Cygnus
Academies Trust
Policies

Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

- Cygnus Academies Trust is committed to providing the best possible educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to fully benefit from education, regular attendance is vital and we will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

- It is the policy of our schools to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our schools will actively promote and encourage high levels of attendance for all pupils, recognising that individual circumstances, including illness, medical needs and additional needs, may affect attendance.

- Our schools will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and of course a legal responsibility. There is a need to establish strong home/school links and communication systems that we can utilise whenever there is concern about attendance.

- If there are problems that affect a pupil's attendance we will identify, investigate and work in partnership with parents, pupils and other agencies to resolve problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will provide appropriate support and targeted intervention to address barriers to attendance and support the pupil to access the full-time education to which they are entitled, wherever possible.

- A senior member of school staff has oversight for whole school attendance – see Appendix B. They are responsible for ensuring registers are completed accurately, communication is made with parents where clear concerns exist, liaison is carried out with the Attendance Service and other appropriate agencies, the Headteacher is briefed about attendance issues, statistical returns for legitimate agencies are made as and when they are required, and records of concerns are kept.

Parents should note that 'It is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child is receiving a full-time education in accordance with Section 7 Education Act 1996. Failure to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually can result in you being issued with a Penalty Notice or prosecuted for an offence contrary to Section 444(1) Education Act 1996'.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Promoting good punctuality
- Reducing absence, including persistent (90% and under) and severe absence (50% and under)
- 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's statutory guidance, *Working together to improve school attendance*, and has regard to the relevant legislation and statutory guidance governing school attendance.

This includes:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Department for Education statutory guidance: Working together to improve school attendance
- Department for Education statutory guidance: Children missing education

This policy also refers to the Department for Education's guidance on the school census and attendance codes. The 2024 registration regulations replaced the previous registration framework and made the national attendance codes mandatory.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Trust

The Trust is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance and punctuality across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures and punctuality for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring and analysing school-level absence data, including the use of DFE data tools, and reporting this to the Trust
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance and punctuality strategies
- Making or authorising requests for penalty notices and other statutory intervention, where appropriate, in accordance with the national framework and local authority arrangements

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis and comparisons to national data
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance and punctuality identified through data
- Evaluating targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

3.4 Designated staff dealing with attendance

Staff dealing with attendance are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with the school's attendance service and local authority to address attendance concerns, including persistent absence and punctuality
- Supporting the headteacher (or staff authorised by the headteacher) to issue fixed penalty notices

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office as soon as possible after morning and afternoon registration.
- The attendance register is a legal record and is maintained electronically on Arbor. Any pupil arriving after the start of the school day will be recorded using the appropriate attendance code. Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, Code U will be used in accordance with DfE guidance.
- Consistently promoting high attendance expectations with children and parents.
- Arranging conversations and meetings with parents where a child's attendance is becoming a concern.

Where concerns persist, teachers should liaise with the PSA/FLO and/or a Senior Leader where appropriate. Further action will be agreed to address the concerns, as outlined under 'Procedures'.

3.6 TAs

TAs are responsible for:

- Consistently promoting high attendance expectations with children and parents.
- Supporting teachers to have informal conversations with parents where a child's attendance is becoming a concern.

3.7 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls, emails and other communication from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Carry out first day calling when no message has been received by the parent

- Ensure any notes received from parents are recorded on the child's attendance record on Arbor
- Liaise with relevant staff about attendance concerns
- Produce attendance data as required

3.8 Other school staff

Other school staff will:

- Welcome children back to school
- Consistently promote high attendance

3.9 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day and on time
- Call the school or use Studybugs to report their child's absence by the start of the school day on the first day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence as required), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Not remove their child from school during term time without first requesting leave of absence from the school. Parents/carers should understand that leave can only be authorised in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

3.10 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

Poor attendance disadvantages children. We aim to ensure that the children in our schools attend regularly and on time, and where this is not the case, staff follow a staged procedure designed to encourage consistent attendance.

The performance indicator by which we judge the success of our efforts is set each year by our average attendance figure.

Regular attendance is essential in enabling pupils to benefit fully from their education. Schools will monitor attendance carefully and identify emerging patterns of absence at an early stage. Attendance below 96% may prompt additional monitoring depending on the individual pupil's circumstances and pattern of absence. A pupil is considered persistently absent where they miss 10% or more of possible sessions and severely absent where they miss 50% or more of possible sessions.

Attendance concerns will always be considered in context, including any known medical needs, SEND, safeguarding concerns or other barriers to attendance. Appropriate support will be offered and reviewed with the pupil and family.

4. Principles

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration process and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law.

- Complete accurate registers at the beginning of each morning and at the beginning of each afternoon.
- Encourage parents/carers to contact staff early on the first day of absence.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Work to ensure parents/carers recognise their vital role, and legal responsibility, to ensure good attendance.
- Identify, investigate and work in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve barriers to attendance.
- Provide appropriate support, signposting and referrals to outside agencies for any child requiring additional wellbeing or mental health support.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their individual responsibility in regard to school attendance.
- Attendance procedures will be regularly evaluated by senior staff and the Trust and reported to Trustees.
- Work to ensure that all pupils feel supported and valued. Pupils returning following absence will be welcomed back positively and, where appropriate, supported to address missed learning without creating additional barriers to attendance.

5. Procedures

- Trust schools use Studybugs in conjunction with Arbor, to support the recording, reporting and monitoring of attendance and absence.
- It is the parent/carer's responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, before the start of the school day. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that the child is safe. Parents/carers should regularly update the school and inform on when their child is returning**.**
- First day calling. If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence, the school will contact the parent by telephone or other method of communication as appropriate, including the use of Studybug alerts.
- If a child remains unaccounted for, staff will make a home visit as appropriate, taking into account any safeguarding concerns for the child. Staff may also carry out home visits when children are absent and contact from the parent/carer has been received, taking into account the length of absence and reason given.
- Designated members of staff meet regularly, together with the attendance advisor from Every Day Counts (where the school uses this attendance support service) to monitor and review whole school attendance and individual pupils whose attendance is either declining, persistently absent or at risk of becoming persistently absent, severely absent or at risk of becoming severely absent. Attendance and absence data is regularly reviewed together with emerging and historic patterns, to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and this analysis is used to provide targeted support to pupils and their families.
- Letters/Studybug notifications will be sent to parents to alert them to their child's attendance where this is declining and/or a cause for concern.
- In addition, the regular attendance review meetings may result in home visits undertaken by staff, or parents being invited in for a more formal meeting with the Family Support staff, and a Senior Leader as appropriate.
- The school will work collaboratively with pupils and parents/carers to identify barriers to attendance, agree appropriate actions and provide support. This may include school-based

support, signposting to relevant services, involvement of other agencies (e.g. School Health or Early Help), and/or referral to the school's attendance support service.

- Where support has not been successful, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate, the school may consider formal attendance interventions in accordance with statutory guidance. These may include an Attendance Contract, Notice to Improve, Education Supervision Order, or referrals to the Local Authority for statutory intervention, penalty notice or prosecution referral, depending on the circumstances.
- Where appropriate, the school will make a referral to the local authority in accordance with the national framework and the relevant local authority code of conduct.
  Penalty notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.
  For a first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil within a three-year period, the amount is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
  A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil within three years is charged at £160, payable within 28 days.
  A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil within the three-year period. Where the national threshold is met for a third or subsequent time, alternative legal action will be considered by the local authority.
- The school will also attend statutory Targeting Support Meetings with the Local Authority to discuss and ensure appropriate support is in place for children where attendance is a concern.
- The school will also ensure they plan and implement appropriate support to address any identified needs of the child, including SEN, disabilities, or mental or physical ill health.
- Requests for medical evidence will be made for absence due to illness, if the school consider the level of attendance and/or illness to be of concern.
- Absence will be recorded using the appropriate DfE attendance code and will be authorised only where the statutory requirements for that code are met. Examples may include illness, medical or dental appointments and religious observance. The school, rather than the parent/carer, determines how an absence is recorded.
- Pupils leaving school during the day for any reason, such as for medical appointments, must be collected by the parent/carer in person from the school office. The parent/carer should sign their child out using the Entry System, where a pass is printed. Parents/carers should sign their child back in again on this system if they are returning. Parents/carers should also provide school with written evidence of medical appointments if requested.
- Our Attendance Leaflet is given to all new pupils on entry and sent to parents/carers with their child's Annual School Report (see Appendix C).
- Attendance figures for the year are reported in every pupil's Annual School Report, including the total number of missed school days/weeks.
- Specific punctuality letters/Studybugs notifications are sent to parents where this a concern and meetings arranged as appropriate.
- Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, (see Appendix B) the absence for that session will be recorded using Code U. Code U is recorded as unauthorised absence. Repeated Code U absences will be monitored and may contribute towards the national threshold for a penalty notice.
- General attendance and lateness reminders are included in regular school newsletters and communication with parents/carers.
- Schools may recognise and celebrate good or improving attendance and punctuality in ways that are inclusive and sensitive to individual circumstances. Any rewards or incentives will seek to avoid disadvantaging pupils whose attendance is affected by legitimate illness, disability, medical needs or other circumstances beyond their control. School-specific approaches are outlined in Appendix B.

Term Time Leave of Absence or Holiday

- Headteachers will not grant leave of absence during term time unless the request meets the circumstances permitted by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- A holiday will not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance and will not normally be authorised. Where a parent/carer wishes to request leave of absence, an application should be made in advance and should set out the circumstances of the request. Each application will be considered individually in accordance with the statutory regulations and DfE guidance.
- If a parent/carer wishes to request such leave, they should make a written application at the earliest opportunity. The Headteacher and/or senior staff will consider each request and inform the parent/carer as soon as possible in writing, whether the request has been granted or not. Where leave has not been authorised and the pupil is absent, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised using the appropriate attendance code.
  Unauthorised leave may contribute towards the national threshold for a penalty notice. The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. The 10 sessions do not need to be consecutive and may consist of different types of unauthorised absence.
  If the school believes a family holiday has been taken despite not receiving a request, the local authority will consider the school's evidence and may issue penalty notice.

6. School Specific Information

See Appendix B for school specific information including start of the school day, relevant staff contacts, process to request a leave of absence.

7. Children Missing Education

Schools have an important role in identifying children who may be missing education and will follow the current Department for Education *Children missing education* statutory guidance and relevant local authority procedures.

A pupil's name will only be deleted from the admission register where one of the statutory grounds set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies.

Where a pupil's whereabouts or destination school is unknown, the school will make reasonable enquiries, liaise with the relevant local authority and make a Children Missing Education referral where appropriate.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, the school will act in accordance with the Trust Child Protection Policy.

8. Elective Home Education

Parents have a right to educate their child at home, subject to the relevant statutory requirements. Where a parent indicates that they are considering elective home education (EHE), the school will seek to understand the reasons for the decision, provide appropriate information and support, and ensure that any school-related barriers are explored where appropriate.

The decision to electively home educate rests with the parent. Parents should not be encouraged to remove a pupil from school to avoid attendance, behavioural, safeguarding or SEND processes.

Where a parent formally confirms in writing that their child will cease to attend the school and will receive education otherwise than at school, the school will follow the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and relevant local authority procedures. See Appendix A.

Appendix A - Elective Home Education Request

This form should be initiated by the FLO/PSA (or relevant staff) when a parent advises they wish to home educate their child

School: **Child's Name:** **Year Group:**

Action	**Completed by:** **Or reason for non completion**
• Initial conversation with parent by FLO/PSA/appropriate staff member • Discuss the reasons for considering home education. Where appropriate, explore whether any concerns or barriers relating to school can be addressed and notify the Headteacher of any relevant concerns. • Signpost parent to EHE service for further advice and guidance to enable them to make an informed decision. • Add all info to CPOMS.	
• Arrange meeting for parent with HT to discuss further, including any SEN or safeguarding concerns. • The meeting should provide the parent with information about the responsibilities associated with elective home education and signpost them to the relevant local authority and DfE guidance. **Kent:** Kent Home Education Information **Bexley:** Bexley Home Education Information • Add all info to CPOMS.	
• Parent to provide written confirmation of the decision to home educate.	
• Discuss any safeguarding and SEN concerns with HT. Consider if a Front Door or MASH referral is required if there are specific safeguarding concerns. • If the child has an EHCP, consult with the LA SEN department before making submitting an EHE. • Where written notification has been received from the parent that the pupil will cease to attend the school and will receive education otherwise than at school, and the relevant statutory conditions have been met, remove the pupil's name from the admission register under the appropriate statutory ground and notify the local authority. • Where a School Attendance Order is in force, seek advice from the local authority before removal from roll. • Add all info to CPOMS.	

• Letter to be sent to parents confirming their request, support offered and submission of EHE.	
• Advise school office staff.	
• Store child's file in separate secure location – specify:	

Once completed, keep this form in a secure file for future reference.

Appendix B - Royal Rise Primary School Specific Attendance Information

Registers open at:	8.40am
Start of the school day: Pupils arriving after the start of the school day will be recorded using Code L (late before the register closes).	8.50am
Registers close: Pupils arriving after this time (half an hour after registers close) will be recorded using Code U (unauthorised absence).	9.20am
The end of the school day is:	3.20pm
How to request a leave of absence:	Email, write or call the school office with reason. office@royalriseprimary.kent.sch.uk 01732 354143
Concerns regarding attendance should be addressed with: Any further concerns should be addressed with:	Your child's class teacher in the first instance Sarah Griggs (Headteacher)
The designated senior leader and attendance champion responsible for attendance is:	Sarah Griggs
Our school attendance incentives and rewards include:	Celebrating class attendance in assembly each week. Rewards for whole class attendance improvement and weekly winners.

Every Day Matters: Working Together for Good Attendance

Why attendance matters
Regular attendance gives children the best opportunity to learn, build friendships, feel part of their school community and make progress.

When your child is unwell
Please contact the school before the start of the school day on each day of absence, unless otherwise agreed. Schools will not routinely ask for medical evidence for illness absence.

If attendance begins to fall
We will work with you to understand what is making attendance difficult and agree support wherever possible. We want to identify barriers early and work together to resolve them.

Persistent absence
A pupil is considered persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of their possible school sessions.

Severe absence
A pupil is considered severely absent when they miss 50% or more of their possible school sessions.

Punctuality
Arriving on time helps children settle positively and access the full school day. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will receive a U code, which counts as unauthorised absence.

Term-time leave
Holidays during term time will not normally be authorised. Other leave of absence may only be granted in accordance with statutory requirements.

Penalty notices
The national threshold for a leave of absence (G code) is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. The 10 sessions do not need to be consecutive and may consist of different types of unauthorised absence.
OR
An unacceptable level of unauthorised absence and enforcement is necessary to improve attendance as support options have been exhausted without success (other unauthorised absence codes O and U).