GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

Pupil Attendance Policy

Version 2.0

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1 Aims

The aim of this policy is to secure the highest rates of attendance for all our pupils. It ensures that we effectively meet our obligations with regards to academy attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024).

Each academy will have an attendance policy that aligns to this trust policy and will include how the academy will:

- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promote good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend academy

2 Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and academy attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern academy attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

All work on attendance will also take place in the context of our approaches to safeguarding, behaviour, alternative provision, admissions and elective home education.

3 Background

The law entitles every child of compulsory academy age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at academy, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that academy regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the academy 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.

The most effective academies consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at academy, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. They also recognise that the foundation to good attendance is a high quality education, delivered in a calm, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend academy and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, academies and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve consideration around the academic and pastoral curriculum, behaviour support and procedures for more vulnerable children, such as those with special educational needs or mental health and wellbeing needs. Academies are expected to consider the effective use of resources, including grants such as the Pupil Premium to support children at risk of, or with, attendance concerns.

Attendance is a key priority for the Trustees and the Trust Board monitor attendance across the trust and the application of this policy. We expect all staff involved to have a sound knowledge of good practice in this area and the relevant national and local processes.

4 GAT expectations of academies

In line with DfE expectations, to manage and improve attendance effectively, all academies in GAT are expected to:

- develop and maintain a whole academy **culture** that promotes the benefits of high attendance and ensures all staff understand that attendance is everyone's business
- have a published academy **attendance policy** which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- accurately complete **attendance registers** and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence quickly
- accurately complete **admission registers**
- retain attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered
- regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence **data** to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Follow closely the DfE guidance on the use of **part time timetables**
- build **strong relationships** with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- **share information** and work collaboratively with other relevant local partners, and particularly local authorities, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Follow the national framework for **penalty notices**
- Have a named senior leader responsible for attendance – **attendance champion**
- Make sure 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
- The academy's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

5 Academy level attendance policies

In line with DfE guidance, all GAT academies are expected to have their own Attendance Policy that sets out:

- the attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents, including start and close of the day, register closing times and the processes for requesting leaves of absence and informing the academy of the reason for an unexpected absence
- the name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in the academy (also known as the 'senior attendance champion')
- information and contact details of the academy staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day to day basis (such as a tutor, attendance officer etc) and for more detailed support on attendance (such as a head of year, pastoral lead or family liaison officer etc)
- the academy's day to day processes for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence
- how the academy is promoting and incentivising good attendance
- the academy's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most
- the academy's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority
- the point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought if support is not appropriate (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with
- how the academy will work with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where academy transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-academy barriers
- how the academy will communicate with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- communication of the academy's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- expectations for how parents should request a leave of absence and the evidence that will be required
- the academy's approach towards pupils absent from academy due to mental or physical ill health, SEND, complex barriers to attendance or pupils returning to academy after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence
- how the academy will monitor attendance of pupils with a social worker and communicate as necessary.

The policy must be easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the academy's website. It will be reviewed annually.

6 Registers

In line with DfE requirements, academy leaders must ensure the register is taken at the start of each morning session of each academy day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion there must be a record of whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstance.

Academy leaders in GAT are expected to ensure that:

- registers are kept up to date
- register closing times are specified and adhered to
- registers are accurately completed using attendance and absence codes as defined by the DfE
- there are effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence quickly
- attendance data is shared with the DfE.

7 Persistent and severe absence

The most important element to attendance work are the everyday strategies to develop a culture of high expectations of attendance and punctuality and the work with families to prevent absence becoming a concern.

GAT academies are expected to have bespoke strategies to improve the attendance of pupils at risk of 'Persistent' or 'Severe' absence:

- 'Persistence Absence' is where absence escalates, and pupils miss 10% or more of academy (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full academy year).
- 'Severe Absence' is when pupil is absent from academy more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of academy).

These pupils are likely to be finding it difficult to be in academy or face significant barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. These categories of absence will be particularly monitored and analysed at an academy and trust level. All GAT academies are expected to provide information to local partners about these cohorts so that pupils who need targeted attendance support receive it as quickly as possible.

8 Legal intervention

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time) the relevant Local Authority will take forward legal intervention to formalise support and/or enforce attendance as below.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the academy 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 academy 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

Whilst it is the local authority's responsibility to take forward Parenting Contracts, Supervision Orders or Prosecutions, academies must work closely with the local authority's Academy Attendance Support Team to provide appropriate information. Academy leaders are also expected to be familiar with their local authority arrangements so that they can be clear with families, where appropriate, about the process so that this route is avoided wherever possible.

9 Role of the Trust Board

In line with DfE expectations, Trustees:

- recognise the importance of attendance and promote it across the trust's ethos and policies
- regularly review trust and academy level attendance data to ensure leaders are focusing improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- ensure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, specifically that
    - all academies have a thorough and effective attendance policy
    - all academies are complying with their policy
    - all academies are keeping registers up to date and completing them accurately as per DfE guidance
    - all academies are working effectively with local partners, particularly in regard to the most vulnerable children and most challenging cases
    - all academies ensure academy staff receive adequate training on attendance
    - effective practice on attendance management and improvement is shared across academies in the Trust.