Dixons Unity Academy

Student Attendance Policy

Academic Year 2026-27

A concise overview of our attendance process, including timings for the day and key contacts, can be found below:

Attendance aim for all students	• 100%
Minimum expected attendance	• 97%
Academy site opens	• 7.50am
Students must be on site by	• 8.18am
Register opens	• 8.30am
Register closes	• 9.00am

	Name	Contact
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Attendance and admissions manager	• Samantha Smith	• ssmith@dixonsua.com
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Safeguarding officer	• Jessica Fox	• jfox@dixonsua.com
Academy reception	• Nichol Pace	• npace@dixonsua.com

Student Attendance Policy

Student attendance policy: document provenance

Approver	Trust board
Date of approval	August 2026
Policy owner	School and college trust leaders
Policy authors	Behaviour cross cutting team
Version	1.0
Date of next review	August 2027
Summary of changes in this review	• Legislative references throughout have been updated to reflect updates to Working Together to Improve School Attendance from July 2026, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. • Further clarity on academy responsibilities for oversight of students educated off-site and in alternative provision, including daily attendance and welfare monitoring. • Leave of absence section amended to clarify that leave of absence can only be granted in very exceptional circumstances by the principal.
Related policies and documents	• Anti-bullying • Child Protection and Safeguarding • Child Missing in Education • Medical conditions • Positive Behaviour • Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, the policy will be reviewed as per the review cycle. Should no substantive change be required at this point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.

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What to do as a family if your child is unable to attend school

Please see the attendance guidance document on the policies page of the relevant academy website for details of how to report a student absence and access appropriate support or guidance.

1.0 Policy statement

Dixons Academies Trust is committed to improving educational outcomes for all students and recognises the link between high attendance and attainment. Students who attend school regularly make much better progress socially and academically. High attendance has a positive impact on students' academic progress at all stages of education.

We take our duty to safeguard children and our mission to challenge educational and social disadvantage seriously. Securing great attendance for all students is at the heart of our work. We recognise that a strong attendance culture starts with our academies being somewhere our students want to be. We believe that improving attendance is everyone's business and will work with students and families collaboratively to remove barriers to attendance.

We recognise that improving attendance is a joint effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff, our trust, local authorities, and our local partners. Our academies will work in partnership with families to facilitate supportive routes to improve students' attendance by addressing barriers inside and outside of the academy. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working, we will explain the consequences clearly to our students and families. Where all other avenues have been exhausted, we will work with local authorities to enforce attendance through statutory intervention. Throughout this document we have used the term 'families' to refer to our students' parents, carers or others that hold parental responsibility, or 'PR', including the corporate parent for those to whom that applies.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance July 2026
- The Education Act 1996 and 2002
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Equality Act 2010
- Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

This policy relates to many other trust policies and, in particular, the following:

- Anti-bullying
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Child missing in education
- Medical conditions
- Positive behaviour

2.0 Scope and purpose

- To create an environment in which students are enabled to become mature and industrious, accepting responsibility for their own actions and preparing for future success.
- To form an active partnership with families to support the learning of their children.
- To ensure regular contact with students in order to safeguard their wellbeing.
- To provide every opportunity for our students to secure outstanding outcomes and reach their full potential.

3.0 Roles and responsibilities

Our academies will:

- accept that outstanding attendance is everyone's responsibility and follow the statutory guidance in 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- maintain a whole school culture promoting the benefits of high attendance
- monitor data regularly to identify patterns and implement attendance interventions

- formally recognise good attendance and punctuality (above 97%)
- challenge attendance that is less than good and set targets for students to improve
- intervene when poor attendance / punctuality becomes a problem and before it becomes a habit
- follow up on any non-attendance with no contact on the first day of absence with a phone call and / or home visit
- deal sympathetically with any problem a student may have which is causing attendance / punctuality to decline and always stay in regular contact with families
- act swiftly to reduce absence, in particular persistent and severe absence, with a specific focus on immediate support for vulnerable learners
- work actively with children and families in nursery and reception classes to emphasise the benefits of high attendance, to instill and reinforce good habits of attendance from the start of their educational journey
- ensure every child of statutory school age has access to full time education
- communicate a clear and transparent process around the management of attendance to families following the listed process: prevention and reward / recognition; support and challenge with punitive measures where necessary; and legal action and / or external agencies when other measures have no impact
- not grant extended leave during term time and will automatically refer to the local authority to fine
- involve the DSL (designated safeguarding lead) and any relevant external agencies if we have any safeguarding concerns
- support students with medical conditions or SEND to maintain the same ambition for attendance
- identify and support students with a social worker, taking into consideration specific issues which may have an impact on attendance
- have high expectations for students who are looked after or were previously looked after by the local authority and work in partnership with carers, families and the virtual school

Families will:

- encourage their child to attend the academy daily, be punctual and inform the academy immediately if their child is absent
- inform the academy of any hospital appointment in advance unavoidably scheduled during school time via the 'Request for Medical Leave of Absence' form which is available from the attendance team
- inform the academy of any problems which might affect their child's attendance
- cooperate with the academy if their child's attendance / punctuality is unsatisfactory
- make requests for special leave of absence for their child during term time by completing in advance an 'Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances' form which is available from the attendance team

Students will:

- always attend the academy unless prevented by a specific illness or unavoidable circumstances
- always arrive at the academy and lessons on time

4.0 Targets, attendance and punctuality

The target for all students is to achieve 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. The minimum expectation for all students is attendance over the academic year of 97%.

Attendance during one academy year	Equivalent days	Equivalent session	Equivalent weeks	Equivalent lessons missed
95%	9 days	18 sessions	2 weeks	54 lessons
90%	19 days	38 sessions	4 weeks	114 lessons
85%	29 days	58 sessions	6 weeks	174 lessons
80%	38 days	72 sessions	8 weeks	228 lessons
75%	48 days	96 sessions	10 weeks	288 lessons

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70%	57 days	114 sessions	11.5 weeks	342 lessons
65%	67 days	134 sessions	13.5 weeks	402 lessons

5.0 The impact of poor attendance on academic progress

If your child misses school on a regular basis, they are damaging their future life choices. Nationally, it has been proven that children with poor attendance in primary school miss out on making the expected progress in vital literacy and numeracy skills, and find it difficult to catch up. In secondary school, 19 days absence correlates, on average, to a grade at GCSE in all subjects.

6.0 Procedures

6.1 All our academies have in place a coherent system of rigorously monitoring student attendance. Class teachers, subject tutors, form tutors / advisors, middle leaders, senior leaders, home link officers and the education welfare officer all play key roles in this system, and our MIS is used to manage this information.

6.2 If a telephone call is not forthcoming, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised. If no contact has been made by day three (at the very latest) of the absence, the home link officer, the education welfare officer or a member of staff will visit the home of the student. This will be an opportunity to explain the possible consequences of a fine if attendance does not improve. If there is a history of poor attendance, the visit may be earlier.

6.3 Children's Social Care will be contacted by a member of the safeguarding team on the first day of an unexplained absence for any child with a child protection plan.

6.4 If a student is absent for three consecutive days (and contact has been made from home), contact will be made with home to gauge when the student will be returning to the academy and to arrange for missed work to be sent home, if appropriate.

6.5 At the end of the week, an unauthorised absence report is generated and a letter or text correspondence asking for an explanation is sent home. The list of students with unauthorised absences is also printed and passed on to the staff member with responsibility for the cohort.

6.6 If there is a suspected pattern developing in the absences of a particular student, or group of students, then a registration certificate can be printed. This is a record of attendance for the whole year, and it is sent home periodically in the student's annual report for families' information. It is a confidential document and, therefore, should be kept carefully and only shown to the student and / or their family.

7.0 Medical and dental appointments

These should be made outside academy hours. Any urgent medical and dental appointments will only be authorised on sight of proof by completing the 'Request for Medical Leave of Absence' form which is available from the attendance team. If the absence is authorised, families must ensure they collect the student from visitors' reception as no student will be allowed out of the academy unaccompanied unless there is prior agreement with the academy. Families must also ensure that the student is aware of the appointment and is ready waiting at the authorised time. It is not the responsibility of the academy to inform students of appointments. In emergency situations, we will ensure the student is aware of the appointment. In any other circumstances, the student has to make their own way to reception at the authorised time. For students with long term illness / medical needs or those that have an illness for a period of time, please refer to the medical conditions policy.

8.0 Leave of absence during term time

Leave of absence during term time is only permitted in very exceptional circumstances by the principal. Extended absence from the academy will be counted as unauthorised and will normally lead to a fixed penalty notice from the local authority in line with their code of conduct and the national framework for penalty notices. In order to avoid personal opinion and to ensure complete fairness for all, we refer all planned leave of absence to the authority. Local authorities may choose to prosecute in instances of repeated or prolonged leave of absence.

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9.0 Students who are late

9.1 Students who are absent when the register started being taken but arrive before the register is closed are defined as late. Students who arrive late after the register has closed but before the end of the session receive an unauthorised code of 'U' unless another absence code is more appropriate. The cutoff time will be determined by the individual academy and will be the same for every session and not longer than 30 minutes. We ask that all students are in the academy building no later than 10 minutes before the official start time so that they can get prepared and organised for the learning that day.

9.2 The attendance team will send a text message to families informing them when their child is late. In our secondary schools, lateness results in a same-day correction in line with the positive behaviour policy.

9.3 100% attendance is recognised in celebration assemblies and through certificates, letters and, in some academies, by positive behaviour points.

10.0 Persistent and severe absence (PA & SA)

10.1 Any student who has an overall attendance of below 90% is considered by the government to be in the persistent absence category. Any student who has an overall attendance of below 50% is severely absent.

10.2 Any student who is PA / SA will be monitored, signposted to support, and put on an action plan. The education welfare officer / attendance team will meet with students, and their families, whose attendance cause concern. Where necessary, home visits are made. Academies will work with local authorities to agree a joint approach for severely absent students. In situations of persistent unauthorised absence, a referral will be made to the local authority to consider a penalty notice fine or legal proceedings for a prosecution under s.444 of the 1996 Education Act.

11.0 Religious leave of absence

For a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body the family belongs to, students will be granted one day for each occasion of religious observance with a maximum of three days over one academic year. As a rule, 'a day set apart for religious observance' is a day when the student's family would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. These absences, if granted, will be recorded as authorised using the 'R' code. These are the codes as stipulated by the Department for Education and whilst absence is authorised, it does count against the child's attendance. This is the DfE's national policy.

12.0 Registers

12.1 The register is a legal document which must be completed fully and on time at AM and PM registration and then for every lesson throughout the day. If a student is not present at registration, they should be marked absent; however, if form tutors are aware of any appointments elsewhere, in or out of academy, these should be recorded using the relevant code. All academies follow the Department for Education guidance on the use of attendance codes and do not deviate from this.

12.2 There is very little post-registration truancy in any of our academies; however, staff must take a register in every lesson. If a member of staff suspects that a student is missing from the lesson, then they should notify the attendance team and DSL immediately. The absence register is emailed out to all key staff.

13.0 Strategies for promoting high attendance

Academy leaders promote a variety of strategies for high attendance. Strategies referred to in the DfE recently published papers are also used in order to maximise attendance and improve the life chances of all children:

Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024, updated July 2026) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

13.1 Outstanding achievement can only be achieved if it is recognised to be everyone's shared responsibility.

13.2 Trustees will:

- scrutinise attendance key performance indicators at their board meeting four times a year (including elective home education, managed moves in and out, fixed term exclusion and the use of alternative provision)
- hold the school trust leaders to account for explaining patterns of attendance within and between academies

13.3 The school trust leaders will:

- scrutinise the use of attendance codes in academies

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- oversee decisions regarding elective home education and permanent exclusion

13.4 The senior attendance champion will:

- set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- establish and maintain effective systems for tackling student absence and make sure they are followed by school staff
- form positive relationships with students and families
- set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students and communicate expectations through all available channels
- visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance through academy life
- recognise that attendance is a continuous process

13.5 The academy leadership team will:

- form positive relationships with students and families
- ensure that there is a whole academy approach which reinforces good attendance
- monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- ensure that the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- ensure that there is a named senior attendance champion on the senior leadership team and allocate sufficient time and resources
- return academy attendance data to the local authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated offsite, are implemented (see academy expectations)
- ensure daily oversight of attendance and welfare for students educated off-site or in alternative provision
- ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence and is then interpreted to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families

13.6 Class teachers will:

- rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually
- emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate students to be in the classroom
- promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions
- apply rewards and sanctions consistently follow up on absence and lateness with students to identify barriers and reasons for absence
- contact families regarding absence and punctuality
- review form or tutor group attendance weekly to share data, identify issues, intervene early and help set targets
- periodically review practice and consistency both across and between departments
- proactively promote attendance practice as part of staff induction
- consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of students
- actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their families
- form positive relationships with students and families
- comply with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, and other attendance related legislation
- contribute to the evaluation of academy strategies and interventions
- work with other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families

14.0 Attendance monitoring

14.1 The attendance officer monitors student absence on a daily basis.

14.2 Families are expected to call the academy in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see above).

14.3 If a student's absence goes below 90%, the student will be formally monitored with family involvement.

14.4 The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the child will be classified as a persistent absentee.

14.5 The severe absence threshold is 50%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 50%, the child will be classified as a severely absent student.

14.6 Our trust and academies will use data to monitor severe absence, persistent absence and 'low attendance', (this is defined as overall absence being greater than or equal to 5%).

14.7 Student-level absence data is collected each cycle by our trust. The underlying academy-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with trustees.

15.0 Legal sanctions

15.1 Our academies will work hard to engage with all our families to ensure that, where a student has low attendance, support is identified and implemented, where appropriate and where possible. We expect that all families will engage positively with support and that attendance will improve as a result. However, as a last resort, the academy will refer to the local authority who can issue a fixed penalty notice under the national framework. If the unauthorised absence exceeds the local authority threshold for a fixed term penalty notice, the LA may instigate legal proceedings for an offence under s.444(1) and (1A) of the 1996 Education Act. In exceptional cases, this can lead to a custodial sentence of up to three months and / or a fine up to £2,500 (where the child is of compulsory school age).

15.2 Under the current national penalty notice framework, if issued with a penalty notice, families must pay £160 within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same student is charged at flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. Where the national threshold is met for a third time within three years, alternative action will be considered. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other legal interventions.

15.3 The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This will take into account:

- whether support is appropriate, whether families have engaged in support and whether further support to improve attendance is necessary
- whether another form of legal intervention is more likely to improve attendance
- the national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during academy hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the family or withdraw the notice.

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Appendix 1 - Attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Child is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Child is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Child arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than school		
K	Attending an approved educational activity arranged by the local authority	Child attending provision arranged by LEA
V	Educational trip or visit	Child is on an educational visit / trip organised, or approved, by the academy
P	Sporting activity	Child is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the academy
W	Work experience	Child is on a work experience placement
B	Off-site educational activity	Child is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the academy
D	Dual registered	Child is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Regulated performance / employment	Child has been granted a leave of absence to participate in regulated performance or regulated employment abroad
M	Medical / dental appointment	Child is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Child has an interview with a prospective employer / educational establishment
S	Study leave	Year 11 child is on student leave during their public examinations
X	Not required to be in the academy	Child of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	School age student has a part time timetable	School aged child with temporary part-time timetable
C	Authorised leave of absence	Child has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Other authorised absence		
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Child from a Traveller community whose parents are travelling for occupational purposes and have been granted leave of absence by the academy
R	Religious observance	Child is taking part in a day of religious observance set aside by the religious body the family belongs to
I	Illness	Academy has been notified that a child will be absent due to illness

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E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Child has been suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision has been made
Q	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements	Child is unable to attend school because an LEA has a duty to make access arrangements but has failed to do so
Y1	Unable to attend due to normal transport not being available	Child is unable to attend due to academy not being within walking distance and transport normally provided by academy or LEA not being available (walking distance via nearest available route for a child under the age of 8 is 2 miles and 3 miles for 8 and over)
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Child is unable to travel due to disruption caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of academy premises being closed	Part of school premises are unavoidable out of use and child cannot be practicably accommodated in parts of premises in use
Y4	Unable to attend due to whole academy site being closed	School was planned to be open but closed unexpectedly
Y5	Unable to attend due to student criminal justice detention	Child is unable to attend due to police detention, youth detention or detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Child is prohibited from travelling or attending due to legislation or guidance relating to the transmission of infection or disease
Y7	Unable to attend due to any other unavoidable cause	Child is prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause not covered by code Y1 – Y6 (nature of unavoidable cause will be recorded)

Unauthorised absence

G	Unauthorised holiday	Child is on a leave of absence that was not approved by the academy
N	Reason not established	Child is absent for an unknown reason (this code will be amended when the reason emerges or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided within five school days)
O	Unauthorised absence	The academy is not satisfied with reason for child's absence or reason for absence is not established
U	Arrival after registration	Child arrived at the academy after the register closed but before the end of the session

Administrative codes

Z	Child not on admission register	Register set up, but child has not yet joined the academy
#	Planned academy closure	Whole academy closure due to half term / bank holiday / INSET day

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