Liberty Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

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Written By	Director of Safeguarding
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1. Aim of this policy

To support excellent levels of attendance for all pupils to enable fulfilment of their potential at Liberty Academy Trust schools.

This policy has been prepared with regard to the statutory duties relating to attendance, including those set out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance entitled ***Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026)***, which is referred to in this policy as the "DfE Attendance Guidance".

2. Key principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded.
- It is the responsibility of everybody in the school to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Where attendance or punctuality fall short of expected standards, steps will be taken to address this and sanctions may be applied in accordance with the behaviour policy.
- Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. The school recognises that attendance difficulties may arise from a range of factors including special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), mental health needs, physical health needs, family circumstances, caring responsibilities, involvement with social care services or other vulnerabilities. The school will work collaboratively with pupils, families and external agencies to identify and remove barriers to attendance through a support-first approach.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents, carers, or pupils have should be discussed with the key worker or form tutor in the first instance. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents, carers, and pupils should contact the school designated Attendance lead (see contacts in section 8).

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The school will

The school will:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance including half-termly attendance achievement awards, attendance celebration events and recognition of positive attendance through newsletters and key worker communications.

- celebrating and rewarding good and improved attendance
- attendance recognition certificates and awards
- promoting attendance through assemblies, tutor periods and newsletters
- sharing attendance information with pupils and parents
- recognising individual attendance improvement
- providing early support where attendance concerns emerge
- ensuring attendance forms part of the school's wider culture and ethos

- work with pupils and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and understand any barriers to attendance
- investigate unexplained or unjustified absence, applying sanctions where appropriate.
- take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- share information, including returns information required to be shared in accordance with regulations[1] and the DfE Attendance Guidance, and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance
- regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data including to identify pupils or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future
- ensure that all pupils can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case
- ensure that the trust board, the executive team, and the school's leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy
- ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the DfE Attendance Guidance

[1] School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

- ensure that all staff receive attendance training appropriate to their role and that staff with responsibility for attendance receive enhanced training and support

- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) (please refer to our Safeguarding Children and Young People (Child Protection) policy

- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education

- regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels

- support pupils who are returning to education following long term absence

- provide additional support and reasonable adjustments for pupils where attendance is affected by SEND, mental health needs, physical health needs or other identified vulnerabilities.

- ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using an electronic management information system

- assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school to a designated senior leader, known as the senior Attendance Champion

- observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education (Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

3.2 Parents and carers

We expect parents and carers to:

- ensure that their child arrives at the school on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment

- promote the importance of regular attendance at home

- follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child from the school (see section 6 below)

- avoid unnecessary absences

- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance

- not take their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 6 below)
- inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent/carer with whom the child shall live
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- Responsibilities are set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk.)

3.3 Pupils

We expect pupils to:

- attend the school regularly and on time
- be punctual to all lessons
- follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the school late (see sections 4 and 5 below).

3.4 Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion ("SAC") at the school is Mr David Ritchie, Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The SAC has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school and will:

- set a clear vision for improving and maintaining attendance
- establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and ensure that these are followed by all staff
- evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes
- have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school
- ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and pupils
- provide data and reports to support the work of the board of trustees (see below).

3.5 The board of trustees

The board of trustees will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the trust and school's ethos and policies
- ensure the school's leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

1.1 regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

1.2 receive reports on:

1.3 overall attendance

1.4 persistent absence

1.5 severe absence

1.6 attendance of vulnerable groups

1.7 effectiveness of attendance interventions and support strategies

- ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance
- Ensure effective practice on attendance management and improvement is shared across its academies
- have a Trust Attendance Lead (The Director of Safeguarding) who will drive improvement across the trust and act as a central point for academies with attendance queries.
- require the school to report to the trustees on the school's attendance at regular intervals, via the Trust Attendance Lead.

3.6 The Trust Attendance Lead

The Trust Attendance Lead will:

- ensure the school's leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- review attendance data weekly, discuss and challenge trends and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

- Facilitate the Attendance Training programme, providing opportunity for Attendance leads to work together across the Trust.
- require the school to report school's attendance data at regular intervals.
- Annually review the attendance policy

4 Registration

4.1 The school maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each pupil's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Registration session	**Start time**	**End time (no longer than 30 mins after session start time)**
Morning	08:45	09:15
Afternoon	13:10	13:40

1.8 Pupils who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session (within 30 minutes) will be marked as late. Where pupils arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 5 applies.

1.9 The register is marked on the day only and no codes are entered in advance. Information regarding possible future absences will be noted however confirmed and recorded on the day of absence.

1.10 Pupils are registered for each session and each lesson.

1.11 Attendance registers will be completed accurately and in accordance with the statutory attendance codes set out in the DfE Attendance Guidance.

4.2 Where a pupil attends a registration session but does not attend subsequent lessons, we will treat this as a truancy and non-attendance matter in accordance with the behaviour policy and engage parents where necessary.

5 Late arrival

5.1 If a pupil arrives at the school after the relevant registration period has ended but within the relevant session, they must immediately go to the office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness to enable the school to establish the appropriate attendance or absence code. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

5.2 Persistent lateness will be investigated and may result in escalation as outlined in Appendix 2.

6 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

6.1 ***Authorised absence*** - absence will only be authorised where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the school can authorise absence.

6.2 ***Unauthorised absence –*** absence will be marked as unauthorised where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

6.3 Reporting absence from the school

6.3.1 Where a pupil is to be absent from the school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the school by telephone on the morning of the day of the first absence and let the school know when they expect the pupil to return. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the school on each day of absence.

6.3.2 On the day of return to the school, parents must also provide written confirmation of the reason(s) for the full period of absence.

6.3.3 Any unexplained absence will be followed up by the school promptly which may include staff conducting a home visit to check on the child's safety/welfare.

6.3.4 In cases where the school needs clarification to accurately record the absence in the attendance register, the parents/cares may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor to support an absence for illness. If satisfactory evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

6.4 Appointments

6.4.1 Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a pupil should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

1.11.1 Where an appointment must take place during school time, the pupil should attend the school for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given to the Main Office / Attendance Team / Safeguarding Team / Form Tutor / Learning Mentor / Key Worker.

6.5 Part-time timetables

6.5.1 Part-time timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances where they are in the best interests of the pupil.

Any part-time timetable will:

- be approved by the Principal
- be approved by the Local Authority
- be agreed with parents/carers
- have a clear intended outcome
- be recorded and monitored by the school
- be recorded on the school's attendance tracker
- be reviewed regularly, normally every two weeks
- be used for the shortest possible period
- not be used as a long-term solution for attendance, behaviour or safeguarding concerns.

6.6 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)

6.6.1 The school will grant permission for a pupil to be absent from school in the circumstances described in paragraph 37 of the DfE Attendance Guidance which can be summarised as follows:

- taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- attendance at an interview for entry into another educational setting or future employment
- study leave for public examinations
- temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- other exceptional circumstances.

6.6.2 Parents and carers should make every effort to avoid taking pupils out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time..

6.6.3 To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the Principal and, wherever possible, at least 4 school weeks ahead of the planned leave.

6.6.4 Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the Principal will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:

- will be confirmed in writing
- is solely at the Principal's discretion and

- is final.

6.6.5 Where permission is granted, the Principal will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.

6.6.6 If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of the Academy, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see section 7 below).

6.7 Religious observance

6.7.1 We recognise that pupils of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs,

the absence from the school will be authorised.

1.11.2 We ask that parents/carers notify the School by writing in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

1.12 Infectious diseases

1.12.1 The school will report any notification of infectious disease to the Director of Governance and Operations, the Director of Safeguarding and to the local authority. The school will follow Department for Education, UK Health Security Agency and local authority guidance in relation to infectious diseases and any associated attendance recording requirements.

7 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality

7.1 The school will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or groups of pupils who need it most. In doing so, the School, led by the SAC will:

- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance
- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and relevant leaders
- identify pupils who need support from wider partners as soon as possible and deliver this support in a targeted manner

- conduct thorough analysis of weekly, half-termly, termly and fully year data to identify patterns and trends
- benchmark school attendance data at each level against local, regional and national level
- monitor the impact of school strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular pupils and particular groups
- work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups
- hold regular meetings with the parents or carers of pupils who the school and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable

7.2 Our procedures for managing unexplained absences can be found in **Appendix 1.**

7.3 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is:

- a pattern of unauthorised absence
- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival
- persistent truancy or lateness

we will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality see **Appendix 2.**

7.4 Failure to attend or arrive at lessons on time may also be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with the behaviour policy.

7.5 In cases where the school has been unable to establish a clear reason for absence and/or has welfare concerns about the pupil, a home welfare check may be carried out.

1.13 **Persistent Absence:** Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90% across the academic year. Absence at this level is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental co-operation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies and/or seeking to put in place an attendance contract.

1.14 **Severe Absence:** A pupil is considered severely absent when attendance falls below 50%. Where severe absence is identified, the school will consider enhanced intervention including:

- safeguarding review
- attendance action planning
- Early Help/Family Help assessment
- multi-agency working

- social care involvement where appropriate
- local authority attendance support
- attendance contracts and other formal intervention measures.

1.15 Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any additional services.

1.16 Attendance Contracts:

7.5.1 Where attendance concerns continue despite earlier intervention, the school may work with parents/carers and the local authority to establish an Attendance Contract.

7.5.2 An Attendance Contract is a formal agreement which identifies barriers to attendance and sets out actions, responsibilities and support measures intended to improve attendance.

7.5.3 Attendance Contracts will be reviewed regularly and may involve contributions from other agencies where appropriate.

7.6 Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending the school and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate or effective, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a fine (£80 if paid within 21 days, £160 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

7.7 When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, we will have regard to:

- the National Framework for penalty notices as set out in DfE Attendance Guidance; and
- the local authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

7.8 In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.

8 Contacts

School Senior Attendance Champion:

David Ritchie, Designated Safeguarding Lead

0208 0596 310 ext. 3714 David.Ritchie@vanguardschool.org.uk

Trust Attendance Lead:

Nic Law, Director of Safeguarding

Nicola.Law@libertytrust.org.uk

Appendix 1 – Managing unexplained absences and responding to children missing education

School to attempt to make contact with parent/carer on Day 1 of Absence

If contact has not been made, no later than Day 3 of absence (best practice Day 1), Home-visit is conducted by school staff to establish pupils' whereabouts

Days 0-10, Staff to continue to make efforts to engage the family and locate the pupil; recording their contact including all telephone conversations, texts, e-mails, letters, Home-visits. Liaising with professionals who may be involved. School should consider what action to be taken if attendance is 10% unauthorised.

Whereabouts confirmed to be known
but not attending education or engaging with the school.

- Child and family meet the threshold for Early Help or Social Care involvement. Make a referral evidencing the actions you have taken.
- Contact the LA SEND team if parent expresses, they no longer want to attend the school.
- Absence meets the threshold for enforcement action as outlined in the [Local Authority] Code of Conduct, Child stays on roll.
- Consider if a reintegration plan may support the return to school
- If child is absent due to medical needs, refer to LA medical needs team as per guidance Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health

Whereabouts unknown

evidencing reasonable efforts to locate/make contact with the family, this can include move out of area. When a pupil's attendance becomes a concern, the school will consider whether: the pupil has a social worker; the pupil is a young carer; the pupil is known to mental health services; safeguarding concerns exist; additional early help intervention is required

- Referral is made to: Children Missing Education Team No later than day 10 when there is no explanation for absence and above checks have been completed.
  Children Missing Education - Guidance for Local authorities
- Detail clearly any safeguarding concerns you may have.
- DO NOT remove from your roll until CME team has completed initial checks and confirmed that they can be removed.

Appendix 2 – Attendance flowchart

