



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

An Daras Multi-Academy Trust **Attendance Policy**

The An Daras Multi Academy Trust (ADMAT) Company
An Exempt Charity Limited by Guarantee
Company Number/08156955

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Attendance Policy

Rationale:

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance at school is essential for a child's education and well-being and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. Achieving good attendance for all pupils is therefore a vital part of our home-school relationship.

Since the pandemic, securing pupils' good attendance has been an increasing challenge for schools. Overall absence rates and persistent absence rates have risen. Poor attendance impacts on pupil outcomes. It is therefore essential that our schools are doing all that they reasonably can.

We are aiming to secure a good attendance record for all pupils and are grateful to our supportive parents and carers who work with us to promote and encourage good attendance by their children. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including the pupil premium grant.

Trust staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

100% attendance is always our ultimate goal although we realise that this is not always possible due to illness or other circumstances. Consequently, we will always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers.

Schools will seek to recognise and reward very good attendance.

To meet our objectives all individual Trust schools, have an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support regarding the attendance of our pupils.

95% attendance is our minimum expectation for all schools (or in line with the current national average). Our annual aspirational attendance target for Trust schools (and therefore the Trust as a whole) will always be 97%+ overall attendance.

In working together to improve attendance our schools will:

- Expect high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school.
- Rigorously monitor and use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- Discuss patterns with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

- Facilitate the right support to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support that they need in a timely manner.
- Formalise support where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with.
- Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

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

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Aims:

1. To further improve the overall attendance percentage of pupils at our schools, including those in the most significant groups
2. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
3. To continue to develop positive and consistent communication between home and the schools.
4. To maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data.
5. To maintain an effective partnership with the Attendance Improvement Officers and other agencies.
6. To recognise the individual needs of each pupil and family with regard to attendance.

Monitoring Attendance and Supporting Families:

The Trust Board and individual school LGBs/Leadership monitor attendance data regularly. As a result, they are clear on the common causes where this is an issue, have a robust and effective strategy in place and are able to demonstrate sustained improvement in pupils' attendance over time. Regular monitoring by school leaders will ensure in individual cases where a child's attendance drops below 90% or if there are any unauthorised absences, this will be discussed at the termly meetings with the Attendance Improvement Officers and an appropriate personalised plan to rectify the issue will be established.

Analysis of weekly absence and persistent absence rates is undertaken for individual pupils, cohorts, year groups and different groups (e.g., boys and girls, pupils with SEND, pupils who are eligible for free school meals) and compared with the published local, regional and national averages for all pupils. Leaders consider patterns in year groups and classes and take into account links with other improvement work such as safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, school culture and work on the curriculum. Data analysis is used to identify the typical reasons for absence, the potential trends and inform the school's strategies and approaches. Schools across the Trust have a strong understanding of the causes of absence and a clear strategy in place to address them. Strategies for reducing persistent and severe absence are likely to include access to wider support services.

Reasons for a child's absence or persistent lateness will be investigated by the school and an informal meeting with parents will be arranged to see what structures and support can be put in place to achieve improvement.

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (the equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across the full school year) this is referred to as persistent absence. Where absence drops below 50% this is referred to as severe absence.

Processes:

It is essential that the school is informed of the reasons for a child's absence so that it can be recorded accurately.

All absence figures have to be reported to the Attendance Improvement Officers and the Department for Education. Absence data is also recorded on a pupil's annual report.

It is vital that pupils arrive on time for the start of the school day. This positive start establishes a good learning routine for the day.

Pupils arriving after registration must take their child to the main reception office where they will be marked as 'late arrival'. The attendance register officially closes at 9.15am arrival after this time will be marked as 'unauthorised absence' unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Safeguarding and Child Protection:

The Trust and its schools take the safety of every pupil very seriously and if they do not attend, we need to have a prompt and valid reason for their absence. Acting swiftly and effectively on pupil absence is key to addressing potential safeguarding concerns. We must be sure that any pupil who has not left home in the morning and failed to arrive at their school is safe. This is why we have a Trust policy of immediate contact with parents or carers if we have not been contacted by phone, text, letter or email giving a valid reason for absence.

It is the parent/carers responsibility to inform the school promptly of any absence on the morning of the absence by 9.00am. If no valid reason is provided then this will be coded as an 'unauthorised absence'.

Each school implements guidance from the current **Keeping Children Safe in Education** (KCSIE) document in regard to attendance issues.

Absence due to Ill Health:

When a pupil is unwell the school should be called on the first morning of absence as early as possible and by 9.00am at the latest. If a phone call or message is not received, the school will attempt to contact the parent on the first day of absence by phone/and or text message.

The school may require a letter explaining the reason why the pupil is not at school.

If the school are unable to contact parents/guardians and have no recorded explanation or letter explaining a child's absence it will be recorded as 'unauthorised' and referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer.

GP consent may be requested if a pupil has high levels of authorised absence through sickness and a parent will be invited to an informal meeting to complete the GP consent form. This will enable an appointed person from the school to enquire if the pupil has attended the surgery but not to share any confidential information.

Granting leaves of absence

Appointments:

For out of school dental and medical treatment the school office should normally be informed in writing, in advance of the date and time of the appointment. The school may also request to see a record of any pre-booked dental or medical appointments.

Exceptional Circumstances Leave Requests during Term Time:

*"Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head teachers/Heads of Schools may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances".*

"Exceptional" in this context is regarded as being unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child: outweighing the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, and it will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request.

*The normal expectation is that requests are likely to be **refused**.*

A request form and a letter explaining the need for agreed absence in term time must be obtained by the parent from the individual school office and returned to the Executive Head teacher/Head of School ideally one month prior to the proposed date of the absence.

Parents may be asked to come in and speak with the Executive Head teacher/Head of School to discuss an exceptional leave request in term time if the school feels it is required.

The Trust Board of Directors have given delegated authority for requests of up to 2 days to be decided by the Executive Head teacher. Any requests for longer than this will be referred to a panel from the Local Governing Body.

If a pupil is removed from the school for an unauthorised holiday, then the school must refer it to the local authority. The local authority may issue a penalty notice which carries a fine. Non-payment of this fine by parents can result in prosecution.

Term Dates:

These are published on each school's website as well as being regularly listed in newsletters.

Schools will aim to give as much notice as possible in order to assist parents with planning ahead.

Part-time time tables

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a part-time timetable for a prolonged period.

National framework for penalty notices

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve will usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. They will usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence). Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and will only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance.

Trust schools will not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and will make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency. The typical threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

Further guidance on the use of penalty notices can be found in paragraphs 185 to 201 in the DfE guidance document on 'Working together to improve school attendance (see link below).

Name and contact of the school's Senior Attendance Champion: *(insert details here)*

Contact details of the school staff who parents / carers should contact about attendance on a day to day basis: *(insert details here)*

For more detailed support on attendance parents / carers should contact *(insert details here)*

Supporting guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence>