



Attendance Policy

In God's hands, we love, learn, grow and inspire

“What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?
It is like the mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on the earth. Yet, when
planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches
that the birds can perch in its shade.”

Mark 4: 30-32

Date Approved by The Board of Trustees	4.10.2022
Effective Period	1.09.22-1.09.23
Reviewer	Jan McColl
Date of Review	1 st September 2022
Next Review Due	31 st August 2023

HMFA Federation Schools Registration Times

Clehonger

Morning registration: 08.50. Registers close at 9.00 am

Afternoon registration: 1.15pm

School finishes: 3.15pm

Kings Caple Primary Academy

Morning registration: 9.00 am. Registers close at 9.10 am

Afternoon registration: 1.00 pm

School finishes: 3.00 pm

Llangrove CE Academy

Morning registration: 8.50 am. Registers close at 9.00 am

Afternoon registration: 1.10 pm

School finishes: Reception and Year 1- 3.10 pm and Years 2-6 - 3.15 pm

Lord Scudamore Academy

Doors open 8.40 am

Reception

Morning registration: 8.50 am

Afternoon registration: 1.15 pm

School finishes: 2.50 pm

Year 1 and Year 2

Morning registration: 8.50 am

Afternoon registration: 1.15 pm

School finishes: 3.05 pm

Year 3, 4, 5 and 6

Morning registration: 8.50 am

Afternoon registration: 1.15 pm

School finishes: 3.10 pm

Registers close (all year groups): 9.10 am

Marden Primary Academy

Doors open: 8.50am

Morning registration: 9.00 am. Registers close at 9.10 am

Afternoon registration: 1.00 pm

School finishes:

Class 1&2: 3.00

Class 3&4: 3.05pm

Pencombe CE School

Morning registration: 8.55 am. Registers close at 9.10 am

Afternoon registration: 1.00 pm

School finishes:

R & KS1 3.05 pm

KS2 3.10

St Weonards Primary School

Morning registration: 9.00 am. Registers close at 9.30 am

Afternoon registration: 1.00pm

School finishes: 3.15 pm

Sutton Primary Academy

Morning registration: 8.45 am. Registers close at 9.00 am

Afternoon registration: 1.00 pm

School finishes: 3.05 pm

This policy has been rewritten following the publication of new Department for Education guidance published in September 2022. The DfE has stated that the guidance will become statutory from September 2023.

Please read this policy along with the guidance at the end of the policy which has been taken from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

School, Governors and Parents/Carers should also consider the following document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf

For the purpose of this policy, a parent means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

The Headteacher/Head of School in each of the federation schools is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in their school. The Safeguarding Director has strategic oversight for the whole federation.

The school expects that parents and carers will ensure that:

- their children attend school regularly and punctually;
- pupils report to the school office if they are late;
- they support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- they contact school on every day of absence or give the duration of the absence if known in advance;
- their children arrive at school on time and are collected on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day; and
- they work in partnership with the school, for example, by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities; and
- contact the school immediately if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives.

The Federation's schools' registration times are listed on pages 2 of this document. Pupils arriving after registration time will be recorded as L for late before the register closes and must enter school via the main reception area, where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The class registers will remain open until their school's listed time and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as U for late after the register closed. This is considered an unauthorised absence. Parents or carers will be asked to explain persistent lateness and asked to remedy the cause.

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents or carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence by 9.00 am. If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation by the close of registration, the office staff will be informed and will contact the parents or carers to establish the reason for the absence.

In cases where the absence at registration is due to an early morning medical appointment, the absence will be recorded as authorised as long as prior notification has been received.

A written explanation may be sent in for absences. Parents will be notified in writing if the absences are unauthorised.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- ascertain the reason;
- ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

Absence from school

At Herefordshire Marches Federation of Academies we recognise the clear links between attendance and progress, and attendance and safeguarding children. Pupil's attendance rates will be monitored on a weekly basis.

If there is a problem with a pupil's attendance, the parents or carers will be informed of the school's concerns and will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. Support will be offered. The attendance of these pupils will be monitored by the school and if no improvement is noted a further letter will be sent, again expressing concern and offering support. The school will always work with parents and carers and pupils to try to remedy any issues.

At registration each morning and afternoon, any child who is not present will be marked as an "unauthorised absence" (n code) by the class teacher, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment or correction is distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head Teacher. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Absence from school may be authorised in the following circumstances;

- If a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.
- If a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion.
- In exceptional circumstances where the parents or carers have sought permission in advance.
- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend (with medical evidence to support the absence) although persistent illness without medical evidence may not be authorised. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school can request that parents provide medical evidence to support illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if it is not satisfied with the authenticity of

the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions or appointment cards

- Where the pupil has a medical appointment. Parents should however be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards, or send them to school beforehand.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong (evidence may be requested).
- In other exceptional circumstances, such as a family bereavement, and for a very limited period.

If absence is required in exceptional circumstances parents or carers must apply in writing to the Head Teacher for permission for that absence. This must be done in advance of the planned absence and include the reasons for absence. The Head Teacher will inform the parents or carers of the decision in writing.

Holidays during Term Time

Holidays during term time will not be authorised. Absence for leave in term time may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. The application for leave must be made in advance and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that there are truly exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion. If the Head Teacher does not authorise the absence and parents or carers still choose to go on holiday this will then be deemed unauthorised absence and, marked as code G. As a result a referral may be submitted to Herefordshire Council, who may initiate legal proceedings or issue a penalty notice.

Penalty notices

Penalty notices or legal proceedings can only be instigated by Herefordshire Council. They are seen as a last resort after all avenues of support have been exhausted and can be used where the pupil's frequent or prolonged absence has not been authorised by the school.

A penalty notice is a fine imposed on the parents or carers. The penalty is £60 per child, per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 per child, per parent if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

Children missing in education

When pupils leave the school and no information has been received by the school regarding their new placement and parents/carers are unable to be contacted, the school has a duty of care regarding safeguarding and must contact the Local Authority. The child will be considered to be a Child Missing in Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to investigate, which will include liaising with Social Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child. By giving the school details of the child's new school and location, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

The following sections have been taken from **Working Together to improve School attendance September 2022**. This new guidance can be read in full if required. See link at start of this policy.

The importance of school attendance

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should 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. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

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 either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend 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.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent)

Expectations of schools

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in school.

All schools in the federation will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. We will also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive. To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- 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.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- 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.

Developing a whole school culture to promote the benefit of high attendance

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and the most effective schools recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. Schools that have good attendance recognise that it is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance, all schools are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Responsibilities should include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes,

- oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding.
- Where possible this should include attendance or pastoral support staff (either school based or contracted) who can work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders, the local authority and other partners.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.
- In doing so, schools should help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It should also include clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form and individual level.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils 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 pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, schools should 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. Please see further details on SEN support.

- 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.
- 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.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings 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. Please see further information on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

In all cases, schools should be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and they should talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Part-time timetables

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, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must 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 part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

Expectations of academy trust boards and governing bodies of maintained schools

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. We therefore expect all trusts and governing bodies to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Multi-academy trust boards and governing bodies of federations are also expected to:

- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.

Whilst it is expected that all trusts and governing bodies will provide support covering these areas, the approach to delivering it should be proportionate to the size of the group of schools and type of school(s) within it.

Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies

Improving school attendance begins at board level, therefore all academy trust boards, and governing bodies of maintained schools should take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with school leaders to set whole school attendance cultures. This should include:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- Recognising that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and therefore ensuring it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding. This may include having a link governor or trustee that focusses on attendance.
- Ensuring the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils. This includes those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of their school(s)' processes and

improvement efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.

In addition, multi-academy trusts and federation governing bodies should identify and monitor attendance patterns across their schools to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools. For trusts whose schools are geographically concentrated, this may also include sharing of staff and other resources between schools in the area (especially where a member of staff is supporting pupils from the same family but at different schools run by the trust).

For larger trusts, this may include having a dedicated attendance lead and/or central attendance staff who can drive attendance improvement across the trust, work more intensively with the schools who require it, and act as a central contact point for schools with attendance queries. All trusts may also find it useful to liaise with DfE's regional teams for advice about wider support programmes.

Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

As the proprietor of a school, academy trusts and governing bodies of maintained schools are ultimately responsible for ensuring due regard to guidance and compliance with the law on school attendance. All trusts and governing bodies should therefore ensure their schools:

- Have an attendance policy which meets the expectations outlined in section 1, and which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff. Some trusts and federations may wish to have one attendance policy which covers all their schools. Whilst this can be useful in sharing effective practice, the attendance policy should be tailored to the needs of each individual school and the barriers to attendance pupils experience as identified through analysis of school level attendance data.
- Record attendance accurately in the register (see section 8) and share the required information with DfE and local authorities.
- Work effectively with local partners to help remove the barriers to attendance that go beyond the school gates, including building strong links with local statutory services (including social care, health and police) and the voluntary and community sector.

Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

All trusts and governing bodies should provide support and challenge to their schools around current trends on attendance in the school community, by:

- Regularly reviewing attendance data at board meetings. This should include thorough examination of recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the trust, local authority area, region and nationwide.
- Paying particular attention to attendance of pupil cohorts within their school(s) that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This should be specific to the school's context, but may include pupils

who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals.

- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.

In addition, for schools that are struggling with their attendance, academy trust boards and governing bodies of maintained schools should work with school leaders to develop a comprehensive attendance action plan to improve attendance. This should be evaluated and reviewed regularly. This may form part of a wider school improvement plan, including where appropriate school-to-school support from system leaders.

Multi-academy trusts and governing bodies of federations may also wish to hold termly attendance review meetings with each individual school and/or ask them to report on their attendance at defined intervals.

Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. All trusts and governing bodies should therefore ensure that:

- Training on attendance is included in the school(s)' continued professional development offer for all staff, and that attendance is covered in any trust/federation wide induction packs. As a minimum this should include all staff understanding:
 - the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
 - the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers,
 - the school/trusts' strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
 - and the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.
- Dedicated attendance training is provided to any staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders. In addition, this should include:
 - the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data,
 - and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils and pupil cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance. Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools

One of the most successful approaches to improving attendance is the sharing of effective practice between schools. Multi-academy trusts and federation governing bodies are, therefore, expected to provide regular opportunities to bring together staff from different schools to learn from each other's attendance expertise and share effective interventions.

This should be tailored to the needs of their schools and pupils but as a minimum could include, sharing exemplar resources and documents such as communications to pupils and parents, regular networking or Q&A sessions, and topical best practice training or webinars.

This is in addition to the expectation of local authorities to provide opportunities to schools of all types within a geographical area to come together to share effective practice (see section 4)