Unified Academy

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

2026/2027

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Introduction

Unified Academy aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment that supports students to develop the personal, social and academic skills they will need to become positive young people and move on to their chosen next step after school. To achieve this the school will work closely with students, families and carers to ensure students attend school fully and regularly.

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all stakeholders including parents/carers and students understand the importance of attending school and accessing education as well as their roles and responsibilities. There is a clear positive link between students' achievement and their level of attendance at school. We want all the students to achieve the very best they can and for this they need to be in school regularly. Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (5 to 18 year-olds) with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan attend an establishment authorised by their Local Authority. Unified Academy aims to support and assist parents/carers to meet this responsibility.

School Responsibilities

The principal holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), home school link worker and administration staff. Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the Arbor attendance Module. It is a statutory duty for Unified Academy to maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents and may be called for as evidence by a Court. The principal is the only person who can authorise an absence. Unified Academy adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different, and Unified Academy acknowledges that not one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to support the student and their family to attend school regularly. It is essential that parents/carers keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

Overview

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers, students and all members of school staff. To support students to attend well the school will:

- Monitor the attendance pattern of all students weekly. The Admin Team and HSLW's will make contact to support students, parents and carers in cases where attendance levels cause concern.

- Share a termly overview of student progress, including attendance, and achievement.
- Listen to, acknowledge and respect the views and perceived barriers to attendance raised by students, families and carers.
- Work constructively and flexibly with students, families and carers to put support in place to minimise or remove barriers to good attendance.
- Work with students, families and carers to create plans which support sustainable transition into full time education at Unified Academy.
- Work with outside agencies to ensure students, families and carers receive all the support they require.
- Celebrate good and improving attendance like any other academic student progress or achievement, in line with the school's praise and reward policy.
- Share information provided by the DFE and Local Authority where necessary.

Typical Attendance Levels and Support from School

95% -100% Excellent	- Regular contact between tutor and family or carers. - HSLW/attendance officer may contact family/carer if attendance pattern drops over a week.
95 - 85 % Moderate	In addition to above, - Meeting with HSLW maybe called to discuss barriers to attendance and agree additional support.
85 – 75% Persistent absentees	In addition to above, - Meeting with member of SLT will be called to create a bespoke plan of interventions to reduce barriers to attendance. - Bespoke transition plan back into full time education may be agreed and monitored weekly
Below 75%	In addition to above, - School will seek support from Surrey Inclusion Service

Parent/Carers Responsibilities

To support students to attend well parents and carers will:

- Make the school aware of any academic or social concerns promptly
- Make the school aware of any existing or potential barriers to good attendance.
- Maintain open and honest communication with the school.

- Present a positive attitude towards school attendance to their child or young person
- Avoid taking holidays within term time, wherever possible
- Wherever possible, arrange for medical appointment outside of school hours
- Work collaboratively with the school and any third parties to maintain agreed support packages or interventions

Absence Procedures for Parents/Carers

Contact us soon as possible on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence. The telephone number for Unified Academy is: 01737 215488

If your child is absent the school will:

- Telephone and/or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Send you a letter asking you to contact us about your child's absence.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if the absence persists without contact from you.

Safeguarding students who are absent without reason

Safeguarding pupils is paramount at Unified Academy. In line with the statutory guidance for schools set out in KCSIE 2025 the school will attempt to contact parents or carers in instances where absences are unexplained. Where the school cannot make contact, the emergency contacts for a pupil will be contacted. If no contact can be made, the school may refer to social services or other agencies for support. This is to ensure the welfare of pupils and their families or carers. This process will occur for every day of non-attendance without reason.

Arrival Times/Lateness

Unified Academy expects all students to arrive on time for their scheduled provision. Late arrival is disruptive and can lead to students missing out on important work and information. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage further absence.

School begins at 9.00am (unless agreed otherwise).

Registers open at 9.00am and close at 9.30am for the morning session.

In the afternoon registers open at 12:30pm and close at 13.00pm.

All students MUST arrive for school on time. If students arrive 5-30 minutes after their start time they will be marked as late (L Code). If they arrive after 30 minutes of their start time they will be marked as unauthorised (U or O code).

In circumstances such as bad weather or transport difficulties, the register may be kept open for a longer period of time. If a start time has been agreed that is later than when the school register closes students will be marked as unauthorised until they arrive for their session – at which point the mark will be changed to 'present' if they have attended on time.

Persistent lateness may lead to a fixed penalty notice.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classed as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification or a request from a parent/carer, e.g. if a child has been unwell. Evidence may be required in order to authorise an absence, e.g. hospital appointment letter. There may be other occasions where the school will authorise an absence e.g. family wedding/funeral; any requests of this type must be made in writing to the Principal.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority becoming involved.

Support will be offered initially but if unauthorised absences continue, the LA has the right to apply a fine or legal proceedings. Examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school to go shopping, to care for a sibling, for a family birthday.
- Refusal by the student to attend an allocated session.
- Absences that have never been explained.
- Children who arrive too late to get a mark.
- Illness without medical evidence.
- Holidays in term-time.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a student is unwell, parents/carers should contact the school before 9am on the first day of absence. A call must be made for each day of absence. When a student is absent due to illness or a medical appointment, evidence may be requested. This can be an appointment card, letter, prescription, prescribed medication packs or boxes with the child's name printed on them. This will still be a negative mark. In some cases, the absence is unauthorised until the evidence is received. Once the evidence has been received the absence will be changed to 'authorised'. When Unified Academy is concerned about the amount of school missed due to illness, we may share information with external agencies such as social services. In some cases, the school nurse or Designated Safeguarding Lead may make an unannounced welfare visit to the home.

Persistent Absenteeism

Those students deemed to be persistently absent will receive support from the school. In addition, we may involve external agencies including social services and Surrey Inclusion Team. Parents/carers are expected work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. However, parents and carers need to be aware that if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, officers from the LA can use sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice (this includes going on holiday in term time), the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child,** if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

The school will work with parents and carers to try to avoid this action being taken through collaborative working.

School Targets and Initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 90% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to success. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided to you and we ask for your full support.

Summary

Unified Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents/carers and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students to ensure a high level of attendance whenever possible.