



Marches Academy Trust

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Trust Attendance Policy – Lower Heath CE Primary School

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1. Trust Attendance Mission Statement

The Marches Academy Trust seeks to ensure that all children & young people (CYP) receive a full-time education, maximising the opportunities for all to realise their true potential. We strive to create a learning environment where all CYP have the skills, knowledge and recall to access the full curriculum and achieve success every day. Regular attendance is vital for CYP as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships. The Trust will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all CYP.

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

We aim to support and encourage attendance through the Learning for Life (L4L) Framework, 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 running through all policies related to the education, well-being and behaviour of children.

Staff, Governors and Trustees expect full and punctual attendance from all CYP and believe that:

- there is a link between regular attendance and academic achievement;
- regular attendance encourages CYP 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.

Parents/carers of registered CYP have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that CYP 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 must be classified by the school (not parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of each absence is always requested.

- 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 CYP off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained, and CYP 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 CYP. If a CYP is reluctant to attend, referral may be made to the school counsellor, a

youth worker or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order. 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 where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Parents/carers are requested 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 (EWO). EWOs always act in a supporting role and court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers for poor or non-attendance are always as a last resort. Parents/Carers are encouraged to contact the school EWO 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 Trust apply the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

3.1. Illness and other legitimate reasons

Any student who is absent from the school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on his/her behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department for Education.

If a CYP 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 school 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 schools 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. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Schools may choose to operate a 48-hour rule for sickness, in these cases, this will be made clear to parents/carers.

We may ask that CYP bring a written note, signed by the parent/carer, for each period of absence. In exceptional circumstances, further proof of a CYP'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.

Notes of telephone calls received, and written notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept electronically on Arbor.

3.2. Absence without explanation

If a CYP is absent at morning registration, and the school has not received an explanation, the school 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, that emergency contact details are kept updated and that school is aware of an absence.

Failure to provide a reason for absence will be investigated by the local attendance officer, or EWO and this may include conducting a Home Visit.

3.3. Holidays

Our schools are pro-active in discouraging parents/carers from taking CYP out of school for holidays during term time. We consider this action inappropriate and harmful to the education of the CYP. Taking CYP out of school without authorisation from the Headteacher could result in parents/carers receiving a Truancy Penalty Notice (see para 3.6).

Headteachers are only allowed to authorise Leave of Absence when an application has been made more than two weeks in advance. An application form can be requested from the school attendance officer. The Headteacher will consider:

- Any exceptional circumstances
- If it is highly unlikely that the event will occur again in a CYP's school life.

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.

School attendance officers will actively investigate any absence where there is a suspicion that a CYP might be absent without good reason. This may include conducting a home visit or requesting support from the EWO and this may include a request to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (See para 3.6).

3.4. Punctuality

CYP 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 their children are on time for registration.

There may be cases where CYP 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 receive an absence message.

- CYP arriving after the register/school has opened will be marked as late.

- CYP 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 CYP move from lesson to lesson quickly to reduce disruption and maximise learning time for each subject. Schools may operate a Punctuality Watch List and CYP who are persistently late to lessons throughout the day will be monitored closely. They may be issued a sanction in accordance with the Trust's Behaviour Policy.

3.5. Truancy

Truancy from school is treated as a serious issue and will always be communicated to parents/carers. Following truancy, a CYP will be monitored to ensure good patterns of attendance are re-established. A sanction may be issued in line with the Trust's Behaviour Policy.

School attendance officers will make every effort to contact parents/carers if it is discovered that a CYP has gone missing from school. 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

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

The EWO monitors attendance closely, meeting with pastoral staff and the school attendance officer to identify poor patterns of attendance. If a pattern of attendance gives cause for concern the EWO will contact the parent/carer. They will seek to listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. If non-attendance continues, and following receipt of a Final Warning, the Local Authority may issue or Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 per parent per child. Alternatively, the Local Authority may decide to prosecute. Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days will be notified to the relevant Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the EWO.

“Failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at the school at which he/she is a registered pupil is a criminal offence under the Education Act 1996. If convicted under Section 444 (1) of the Act a parent can be fined up to £1000 for each offence. A conviction under Section 444 (1a) – which is the more serious offence when a parent knowingly allows a child to be absent from school without authorisation – can lead to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months in prison. If a parent is prosecuted under Section 444 (1a) he/she will be formally cautioned and interviewed under the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.”

CYP 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.
- The EWO may contact parents as follows:
 - Autumn Term – attendance falls below 91%
 - Spring Term – attendance has fallen below 92%
 - Summer Term – attendance has fallen below 93%

The EWO may contact parents if they are concerned about a pattern of attendance, regardless of the CYP's attendance percentage.

Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss attendance and progress with a member of staff. Alternatively, the EWO may request to meet with parents/carers. At this meeting, an Action Plan is agreed to support CYP to return to school full time and the EWO will outline the legal implications of further absence from school.

3.7. Incentives

The school endeavours to improve the attendance of all CYP. Where appropriate a particular cohort may be targeted with further specific intervention. Excellent attendance will normally 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. A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all CYP are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the CYP receives help to catch up on missed work and is updated on any information which has been passed to other CYP.

5. Safeguarding

Attendance is an important element of safeguarding and schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for CYP who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the CYP normally resides. Schools should hold more than one contact number; this goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides schools with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a CYP is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Schools should always follow-up any absences to ensure that the proper safeguarding action is taken. DSLs should check the absence list on a daily basis to ensure that appropriate follow-up action can be taken where required.

6. Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some CYP face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include CYP who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other CYP and therefore the attendance ambition for these CYP should be the same as they are for any other CYP. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these CYP face and make reasonable adjustments or put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. Please refer to the Trust's Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy for further information.

7. 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 and all schools will issue an addendum to this policy outlining school specific procedures.

8. Monitoring Arrangements

Each school's Senior Leadership Team conducts a thorough analysis of attendance half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This will 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 Attendance Officer will liaise with the Trust Executive Lead to report attendance analysis across the Trust. They will review the Trust's systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

Headteachers will keep their LGBs regularly informed of attendance data and trends.

This policy will be reviewed by the Attendance Officer and Executive Board annually. At every review, the policy will be shared with the LGB.

9. Appendix – Lower Heath CE Primary School Attendance Procedures



Our School Day

School gates open at 8:40am, the school gates close at 8:55 and school starts promptly at 9am. Children who arrive after gates close (8:55am) but before lessons begin (9am), without good reason, will be marked as 'Late' (Code L). Children who arrive after this time (without good reason) will be marked as 'Late after the Register Closed' (Code U). This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session. School finishes at 3.15pm.



Illness or Medical Appointments

Please inform school by 9am if your child is too ill to attend. We need a call for every day of the absence.

It is recommended that medical appointments be arranged before or after school. If this is not possible, please inform school of all appointments in advance.

You can contact us as follows:

Phone – 01948 840 524

Email/Text – janet.dakin@low.mmat.co.uk / admin@low.mmat.co.uk

If a child is not in school by 9:15am and we have not been informed of a reason for their absence, we will phone the contacts you have given us. If we are unable to make contact in this way, we will send a text and/or email letting you know that your child is not in school, and that we may make a Safe and Well Check at home.

If your child is absent from school and we cannot contact you, absences will be noted as 'Unauthorised'. We will continue to try to make contact to establish the reason for the absence and will endeavour to provide support if there is anything we can help with. If we are unable to establish the safety of a child, we may call for the support of the police.



Holiday

The Headteacher can only approve holiday in term time in exceptional circumstances, which are very rare. Should you take an unauthorised holiday, the unauthorised absence will be reported the Education Welfare Officer and you may be fined.



Attendance Contacts - 01948 840524

Many people in school can support you with school attendance. You can contact the following people for help:

Day to Day e.g. sickness	Specialist Support e.g. worried about coming to school
School Office Admin Team: Mrs Jan Dakin Mrs Sarah Thomas	Ms Helen Reynolds – Headteacher and SENDCo Miss Megan Curry – Pastoral Lead



Rewards

We try to recognise and encourage excellent attendance in the following ways:

- Teaching children the importance of not missing any school, and helping them to understand and track their attendance
- Record, support and celebrate good attendance on school reports and during parent evenings



How we monitor attendance

Children's attendance is checked daily to establish regular attendance then fortnightly to ensure that it remains at or above the **school expectation of 97%**.

- We offer a 'Support Phone Call' if attendance falls below 97%.
- We may write to let you know that attendance has fallen below 96%.
- The EWO (EWO) also checks attendance every half term and may write to you if there are any concerns. If the EWO has written to you, more formal attendance support may be needed.
- When we monitor attendance, we consider other things as well, such as academic progress, behaviour in lessons, known medical conditions or if there are family concerns to take into account.

These checks mean that we can put appropriate support in place for example, temporary adjustments to a child's school day, extra support with lessons, friendships or emotions.



We always try to support families and children to improve attendance, but sometimes it might be necessary for the EWO to enforce school attendance. This usually happens when attendance falls below 90%. If this does happen, the EWO will either:

- Invite you into school to discuss concerns, agree an action plan and explain the legal implications of further absence from school.
- Write to you and explain that further absence from school could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

It is never too late to try to resolve attendance problems, so ALWAYS talk to us or the EWO.



Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence is the term given by the Government when attendance falls below 90%. By the end of the school year, a child with 90% attendance would have missed 4 weeks of school. We try to minimise the chances of children being persistently absent by regularly checking attendance and ensuring that the right adjustments are made for a child to come back to school. We do this with our EWO to ensure that the right support is in place, on time and in time to avoid persistent absence.



Other sources of help

- Education Welfare Service - 0345 678 9063
- BEAM

Beam is an emotional health and wellbeing service for young people under 25 years old who are registered with a GP in Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin –

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/mental-and-emotional-health-and-wellbeing-service/beam/>

- Citizens Advice

<https://www.cabshropshire.org.uk/>

- Shropshire SEND Local Offer

The SEND local offer is a single place for information, services, and resources for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and / or disabilities, their families, and the practitioners who support them. <https://shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/>



- Family Doctor
- Shropshire Early Help

Early help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family as soon as a problem emerges.

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/>

- Shropshire Information Advice and Support Service (Shropshire IASS)

Shropshire IASS provide information, advice and support to parents and carers of children aged 0 to 25, and young people aged 16 to 25 who have, or may have, special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

<https://www.cabshropshire.org.uk/shropshire-iass/>

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Policy owner	Trust Attendance Officer
Scope	All staff, Trustees and Governors
Last Updated	March 2023
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Status	Approved
Date of approval	05.10.22 by ELT
Summary of last revision	June 2021 - Updated vision and changes to reflect expanded number of schools in Trust. January 2022 – added fine amount, no other changes June 2022 – Updated to reflect changes in guidance ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ – application from September 2022
Related Policies/Documents	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Behaviour Policy Exclusions Policy
Policy control survey	Please complete this survey and provide feedback if you have had to use this policy https://forms.office.com/r/HMeZtB29Si