence in this area. The code complies with relevant regulations and the Department for Education's national framework for penalty notices as set out in the '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance.

Consultation

2. This code has been drawn up in consultation with the headteachers and governing bodies of state-funded schools and the local police force.

Legal basis

3. Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, AP academies, and certain off-site places as set out in section 444A(1)(b).

4. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendments) set out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.

5. A penalty notice can only be issued by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them, an authorised local authority officer or a police constable.

6. The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)'. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.

7. A parent includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent or parents with day-to-day responsibility for the pupil's attendance or the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

Rationale

8. Research published by the Department for Education in May 2022 found pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

- Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.
- Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

9. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and often the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

10. Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a 'support first' approach in line with the DfE's '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.

11. The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where:

- support is not appropriate (e.g., a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular family.

When may a penalty notice for absence be appropriate?

12. When the national threshold has been met, when a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks¹, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- (a) **code G** (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
- (b) **code N** (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
- (c) **code O** (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
- (d) **code U** (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

13. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 allows parents / carers to be issued with a truancy penalty notice if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school on a regular basis. Following a Truancy Sweep, enquiries will be undertaken with the school of any pupil who is stopped. In cases where the school have recorded the absence of the pupil as unauthorised a penalty notice may be issued.

14. If in an individual case the local authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold.

15. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour, they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, Cheshire East will consider prosecution.

16. For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

Key considerations prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice for school absence

17. The following considerations will be made before issuing (or requesting that another authorised officer issues) a penalty notice to ensure consistency of approach:

In cases where support is not appropriate (for example, for holidays in term time), consider on a case by case basis:

- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?

In cases where support is appropriate, consider on a case-by-case basis:

- Has sufficient support already been provided? Telephone calls to the family when the child is absent to understand why the child is absent and to offer support with any issues the child may be having.
- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010

- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?

If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', then a penalty notice (or a notice to improve in cases where this is appropriate) will usually be issued.

Procedure for issuing a penalty notice or notice to improve

18. Although the legislation permits head teachers and the police to issue penalty Notices the authorised officers within Cheshire East Council's Attendance and Children Out of School Service will be the only individuals permitted to issue penalty notices in the Cheshire East area. This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, to allow schools to maintain good relationships with parents and ensure that they reinforce other enforcement sanctions.

19. Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an 'on the spot' action, for example during a Truancy Sweep. This will enable officers to ensure that all evidential requirements are in place and limit the health and safety risks associated with delivering such notices by hand.

20. Where schools, police or neighbouring local authorities ask Cheshire East Council to issue a penalty notice, in the case of an irregular attendance the request for the notice will be investigated and actioned by the Attendance and Children Out of School Service provided that:

- The circumstances of the case meet the criteria specified in this Code of Conduct.
- The pupil is registered at a Cheshire East school.
- Proportionate support has been offered.
- All necessary evidence is provided to the Attendance and Children Out of School Service to establish that an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 has been committed.
- Issuing a penalty notice would not conflict with another intervention strategy already in place or another enforcement sanction already being processed.
- There is a reasonable expectation that the use of a penalty notice would improve the child's school attendance or deter future unauthorised leave of absences.

21. In the case of Irregular school attendance, the Attendance and Children Out of School Service may issue a notice to improve when they are satisfied that all the relevant criteria are met, the service will then:

- Issue a formal written notice to improve school attendance to parents highlighting the possibility of a penalty notice being issued.
- Set an improvement period for twenty school days (four weeks). Pupils must have no unauthorised absences within this period or show significant improvement in attendance during this period.
- Notify school of the notice to improve, and the monitoring period.
- At the end of the monitoring period school will send the Attendance and Children Out of School Service a copy of the registration certificate.
- After due consideration of the facts of the case, the Attendance and Children Out of School service will only issue a penalty notice through the post at the end of the improvement period, if there have been unauthorised absences or no improvement in attendance.

22. The LA will inform the school about whether penalty notices are paid, withdrawn, or prosecuted for non-payment. This information will be communicated to schools by email the term after the penalty notice was issued.

Notice to improve

23. A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a notice to improve would have any impact on a parent's behaviour (e.g., because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

24. Where the penalty notice is requested from a school in response to an unauthorised leave of absence (for holidays in term time), the Attendance and Children Out of School Service will not issue a twenty-day improvement period. School will provide the following evidence for the Attendance and Children Out of School service to consider:

- A declaration form signed by the Head teacher.
- A copy of a communication, posted on website or a letter/newsletter, sent to all parents during the academic year, clearly explaining the procedure regarding requests for leave of absence which states that holidays taken in term time will receive a penalty notice.
- A copy of the leave of absence request from the parent, including a copy of the response informing the parent that the leave of absence has not been authorised. This should also inform the parent that they may receive a penalty notice. If no leave of absence request has been received but school have reason to believe that the family have taken a holiday in term time, this criteria may be waived.
- A copy of the letter sent by the school to the parent advising that the absence has been unauthorised and that the school has referred the matter to the Local Authority and that a penalty notice may be issued.
- A copy of the pupil's registration certificate signed by the Head Teacher as set out in section 566(1)(c) of the Education Act 1996

Working with other local authorities

25. Where pupils move between local authority areas, Cheshire East can be contacted on crossborder.penaltynotice@cheshireeast.gov.uk to find out if penalty notices have been issued previously.

26. Where pupils attend school in Cheshire East but live in a different local authority. Cheshire East will liaise with the home local authority in cases where a penalty notice is being considered and support is appropriate, and that support is being provided by the home local authority.

Right of appeal

27. There is no right of appeal, but where a parent contests the issuing of a penalty notice they can opt to face proceedings in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444, where all of the issues relating to their penalty notice can be fully argued.

¹ A school week means any week (Monday to Sunday) in which there is at least one school session. The 10 school-week period when the national threshold applies may span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).



ST. BART'S

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