



LINKS
ACADEMY
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

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Attendance Policy

January 2026

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Attendance Policy January 2026

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Committee:	Academy Academic Improvement Committee (AAIC)
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Amendments

Periodically the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees will add to or revise the content within this policy. Any revision made are noted below.

Edition	Date	Revision made by	Content revised
1.0	06.01.25	S Porritt	Reviewed and updated against HCC policy. Policy updated in line with new DfE guidance and HCC. Updated to MAT format.
			Names may be redacted for GDPR and Cyber Security purposes.
1.1	27.01.26	S Porritt	Updated as per HCC Model Policy: P.5: Working together to improve school attendance (live link added) P.5: Keeping children safe in education (live link added) P.13/14: Notice to Improve P.15: DfE summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

			P.15: HCC Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences (live link added) Student/Students changed to Child/Children
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Please note that for the purpose of this policy, the following terminology will apply:

Headteacher	Executive Head, Head of School, Headteacher
Trust	Links Multi Academy Trust
School	Links Multi Academy Trust St Albans, Links Multi Academy Trust Hatfield and Cedars

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Introduction and Background

Links Multi Academy Trust recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for children to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

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.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called **“Working together to improve school attendance”** and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

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

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children’s welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every child has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that children succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that children have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It has been developed in consultation with the Headteacher, Trustees, School, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school’s commitment to attendance being everyone’s responsibility. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor child attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE’s statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is a rule of this school that children must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Links Multi Academy Trust, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our children from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day-to-day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the SLT Attendance Lead/Champion (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is:

School	Name	Contact
Links Multi Academy Trust – Hatfield	S Stagg	01707 346170 attendanceHTF@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Links Multi Academy Trust – St Albans	J Buckland	01727 836150 attendanceSTA@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

For Website: attendanceSTA@ / attendanceHTF@ to replace names

The Trustee with responsibility for monitoring attendance is Mrs Thomson.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department for Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.

- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance deteriorate.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any child's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session.
- Shopping trips.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Day trips.

- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A child is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All children who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A child who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as **'severely absent'**. Children within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Absence Procedures

The contact details of the school, children and parent/carers should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis:

School	Contact	Option	Email
Links Multi Academy Trust – Hatfield	01707 346170	1	adminhatfield@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Links Multi Academy Trust – St Albans	01727 836150	1	admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Cedars PSB	01727 836150	2	admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

All telephone calls and email go directly to the Links Multi Academy Trust Administration Team/office

School Admin/office will:

- take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school MIS system
- notify parents/carers if a child fails to attend a session, and on each successive day of absence to ensure the effective safeguarding for all children.

We monitor and review all children's absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.30am.
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence,

you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised.

- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.30am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested (where school have reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of the absences) where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness see Annex C.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding.
- The Local Authority will be informed if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate) as The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Section 13 requires schools to inform the local authority of any children absent from school and where absences amount to more than 10 or more days, either consecutively or irregularly and have been unauthorised. This means school will have unauthorised 20 am/pm sessions of absences. Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under **section 175 of the Education Act 2002** to investigate any unexplained/unauthorised absences. At this point your child will be considered to be “absent from education”.

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child’s attendance is causing concern and/or where punctuality is a concern.
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our SLT Attendance Lead, Trust Attendance Officer, Pastoral Team and/or Form Tutor.
- Consider and offer reasonable adjustments.
- Offer a Families First Assessment to ensure appropriate support is considered.
- Create a personalised robust support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person’s role in improving the attendance patterns of your child.
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from the Local Authority Statutory Attendance Support Team and consider appropriate legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill, which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Children who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for children at Links Multi Academy Trust are:

Gates open: 8.30am

Registration starts: 8.40am

Registration closes: 9.10am

End of the school day: 3.00pm Monday-Thursday / 2.10pm Friday

How we manage lateness:

- The school is open from 8.30am when children can begin to come into school;
- Morning registration is taken from 8.40am until 9.00am;
- Children arriving after 9.10am are required to come into school via the school office and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded on the MIS system.
- At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns.

Should a child be accessing a pre-agreed alternative start time arrangement to their school day, children will be recorded as 'L' (late) should they arrive no more than 10 minutes after their official start time and 'U' (unauthorised late) should this be exceeded, unless a valid explanation has been received.

If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with the SLT Attendance Lead and/or the Trust Attendance Officer, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school seeking advice and guidance from the Local Authority.

Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can consider a Families First Assessment, use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some children face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include children who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these children; however, we will work with families and children to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all children who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

See Annex A for DfE summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

The name and contact details of the school staff members children and parent/carers should contact for support that is more individual with attendance:

School & Main Contact		
Links Multi Academy Trust – Hatfield 01707 346170 adminhatfield@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk		
Name	Position	Email
Mrs Porritt	Trust Attendance Officer	sporritt@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Mr Laud	Assistant Headteacher	tlaud@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Mrs Radmore-Welch	SENCo / Senior Practitioner	nradmore@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Mrs Bruce	SENCo	mbruce@linkscademy.herts.sch.uk
Miss Stagg	DSL / Assistant Headteacher	sstagg@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

School & Main Contact		
Links Multi Academy Trust – St Albans (including Cedars PSB) 01727 836150 admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk		
Name	Position	Email
Mrs Porritt	Trust Attendance Officer	sporritt@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Miss Wallace	Senior Pastoral Leader	twallace@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Miss Nash	SENCo / Assistant Headteacher	gnash@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
Mr Buckland	DSL / Assistant Headteacher	jbuckland@linkscademy.herts.sch.uk
Miss Crawford	Lead Practitioner PSB	mcrawford@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

Local Authority Attendance Support Team

Local Authority Attendance Support Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents/Carers are expected to work with the school and Local Authority to address any attendance concerns. Parent/Carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex B for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct) or other legal options available to the Local Authority such as prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parent/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parent/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carers may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carers is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Notice to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a Penalty notice is used. 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 should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any impact on a parent's behaviour (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence). There will be no restriction on the number of times as parent may receive a Notice to Improve of the possible issuing of a Penalty Notice.

See Annex B for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct.

There is no entitlement in law for children to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. **The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.**

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's

overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. A Notice to improve will not be issued for absences related to unauthorised leave of absence in term time. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Hertfordshire Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

At Links Multi Academy Trust 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parent/Carers are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Deletion from Roll

For any child leaving Links Multi Academy Trust prior to expected leaving date, parents/carers are required to provide school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all our children, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parent/carers keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the child and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register within five days of the child being enrolled. In addition to this, every deletion from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that child, and in any event no later than the time at which the child's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a child's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the child has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual children or groups of children when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit child attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis Education (Information about Individual Children) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent children are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Annex A:

DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. From 19th August 2024

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance applies from 19 August 2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

Annex B:

HERTFORDSHIRE CODE OF CONDUCT: PENALTY NOTICES FOR PARENTS OF TRUANTS AND PARENTS OF CHILDREN EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003 SECTION 23

[Penalty notices for unauthorised absence | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

Annex C:

Illness Absence Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/626669cb8fa8f523b7221b98/UKHSA-should-I-keepmy_child_off_school_guidance-A3-poster.pdf%20%20

DfE external document template (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Wellbeing: national resources - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk)

Illness and your child's education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Is my child too ill for school? - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Policy Review – Attendance

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Academy Academic Improvement Committee (AAIC) every year, but may be reviewed and updated more frequently if necessary.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the AAIC and the Trustees in February 2026.

It is due for review in February 2027 up to 12 months from the above date.

Signature

Date:

Mr Allen

Executive Headteacher

Signature

Date:

Mrs Lynch

Chair of Trustees