David Ross Education Trust

Broadening Horizons

Attendance Policy

Document Management Information

Applicable to:	All staff in all Academies including individuals employed by the Trust, contractors and agency staff. All Members and Trustees.
Development and Consultation:	The policy has been developed with reference to statutory guidance.
Dissemination:	The policy will be available to staff and parents via the Trust's Policy Centre, Trust and academy websites.
Implementation:	Staff in all academies will use this policy and most especially in fulfilling their responsibilities for pupil attendance and safeguarding.
Training:	All staff will receive annual training in the academy attendance strategy. Designated attendance staff will receive routine training relevant to their skills in promoting pupil welfare, recording and analysing attendance information.
Review Frequency:	Three Years unless there is a statutory requirement. Policies will also be reviewed earlier if needed in the light of new evidence/legislation/guidance.
Policy Author:	Juliet Jaggs, Director of Quality Assurance.
Executive Policy Owner:	Mark Neild, Deputy CEO and Director of Secondary Education.
Approval by:	Education Committee
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1. Introduction

1.1. The David Ross Education Trust (the Trust), all its employees and volunteers, are committed to promoting the welfare of all children. The policy reflects its responsibilities in ensuring that academies within the Trust are safe, calm and have productive environments, where staff and students feel supported and that their work is valued, such that they want to attend.

1.2. The Trust believes that all pupils benefit from a world class education and therefore expects regular school attendance. To this end the Trust will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance. The Trust understands that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, academies will 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.

2. Policy Scope

2.1. This policy applies to all academies in the David Ross Education Trust.

2.2. It is the responsibility of all individuals working at academies within the Trust to familiarise themselves with this policy and comply with its provisions.

2.3. The policy will be made available to parents and carers via each academy website.

3. Policy Aims

3.1. The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure effective practices for promoting good attendance involve close interaction with each academy's efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium.
- Ensure that good attendance and punctuality is a part of the endemic culture in all or our academies.
- Emphasise the importance of, and secure from pupils, high levels of attendance and punctuality at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.
- Make explicit to all relevant parties their roles and legal responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- Ensure that the Trust attendance policy is applied consistently and fairly but also takes into account individual circumstances.

4. Definitions

4.1. **Trust** means all Academies within the David Ross Education Trust, as well as Head Office and central services operations.

4.2. **Senior Executive Leadership Team** means the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") and the direct line management reports of the CEO (the "Directors").

4.3. **Persistent absence:** Where pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year)

4.4. **Severe absence:** pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).

4.5. **Child missing Education:** (CME) Children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

4.6. **Pupil not attending regularly** (PNAR) when a pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive days without authorisation.

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

5.1. This Policy takes its legal framework from the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments
- DfE School Attendance Guide (Sept 2022)
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022
- Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities 2014

6. Each academy's strategy to promote good attendance

6.1. High expectations for good attendance and punctuality will be at the heart of each academy's ethos and day to day life. Academies will communicate these expectations regularly to pupils and parents throughout all available channels and keep parents well informed of their child's attendance. Each academy is committed to implementing the following steps in improving attendance:

- **Expect:** Aspire to high standards of attendance for all pupils and parents.
- **Monitor:** Rigorously use and analyse attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance at individual and group level - paying particular attention to pupils with SEND, those with physical or mental health conditions and those with known vulnerabilities. Each academy will also analyse data to identify individual pupils or cohorts with, as yet unknown needs.
- **Listen and understand:** Talk with parents and pupils to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all parties can work to resolve them.
- **Facilitate support:** Remove barriers in school and help parents and pupils access the support available outside school.
- **Formalise support:** Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond.
- **Enforce:** Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

6.2. Each academy will establish its own distinctive strategy to promote good attendance in accordance with these steps and this will be reflected in the appendix to this policy. Each academy is expected to include the following features within that strategy:

- How the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance.
- Considerations and mitigations with respect to the academy contextual safeguarding appendix and the risks to pupils' good attendance evident there.
- 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 provision for academy-based interventions as well as access to wider support services available to help 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.
- Set out the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent to proactively manage lateness.

6.3. Academies will enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the academy has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the academy will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

6.4. Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance. Each academy will use the electronic management information system Bromcom to keep their attendance and admission registers. Registers are legal records and the academy will preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. All staff at the academy will accurately complete attendance registers, taking the attendance register in the morning and once during the afternoon session. This will include monitoring and responding to the attendance and absence of pupils attending alternative providers and on managed moves to other local academies.

6.5. Academies will have an effective first day calling processes in place to follow-up absence which will include contacting the parent, and where appropriate foster carers/ social workers or safeguarding leads at the alternative provider. Attendance officers will conduct home visits to support families as appropriate.

6.6. Academies will 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. Academies have a duty to investigate any unexplained absences. They will build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them. Academies will share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe. Academies will hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy or the local authority consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement with the academy. They will refer pupils to wider partners quickly and support pupils back into school following lengthy or unavoidable periods of absence.

7. The academy's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence

7.1. Support for pupils will include mentoring, careers advice, college placements, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision. Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. Where engagement in support is proving challenging, academies will formalise support, clearly explaining the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future. Academy leaders will continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences. Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, academies will work with the local authority to put in place a parenting contract, an education supervision order or they will issue a fixed penalty notice.

7.2. Academy leaders might also intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50%

attendance). In extremely rare circumstances, academies might prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

7.3. Academies will agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly (PNAR) or have missed ten school days or more without permission. The academy and the local authority will work jointly, making reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register.

8. Support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and those with physical and mental health conditions.

8.1. Academies have the same high expectations for the good attendance of pupils with SEND and those with physical or mental health conditions, but they understand that some of these pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Academies will put additional support in place where necessary to help these pupils access their full-time education. This will include making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Academies will work with external partners including the local authority or health services, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

8.2. Academies will work with parents in ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil's education, health and care plan is delivered. In addition, academies will work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.

8.3. Academies will establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements. They will ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

8.4. They will ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and ASC meetings and in collaboration with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary. Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

9. Part time timetables

9.1. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

9.2. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a

parttime timetable, the academy has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and will therefore treat absence as authorised.

10. Parents, carers and pupils' commitment to good attendance

10.1. 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. Where parents decide to have their child registered at a DRET academy, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school 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. Where authorisation is not given, parents should ensure that their child attends school as normal. Where a pupil is unexpectedly unable to attend the academy, parents are expected to contact the academy to inform attendance staff of the reason for their child's absence.

10.2. Pupils are expected to attend school on time every school day unless there is good reason not to do so. They should arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day. Pupils should always share any concerns that they may have in relation to their attendance and wellbeing with one of the trusted adults at the academy.

11. Record keeping

11.1. The Trust will retain records evidencing compliance with this policy, as set out in the Trust's Data Retention Policy.

11.2. Clear and comprehensive details regarding case work for each child, including concerns, subsequent actions, decisions and outcomes will be recorded electronically. Where this information includes sensitive information and safeguarding concerns, the records will be kept confidential, and stored securely and separately in the safeguarding management system, accessible only by those authorised to do so from the safeguarding leaders. Records will include a robust chronology, relevant internal and external information with respect to the strategy in place to improve the child's attendance in the context of other vulnerabilities. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will work alongside the attendance team to assure the quality of each entry and to ensure that they represent an accurate case history.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

12.1. The Principal

12.1.1. The principal will ensure effective attendance management as follows:

- The principal will hold all staff accountable to this policy and in fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard pupils, especially by completing registers promptly and accurately in order that all pupils' whereabouts are known and following up unaccountable absence efficiently. The principal will ensure that the senior leader responsible for attendance is familiar with the local authority strategy to improve attendance, including support for pupils with physical and mental health conditions, the Early Help offer and the local offer for pupils with SEND. In addition, the senior leader should seek to understand other partner organisations that might be available to support families. This information should be collated and recorded in the Academy Safeguarding and Child Protection policy appendix.
- The principal, senior leaders, including the DSL, and attendance officers, including the attendance welfare coordinator and the attendance information officer in secondary academies, will analyse attendance data regularly, and at least weekly. This is in order that they can identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil

cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the academy and develop strategies to address them. Secondary academies will also look further into patterns of attendance within sessions to ensure all pupils are attending timetabled lessons.

- The principal will assure the implementation of the academy system for communicating this analysis to class teachers and tutors to maintain high expectations for robust practice and for their support in working with pupils to promote their improved attendance. Attendance teams will also collaborate routinely and at least weekly to identify the support required for specific groups of children, with the DSL, the SENCO and the pupil premium lead. Where absence intensifies, so will the support and intervention.
- Termly and yearly data analysis will be generated in collaboration with the Trust data team. This should include analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance. The Trust data team will routinely identify pupils at risk of persistent and severe attendance as well as those already reaching these levels. The academy will also obtain routine attendance reports for all pupils attending alternative providers and on managed moves, while they are still registered at the academy.
- The data team will support academies in benchmarking all attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement. This data analysis, the leadership response and its impact on the attendance of all pupils as well as those who are persistently or severely absent, will be shared routinely with the Academy Regional Director, the Director of Primary or Secondary Education as appropriate and also to the Trustees via the Education Committee and the Full Trust Board and separately at each meeting of the Academy Scrutiny Committee.

12.1.2. The principal is responsible for considering requests for a leave of absence. This will only be in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The principal will determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. It is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

12.2. **Trust Attendance Leads for Primary and Secondary**

12.2.1. The Trust attendance leads for primary and secondary will maintain oversight of attendance in their respective phases of education offering mentoring support for attendance officers as well as advice and guidance in reducing barriers to good attendance for vulnerable families. The attendance leads will contribute to the formal review of academy attendance data in accordance with the termly and annual routines established with the Trust data Team and the Trustees.

13. Reporting and Consequences of Non-Compliance

13.1. Significant deviations from this policy or its associated procedures must be monitored and reported to the Trust primary or secondary attendance lead, as appropriate, in the first instance, and thereafter to the academy regional director. Policy deviations for which remediation is planned must be approved and tracked to resolution in accordance with the Trust disciplinary policy.

14. Policy Status

14.1. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment.

15. Related Policies

15.1. This policy is related to the following other Trust policies:

- Safeguarding and Child protection policy
- Exclusion policy
- SEND policy
- Supporting pupils with medical needs
- Pupil premium strategy
- Behaviour and Ethos policy

Appendix A – Attendance Policy Checklist