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drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust

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# **Attendance Policy**

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## 1. Trust Vision

*'all pupils achieve the highest standard of educational outcomes regardless of circumstances or background.'*

The Trust has been established through a shared belief that lives can be transformed by what goes on in schools. The Trust believes that the process of teaching and learning shapes futures. To this end the Trust's vision is to give every pupil learning experiences that excite them and give them the power to begin to shape their own lives.

## 2. Aim of this policy

To support excellent levels of attendance for all pupils to enable fulfilment of their potential at drb Ignite Trust Schools.

## 3. Key principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded.
- It is the responsibility of all staff in Trust Schools 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 will work with pupils, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents or pupils have should be discussed with their class teacher. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents and pupils should contact the school attendance lead.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### Trust Schools

Each Trust school will:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- 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.
- consider 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 and work collaboratively with the local authority, schools in the local area and other partners where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance.
- regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data 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 and school 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 Trust policies and procedures, including the non-statutory attendance guidance issued by the Department for Education - Working together to improve school attendance (2022).
- 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 (please refer to our 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## **Parents and carers**

The Trust 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 Reporting absence from the school section 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 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time section below)
- inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live.
- observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

## **Pupils**

The Trust 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 5 and 6 below).

## **Designated attendance lead**

The Headteacher/Senior Leader will be responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at the school and will:

- offer a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes.
- oversee attendance and absence data analysis.
- 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).

## **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.
- 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, 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.
- share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across its schools.
- require the school to report to Trustees on the school's attendance at regular intervals.
- have a dedicated Attendance Lead who will drive improvement across the Trust and act as a central point for schools with attendance queries.

## **5. Registration**

- 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.
- Pupils who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session will be marked as late. Where pupils arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 6 applies.

- the register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes which can be found in the Department for Education's guidance on attendance - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108847/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance.pdf).

## 6. Late arrival

- If a pupil arrives at the school after the relevant registration period has ended, the parent or pupil must immediately go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

## 7. Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

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

### Reporting absence from the school

- 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.
- On the day of return to the school, parents must also provide confirmation of the reason(s) for the full period of absence.
- In cases of prolonged absence due to illness, the parents/cares may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor. If this evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

### Appointments

- Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a pupil should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.
- 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 school office.
- For the time absent from the school to be marked as an authorised, confirmation of the appointment by way of an appointment card or letter must be provided.

## **Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)**

- Parents and carers should make every effort to avoid taking pupils out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time. The school will only authorise a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances.
- To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the Headteacher and wherever possible, at least four school weeks ahead of the planned leave.
- Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the Headteacher will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:
  - a.** will be confirmed in writing.
  - b.** is solely at the Headteacher's discretion and
  - c.** is final.
- Where permission is granted, the Headteacher will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.
- If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of the school, 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 8 below).

## **Religious observance**

- 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. We ask that parents/carers notify the school by writing to the pupil's class teacher in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

## **Coronavirus (Covid-19)**

- There may be circumstances in which pupils cannot attend school due to Covid-19. The school will adhere to any current guidance issued by the Department for Education relating to the recording of attendance in relation to Covid-19.
- If a pupil tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded as illness.


## **8. Addressing poor attendance and punctuality**

- a.** 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 DAO 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 half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
  - benchmark school attendance data at each level against local, regional and national level data.
  - 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.
- b.** 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.
  - the school will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality.
- c.** 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 a parenting contract.
- d.** Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any additional services.
- e.** 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, the school may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a fine (£60 if paid within 21 days, £120 if paid within 28 days) imposed on each parent/carer, per child.



- f.** When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, the school will have regard to:
- section 6 of the Department for Education’s guidance, Working together to improve school attendance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
  - the local authority’s Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.
- g.** 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.

## 9. Monitoring and review

<b>Monitoring and review:</b>	Trust Board
<b>Links:</b>	Safeguarding Policy
<b>Staff responsible:</b>	Headteachers DSLs School Attendance Officers
<b>Committee responsible:</b>	Achievement, Support and Scrutiny
<b>Reviewed:</b>	March 2023
<b>Next review:</b>	March 2024
<b>Sign off by Chair of Trust:</b>	 March 2023

- Please note that should there be any changes/further national guidance issued relevant to this policy, it will be updated accordingly prior to the review date shown above and referred to the next Trust Board meeting.

## 10. Change Management

Issue No	Change date	Change description
1.0	Dec 2016	Initial release
2.0	Nov 2018	Rebranded, updated and signed off
3.0	Nov 2019	Review
4.0	Dec 2021	Review
5.0	Mar 2023	Browne Jacobson Policy update