



St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Diocesan Multi Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Date Approved and Minuted	MAT Board	December 2019
Date of Next Review	MAT Board	December 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust Schools acknowledges there are clear links between:

- Attendance and attainment
- Attendance and safeguarding

1.2 The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust is committed to providing a high-quality education for all its pupils. By attending school every day and on time children and young people can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

1.3 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility to ensure good school attendance and all have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.4 This policy applies to all children registered at St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust Schools and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

1.5 St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that ***"parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly"***.

1.6 The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust Schools use the Local Authority recommended attendance codes.

2. Aims & Objectives

2.1 This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our schools are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

2.2 Throughout this policy St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust aims to:

- To improve pupils' achievement by promoting high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve 100% for all pupils, apart from those with acute or chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to non-statutory school age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- To make explicit St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust registration procedures.

3. Registration Procedures

3.1 Registration is an important part of the school day. St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust acknowledges that attendance registers are legal documents, may be presented as evidence in a Court of Law; therefore, all staff undertake to mark registers accurately at all times.

3.2 Morning registration is viewed as a time to welcome pupils into school and help prepare them for the day ahead, as well as an opportunity to explain any changes to the day's usual routines.

3.3 Registers at St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust schools are taken at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions

3.4 The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust schools attendance registers are available for inspection by authorised personnel during normal school hours.

4. School's Responsibilities

4.1 All the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust staff place a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality. They also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

4.2 All St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust Schools report school attendance figures to the Local Authority termly and to the Trust half-termly

4.3 The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust staff are responsible for ensuring that pupils have good attendance by:-

- ensuring that attendance registers are kept accurately;
- differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence – only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence);
- responding to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care;
- contacting parents when they are concerned about a pupil's absences, and recording the contact;
- consulting with the Education Welfare Service if a pupil's attendance continues to give cause for concern;
- promoting regular school attendance (for example, by contacting parents on the first day of absence if parents have not contacted the school);
- acknowledging good or improved attendance of individual pupils and classes.

5. Responsibility of Parents/Carers

5.1 Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Punctuality

5.2 It is the parent/carers responsibility:

- To ensure that their children arrive to school on time.
- The morning register will be called promptly at 8.50 am. Any child arriving after 8.50am but before 9.00am will be marked as late (L). Any child arriving after the registers have closed at 9.10am will be marked as unauthorised late (U).
- The afternoon register will be called promptly at 1.00 pm. Any child arriving after 1.00pm but before 1.10pm will be marked as late (L). Any child arriving after the registers have closed at 1.10pm will be marked as unauthorised late (U).
- To ensure children who arrive after the registers has been called report to the school office to sign in.

Absences

5.3 It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9:30am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office or emailing
- To provide medical evidence, if requested, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer. Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:30am.

5.4 Illness/Medical Absences

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc.

In the case of a chronic illness or other long term illness issue then a letter or note from the GP or other health professional to state the child is not fit for school or stating the times and days each week the child will be fit for school will be required. This will give clarity to both the school and the child, plus the parent/carer.

The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday or if the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.

6. Term-Time Holiday Absences

6.1 Parents/carers are expected to take their child(ren) on holiday during the 14 weeks school holidays to minimise the impact of their child(ren) missing their education.

6.2 Parents/carers requesting a term time holiday must complete a leave of absence request form in advance of the trip (ideally at least 4 weeks prior). These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and referred to a MAT panel consisting of Head Teachers.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally 4 weeks prior).

7. Fixed Penalty Fines & Court

7.1 A fixed penalty notice fine will be issued when 6 or more unauthorised absence sessions (not necessarily consecutively) have occurred (3 whole days in total). School will give a reminder/warning about attendance when 4 unauthorised sessions have been recorded (2 whole days in total) and then expect to see no further unauthorised absences.

7.2 If parents/carers choose to take their child(ren) on a term-time holiday without the Headteacher's authorisation, the child(ren)'s absences will be marked as unauthorised.

7.3 The penalty notice fine is £60 if paid within 21 days; please note this is £60 for each child, for each parent/carer (i.e. 2 children, 2 parent/carers = £240 fine) increasing to £120 between 21 and 28 days.

7.4 The fines are paid to the Local Authority. The LA acts on behalf of both schools and academies. The fines are used to cover enforcement costs associated with the issue, collection or prosecution, in the event of non-payment. The monies also go towards early help projects within Suffolk.

7.5 Second and subsequent unauthorised term-time holidays may be referred to the Local Authority for legal action. In these cases an Education Welfare Officer will be asked to investigate and will decide with the school what the best course of action should be.

8. Absence for Other Reasons

8.1 It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To inform the office, in writing, of the need for leave in circumstances which are known in advance.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

Unexplained Absence

8.2 When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority.

8.3 Regular monitoring of all pupils' attendance is carried out by the Education Welfare Officer. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer and may be invited to an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

9. Role of the Education Welfare Officer

9.1 To investigate absence which exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required.

9.2 To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.

9.3 To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the school and Education Attendance Service.

10. Persistent Latecomers

10.1 Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after the register has closed are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after the times of 9.00am or 1.10pm.

10.2 Children who repeatedly attend school late after 9.00am or after 1.10pm will be brought to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer, who may invite parents to attend a meeting in school to discuss the persistent lateness, this may follow or instead of the issue of a fixed penalty fine.