



ATTENDANCE POLICY

SPRING TERM 2026
Next review date : Spring term 2028

ATTENDANCE POLICY

DISCOVERY MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

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1 Overview of Policy

This document acknowledges that Discovery Multi Academy Trust (the MAT) must apply their powers fairly and consistently with regards to pupil attendance.

Pupil attainment and achievement depend on regular presence in school. Any absence leads to missed learning opportunities and other experiences and may cause difficulties with social relationships. It may also lead to a threat to the welfare of our pupils or to opportunities for anti-social behaviour.

Attendance is seen as a 'whole MAT issue'. Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the MAT, the parent/carers, the pupil, partners in the Local Authority and the Police. Parents/carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that this happens.

2 Aims

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

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to the education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Maximising the achievement of all pupils.
- Supporting pupils to benefit fully from academic, personal and social opportunities, which are offered to them within the school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending school.

3 Legislation & Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

4 Roles & Responsibilities

4.1 The Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the academies' policies and ethos
- Making sure the CEO and school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the academies
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Ensuring that a Trust Attendance Policy is in place and holding the CEO and Headteachers to account for the implementation of this policy
- Appointing a Local Advisory Board (LAB) member with specific responsibility for attendance.

4.2 The Headteachers

The Headteachers are responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the academy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the CEO and Trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

4.3 The Trust Leadership Team

They are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 8)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Leading attendance across the MAT
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Working with the Local Authority to tackle persistent absence

4.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office during the morning and afternoon registration period.

4.5 School Administrators/Office Staff

School Administrators/Office Staff will:

- Take calls and speak to parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from/refer parents to the Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

4.6 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

4.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Where possible, share any concerns that they have about school with a trusted member of staff to avoid attendance becoming an issue

5 Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance Register

The MAT will keep attendance registers and place all pupils onto this register. The academies are required to take an attendance register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Taking the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by all staff, pupils and parents/carers. School session times may vary slightly in each academy across the MAT.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The initials of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE Attendance Codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:40am (Weston Mill), 8:40am (Beechwood) and 8:40am (Oakwood) on each school day as this is when the school day starts. The register for the first session will be taken and kept open for 30 minutes. After lunch, the register for the second session will be taken and will be kept open for 15 minutes.

5.2 Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am, or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin/office staff (see also section 8). The school may text / call a parent to chase for a reason for absence, but this There will only be one text or call, unless a child's circumstances require otherwise.

When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or a pupils has a regular pattern of illness absences the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to Section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Parents can request a leave of absence by completing an Absence Request Form, which is available from the school office and can also be found on the school website.

5.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (i.e. L).
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (i.e. U).
- Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will be contacted by their class teacher advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues including from other staff members e.g. Admin team member or senior member of staff.

5.5 Following up Unexplained Absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact Social Care if the family are involved with this service or if there are Child Protection concerns

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving other members of staff to support and will follow the local authority's 'Child Missing in Education' guidance.

5.6 Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels in their annual school report. Schools may also contact parents and advise them of their pupil's attendance throughout the year. This may be through individual letters, meetings, attendance rewards/celebrations.

6 Authorised & Unauthorised Absence

It is vital that all staff within the MAT adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. Absences should be recorded in accordance with the Attendance Codes issued by the DfE (Appendix 1) and held within the SIMS database.

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

It will be the decision of the Headteacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time absence will be considered on an individual basis, taking the impact on the child's education into account and the circumstances and relevant context behind the request (see Appendix 2).

The Headteacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should there be concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95% it is highly unlikely that the Headteacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated before the absence, and in accordance with any 'Leave of Absence Request' form, accessible via the school office or website. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence include:**

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 5.2 and 5.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

- The pupil is excluded and appropriate information and paperwork have been forwarded to the parent.
- A holiday in term time where special/exceptional circumstances are given at the time of application (evidence may be required) and these are accepted.

Note:

- The absence of pupils taking part in appropriately supervised educational activities outside of the academy is recorded as 'approved educational activities' as appropriate. This is equivalent to 'present' for performance table purposes.
- It is vital that if a pupil attends an off-site provision, that the off-site provision informs the school of the child's attendance every day they are planned to attend, to allow the policy to be followed (whether they are educated on-site or off).
- Any pupil who does not attend a provision off-site and is not attending school has to be marked as absent in the school register.

6.2 Children Missing in Education

Children missing in education are children of a compulsory school age (5-16 years old) who are not on a school roll, being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who have been out of educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).

6.3 Legal Sanctions

A new national framework for penalty notices for school absences came into effect from Monday 19 August 2024.

The changes are:

- A new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered.
- You will no longer be able to take your child out of school for one week's holiday without a penalty notice being issued.
- There will be an increase in the penalty fine from £60 to £80 if paid in 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160 if paid within 28 days of being issued.
- If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
- If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice

7 Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- The MAT will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome. Each academy's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will always be taken. Early intervention is often the key to preventing more frequent absences.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to pupils. Every effort is made to ensure that learning tasks match pupil's needs.
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness/other reason for any extended period of time will (where appropriate) have work sent home to them, support offered and other professionals involved and will be reintegrated back into school upon their return.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and Trustees on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school, which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.
- The Trust Leadership Team will have regular meetings with the Headteacher in order to identify and support those pupils, and their families, who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Good attendance will be praised appropriately and rewards given. School staff are aware of Emotional Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA) and strategies which can be put in place to support this, involving other professionals if necessary.

8 Attendance Monitoring

9 How can we help you and your child achieve great attendance?

- Each academy follows the plan below to support and monitor attendance.

DISCOVERY MAT Strategies and Actions to Support and Monitor Good Attendance & Punctuality	
Strategies to Support Good Attendance & Punctuality	
- Weekly attendance updates are shared by the academies on their newsletters. - Parents have access to key information about the importance of good attendance and punctuality through the Trust's Attendance Leaflet, which is available from the school office and on the school's website and through the school's social media accounts. - The academy SENCOs are aware of Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA) and what support can be put in place to support children experiencing this. - Appropriate letters will be sent and/or meetings with parents arranged in order to support positive attendance.	
Thresholds	Actions
1.	- At the start of the academic year all parents are invited to 'Welcome Meetings' where the importance of attendance and punctuality is discussed by Class Teachers/Team Leaders/Headteacher. 'Meet the Teacher Meetings' take place in Term 1 – where attendance and punctuality are discussed along with how children have settled into their new class and school year. - Attendance and punctuality are monitored routinely by all members of the Trust, at every level. - Rewards for positive attendance shared with pupils weekly and/or termly. These are determined by each academy individually. Transitions are carefully planned to support those children who may find change difficult.
2.	- Class Teachers share any attendance and punctuality concerns weekly in staff Meetings - Initial concerns will then involve a conversation between the Class Teacher and a pupil's parents/carer.
3.	- Whole school attendance and punctuality are monitored by the school Attendance lead, along with the School Administrator. Where there are concerns, or if any pupil is showing 5/8 indicators of attendance ACEs, then further conversations will be had by the Team Leader/DHT/SENCO of HT, Attendances ACEs can be seen in Appendix 3. - Where a pupils attendance is less than 96% a letter may be sent to parents explaining that the school would like to support to improve attendance. - Where attendance is less than 90%, or if attendance is declining and no communication has been had with parents, the school may invite parents to a meeting with the schools' Attendance officer. - The Attendance officer will complete an Individual Attendance Plan (see Appendix 4). - Pupils with an attendance below <96% continue to be monitored and reviewed at least every 6 weeks (at the beginning of Term 2, Term 3 and Term 4). - Attendance and punctuality will continue to be monitored routinely by Class Teachers and concerns shared in weekly Meetings.
4.	The Trust Leadership Team will review any Individual Attendance Plans for pupils with attendance concerns, to determine next steps for the family and the school.

When this plan has been followed, and if a pupil's absence is severely below expected levels, then the Local Authority may become involved. The school will be supported by the Local Authorities' Early Help Offer to determine next steps.

8.1 Monitoring Attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and compared at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The Trust Senior Leaders will liaise with the CEO and Trustees to compare attendance data to the national average.

8.2 Analysing Attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

8.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers, Team Leaders, Headteacher, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

8.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- If absence is severe then the Local Authority may become involved.
- The school will be supported by the Local Authority - Early Help Offer.

9 Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Trust CEO. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust board.

10 Links with Other Policies

- Managing and Supporting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Missing Pupil Policy
- SEND and Inclusion Policy

II At a glance actions

	Teacher	Office staff	Attendance Leader	Headteacher	CEO
Every day				Meets and greets on the playground and then later at the front door. Follows up immediately absence on the phone. Records all info.	Monitors attendance data at all levels and across all schools as well as Trust. Supports and scrutinises data on a daily basis.
			Scrutinise the data relating to each child and liaise with the Office querying attendance and absence every day by 10:30.		
Absent for the day	Speaks with parents on the child's return	Collects message and completes register with relevant code	Monitors and intercepts on the day where current or probable future issue.		
Absent more than twice in two weeks	Speaks with parents on the child's return	Collects message and completes register with relevant code	Speaks with Class Teacher and Office then with parents informally (recorded).	Monitors	
Attendance falls below 95%	Speaks with parents on the child's return	Collects message and completes register with relevant code. Forwards names each Friday to Attendance Leader and Headteacher	Speaks with Class Teacher and Office then with parents during an attendance meeting (recorded). Attendance plan completed.	Monitors	
Attendance falls below 90% (persistently absent)	Speaks with parents on the child's return	Collects message and completes register with relevant code. Forwards names to Attendance Leader and Headteacher on the day for all children who	Speaks with Class Teacher and Office. Invites parents to an attendance meeting. Records meeting and speaks with parents about next steps.	Headteacher attends meeting alongside Attendance Leader.	

		are 90% or below. CC CEO into correspondence.			
Every two weeks		Mail merge to parents/carers with their child's attendance data year to date on template letter produced by Attendance Leaders.			

Appendix I: DfE Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C2	Authorised absence	Leave of absence, part-time timetable
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Plymouth City Council Guidance on Exceptional Circumstances

The following is a guide as to what could/could not be exceptional circumstances for approving a child's absence from school:

Exceptional circumstances:

- A specified, limited period may be granted when a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness.
- Funeral of immediate family member
- Religious observance
- Transport was not provided by the LA when it should have been
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)
- One day of absence could be authorised for a wedding of an immediate family member and the invitation has been provided as evidence
- One off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence
- One day of absence could be authorised for an immediate family member's graduation ceremony/passing out parade
- Medical appointments (parents/carers should be encouraged to arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours when possible). If the medical appointment is during the school day, evidence must be provided. Schools should not authorise a whole day's absence for a medical appointment that occurs in the morning – the child would be expected to return to school in the afternoon, and vice versa.

Appendix 3: Attendance ACEs

1. Ever Persistently Absent
2. Pupil previously suspended
3. Evidence of previous unauthorised absence
4. Pupil previously known to social care (CIN, CP)
5. Pupils who have been absent within the first week of term
6. Pupil with EHCP
7. Pupil previously excluded
8. Pupil with SEND

Appendix 4: Individual Attendance Plan

Name:		DOB	
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Date of meeting:	In attendance:

Attendance Zone	Progress of 3%	Progress of 5%	Progress of 8%+
Review 1			
Review 2			
Review 3			

What are the reasons for absence? (please tick)			
Medical appointments		Illness	
Parent Mental Health		Lesson avoidance	
No Reason Provided		Pupil Mental Health	
Behaviour / exclusions		Bullying	
Historic Attendance Issues		Peer/Relationship Issues	

Parent having difficulties getting child to school		School based anxiety	
Other:		Reason:	

What actions have been taken? (please tick)			
Traffic Light Monitoring		Timetable changes	
Pupil Interview		Family Support offered	
Telephone calls home		Rewards & Recognition	
Meeting with parent/carers		Early Help	
LA Attendance Officer referral		Attendance improvement meeting	
Legal Action			
Group work			
Other:			

Historic Attendance:								
Nursery (1)	Nursery (2)	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6

Historic Attendance Indicators (Select relevant indicators):

Ever Persistently Absent		Pupil previously suspended	
Evidence of previous unauthorised absence		Pupil previously known to social care	
Pupils absent within the first week of term		Pupil with EHCP	
Pupil previously excluded		Pupil with SEND	

Information Shared (including views of the parent/child, where possible):

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SMART Target:	Strategies	Monitoring Milestones	Outcome
1.			
2.			

Signed:

Headteacher			
Child:			
Parent 1:		Parent 2:	