



Marches Academy Trust

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Attendance Policy

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1. Trust Attendance Mission Statement

Marches Academy Trust seek to ensure that all students receive a full-time education, maximising the opportunities for all to realise their true potential. We strive to create a learning environment where all students have the skills, knowledge and recall to access the full curriculum and achieve success every day.

We believe that success in school underpins all our efforts to improve attendance. Where student's attendance is impacting on achievement all school staff within the Trust will work with students and their families to support them in getting their children to school, on time, and every day.

We aim to support and encourage attendance, and resort to statutory action only as a last resort.

2. Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. This policy should not be seen in isolation, but as a strand that underpins all other policies related to the well-being and behaviour of children.

Staff, Governors and Trustees expect full and punctual attendance from all children.

Parents/carers of registered students have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents/carers may be reported to the Local Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always requested.

Staff, Governors and Trustees believe that:

- there is a link between regular attendance and academic achievement;
- regular attendance encourages children to benefit from the whole range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities on offer;
- full attendance is a duty, and a crucial factor in determining personal responsibility and a good work ethic.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (e.g. illness or other unavoidable cause).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained, and children who arrive at school too late to receive a present mark in the register.

Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, parents/carers and child. If a child is reluctant to attend, referral may be made to the school counsellor, youth

worker or Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Other outside agencies may also be invited to become involved, e.g. Early Help or the School Nursing Service. Schools may offer Parenting Support as part of a 'team approach' to improve attendance.

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage, and to work with staff to resolve problems together.

All Trust Schools have a named Education Welfare Officer. EWOs always act in a supporting role, and court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers for poor or non-attendance is always as a last resort. Parents/Carers are encouraged to contact the Shropshire Council Education Access Service if they feel they need independent advice on school attendance matters.

Schools will keep parents informed of their child's attendance and provide updates on Attendance Procedures at least termly.

3. Procedures

Schools within the Marches Academy Trust apply the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

3.1. Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is unfit for school, parents/carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence no later than 9.00 am. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the local attendance officer, on a case-by-case basis; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing a valid reason for absence.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger children, day trips, hairdresser appointments etc. Leave of Absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g., bereavement) or for medical appointments which take place during school time.

Primary School's operate a '48-hour rule' in cases of diarrhoea and vomiting bugs. Secondary schools may choose to operate a 48-hour rule, in these cases, this will be made clear to parents/carers.

We may ask that children bring a written note, signed by the parent/carer, for each period of absence. In exceptional circumstances, further proof of a child's illness such as evidence of a prescription or appointment card may be requested. In very exceptional cases the EWO may ask for a written Doctor's note.

Parents/carers are required to inform the school of the reasons for their child's absence. It is up to school if any absence is authorised and simply stating 'not in' or 'unwell' gives us insufficient information to make an informed decision, and it may therefore be recorded as unauthorised.

3.2. Absence without explanation

If a child is absent at morning registration, and the school has not received an explanation by 9.00am, the local attendance officer will contact the parent/carer by either text, telephone, or email.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school and that emergency contact details are kept updated.

School Staff may visit home if an absence message has not been received in order to ascertain reasons for absence.

3.3. Holidays

This school is pro-active in discouraging parents/carers from taking children out of school for holidays during term time. We consider this action inappropriate and harmful to the education of the child. Taking children out of school without authorisation from the Headteacher could result in parents/carers receiving a Truancy Penalty Notice.

Headteachers are only allowed to authorise Leave of Absence when an application has been made more than two weeks in advance, and it is felt there are exceptional circumstances; the family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance.

The Headteacher will only authorise applications if it is highly unlikely that the event will occur again in a child's school life.

Local attendance officers will actively investigate any absence where there is a suspicion that a child might be absent without good reason. This may include conducting a home visit or reporting the absence to the EWO.

Headteachers may co-ordinate absence requests where siblings are at different schools. The school Absence Request Form details the schools who collaborate in this area.

3.4. Punctuality

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for that session unless the lateness is unavoidable (e.g. late bus or medical appointment). Parents/carers are expected to ensure that children are on time for registration.

There may be cases where students arrive late to school, miss registration and parents subsequently receive an absence message. Parents/carers must contact school if their child has been sent to school but then received an absence message.

Children arriving after the register has opened will be marked as late.

Children arriving after registration has closed (half an hour after the register has opened) will be marked as absent/late after registration has closed.

A sanction for lateness may be issued in line with the Trust's Behaviour for Learning Policy.

In Secondary schools it is important that students move from lesson to lesson quickly in order to reduce disruption and maximise learning time for each subject. Schools may operate a Punctuality Watch List and students who are persistently late to lessons throughout the day will be monitored closely. They may be issued a sanction in accordance with the Trust Behaviour for Learning Policy.

3.5. Truancy

Truancy from school is treated as a serious issue and will always be communicated to parents/carers. Following truancy, a child will be tracked for a period of time to ensure good

patterns of attendance are re-established. A sanction may be issued in line with the Trust's Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Local attendance officers will make every effort to contact parents/carers if it is discovered that a child has gone missing from school. In order for us to do this, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that contact details, including emergency contacts, are updated regularly.

Schools will not automatically report missing children to the Police, this responsibility rests with parents/carers. However, if there are overriding safeguarding concerns, and school has not been able to contact parents/carers, the following agencies may be contacted:

- Social Services
- Police

3.6. Attendance monitoring

Local attendance officers monitor children's attendance on a regular basis and may contact parents/carers if attendance is causing concern.

The EWO monitors attendance weekly, meeting with pastoral staff and the local attendance officers, to identify causes for concern. If a pattern of attendance gives cause for concern, or attendance drops below target the EWO will contact the parent/carer. If non-attendance continues the Local Authority may prosecute or issue a fixed penalty fine. Each parent can be issued with a notice for each child so two parents with two children can potentially be issued with four notices.

Failure to provide a reason for absence will be investigated by the local attendance officer, or EWO.

Children will be informed of their attendance, and how the school views their attendance, by their tutor.

Secondary Schools

100% - Gold
98% plus – Silver
96% plus – Bronze
Below 96% - Amber
Below 90% - Red

Primary Schools

100% Gold
98% plus – Silver
97% plus - Bronze
Below 97% - Amber
Below 90% - Red

School will inform parents/carers of any attendance concerns by letter. Letters of concern may be sent in the following circumstances:

- Attendance has fallen to 97% in primary schools and 96% in secondary schools.
- Attendance does not improve following the sending of a Letter of Concern.
- A particular pattern of attendance is giving cause for concern.
- Schools do not receive reasons for absence, a response to attendance letters, or there are overriding welfare, health or safeguarding concerns.

Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss attendance and progress with a member of staff.

3.7. Incentives

The school endeavours to improve the attendance of all children. Where appropriate a

particular cohort may be targeted with further specific intervention. Excellent attendance may be rewarded through the school's rewards programme.

3.8. Elective home education

If schools receive written notification from parents/carers that they wish to home educate their child, we will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove their name from the school roll. We will not seek to prevent parents/carers from choosing to home educate their child, neither will we seek to encourage them to do so as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to poor attendance.

4. School specific procedures

It is recognised that all Trust schools have their own distinctive character, and that their registration procedures may differ from school to school. However, the principles of this Policy will be applied equally across all Trust Schools.

5. Further information for parents/carers

Parents/ carers are encouraged to read further guidance here <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Policy owner	Trust Safeguarding Lead
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Summary of last revision	Updated vision and changes to reflect expanded number of schools in Trust.
Related Policies/Documents	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures