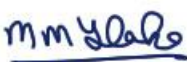


Shires MAT Attendance Policy 2025-2026

Policy Name: Shires MAT Attendance Policy 2025-26	Policy Reference: MAT-SP21
Owner/Reviewer: Mr Jack Worton, MAT Safeguarding Lead	Review Date:
Approved by: Mr Lee Gray, MAT CEO	Approval Date:
Mr Mike Thake, Chair of Trust Board 	Review Frequency: Annually
	Date of Next Review: Autumn Term 2026
Local Details – Key Contacts, Appendices Reviewed:	Review Date:
Approved by Local Governance Committee	Approval Date:

Version	Date	Details
1.0	July 2023	Policy written for the MAT
2.0	July 2024	Policy reviewed inline with DFE Guidance Changes for Sept 2024

Safeguarding Statement The Shires Multi Academy Trust holds safeguarding at the core of its culture and fully recognises the risks associated with poor attendance. It is therefore policy and procedure that pastoral, safeguarding and attendance teams work in constant liaison through supportive, targeted and relentless intervention to reduce and alleviate any potential concerns, through effective early help and intervention.

Introduction

Our expectation is for all students to have 100% attendance and 100% punctuality to school and all lessons. There is strong statistical evidence to show that students who achieve this are more successful in school, make greater progress and that they are more likely to achieve their academic potential. The table below further highlights the link between attendance and learning:

If attendance over the school year is...	...the student will miss this many days	...and this many lessons
100%	0	0
95%	10	50
90%	19	95
85%	29	145
80%	39	195
75%	49	245
70%	58	290

In addition to the academic reasons for attendance, national research also shows:

- Children with poor attendance make less progress than their peers.
- Children with poor attendance struggle to make strong social connections and friendships
- Children with poor attendance are more at risk of safeguarding issues including bullying.

The Shires Multi Academy Trust (MAT) values achievement of every kind and believes that we all respond well to having high expectations placed upon us.

This policy has been written in line with the following guidance: [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

Responsibilities

Although the legal responsibility for regular attendance at school rests with parents/carers, we regard the encouragement of good standards of attendance as a partnership with families designed to support the development of each individual student's potential.

If parents/carers have any concerns about their son/daughter's attendance or are concerned that there may be underlying reasons for him/her failing to attend school, then they should contact the attendance officer.

We ask that parents/carers support us by:

- not letting their son/daughter(s) take time off school for minor ailments.
- arranging appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays.
- not taking holidays during term time, (see guidance on this below).
- ensuring that their son/daughter attends punctually at the beginning of every day.
- ringing or emailing by 9:00am on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the student will return (we have a dedicated section of our phone line for this purpose). We ask that this procedure is repeated for any subsequent days' absence.
- sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on the student's return to school after an illness (this is a legal requirement).
- keeping us informed by telephone, letter or email on every subsequent day of absence after the first day.
- letting us know if there is any on-going medical reason that prevents their son/daughter attending school.

Each school will:

- follow up all first day unexplained absences by phone call / email / text as soon as possible.
- continue to monitor the absence of a student who does not subsequently return to school as indicated with no explanation, treating this as a safeguarding concern.
- remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality via letters, newsletters and the school website.
- publish students' attendance rate as part of their school reports.
- inform parents/carers if we have concerns regarding a student's attendance.
- challenge regular lateness.
- refer any serious attendance concerns to the Local Authority and their Education Welfare Service.
- in extreme cases, work with the appropriate authorities and exercise all possible powers we have to enforce attendance including prosecution.
- inform the local authority and discuss arrangements for the education of students who are likely to be absent for 10 days or more.
- communicate with the local authority and alternative education providers to support students with medical needs.
- Implement any early help or further support as necessary
- Utilise expertise across the school to reduce barriers to poor attendance

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Legally schools are required to distinguish and report on authorised and unauthorised student absence.

Lates and Punctuality

We believe that students need to develop good habits and be on time for school and every lesson. Schools will sanction students who are late, without good reason, in line with locally agreed protocols. Persistent lateness can lead to fixed penalty notices for parents/carers.

The DfE provides the following guidance on registration and coding lates:

'Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.'

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. This should be the same for every session and depending on the structure of the school day not longer than either 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place. (Working together to improve school attendance)

Late arrival before the register has closed will be marked as Code L and will count as present. A student arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with Code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Authorised Absence

A student's absence will be treated as authorised if he/she is unable to attend school due to illness, medical, dental treatment, the death of a close family member or where permission has been granted by the headteacher. Other authorised circumstances such as student study leave, work experience and educational visits will be entered by the school.

Parents/carers should note that, ideally, all medical and dental appointments should be arranged for after school so that students do not miss any lessons. Where this proves to be impossible then students should bring an appointment card to school and follow procedures in the relevant school's appendix in order to be granted leave of absence during the day. The student should then sign out at reception before leaving the school. In order that we might be sure of the whereabouts and safety of our students we ask that parents/carers ring the relevant school by 9:00am on the morning of the first day of absence to notify us of the situation as described above.

On return to school, written communication by the parents/carers is required to confirm the reason for absence and the dates involved. We ask that this is sent to the school office via email or in person.

In cases of long-term absence or where a student's attendance is causing concern, doctor's notes or other medical evidence will be requested and recorded.

Unauthorised Absence

If an absence cannot be authorised or a reason for absence is not forthcoming, the absence will be treated as unauthorised and parents/carers will be contacted by the school in order to seek a valid reason. It is at the school's discretion as to whether absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Extended Periods of Absence (including Holidays)

Please note, under recent amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) regulations, 2006, headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. All applications are assessed on an individual basis by each headteacher. In such exceptional circumstances, headteachers determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted. The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the amended regulations. It is for the headteacher to decide what is considered as exceptional circumstances. However, under these amendments, family holidays do **NOT** qualify as exceptional circumstances. However, leave to attend a high-level sporting commitment or to travel with the family due to the illness of a close family member may be deemed as exceptional circumstances. The schools' term dates are published a year in advance and are made available on their websites in the expectation that parents/carers will ensure that holidays are taken during school holiday times.

Formal Action / Penalty Notices for absences including: (Holidays, Lateness after registers close and any other unauthorised absence.

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

The strongest factor in underperformance at SATS, GCSE and A Level is irregular or poor attendance and it is our belief that we would be failing in our responsibility if we sanctioned time off school in all but the most exceptional circumstances. Parents/Carers are therefore asked to respect these new regulations under which we must now work, and that if there is a need to take your son/daughter out of school during term time, it must be made very clear in the request how the circumstances are exceptional. In such circumstances, requests for the school to authorise absence should be made by writing to the headteacher in advance, not in retrospect.

Applications for leave of absence, which are made and refused, will result in the absence being unauthorised, which may result in legal action against parents/carers, by Penalty Notice, if the student is absent from school during that period.

When a school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected to make the following considerations to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case:

- Is support appropriate in this case? If yes, schools are expected to continue with the existing support without a penalty notice or issue a Notice to Improve if that support is not working or is not being engaged

with. A penalty notice can be issued if either has not worked. If no, for example a holiday in term time, a penalty notice should be issued subject to the other conditions below.

- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would further support or one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010 such as where a pupil has a disability?
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment? If the answer to those questions is yes, then a penalty notice should be issued. If not, another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

Penalty Notices:

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Payment of Penalty Notices:

The payment must be paid directly to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice. 61

- If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. 199. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.
- The penalty notice system is not a money making scheme and local authorities should not have income targets. Any revenues collected through the system must be ringfenced for attendance.
- Monies collected should first be used for administration of the penalty notice system and prosecution. Any surplus left after this should be spent on attendance support. In practice, support means any other activity to improve attendance short of a penalty notice or prosecution in line with this guidance. This revenue should not be considered part of wider local authority funding and relied upon to fund the core attendance expectations of the local authority or be pooled in wider legal services budgets or allocated outside the local authority's attendance functions. Any remaining surplus at the end of the year must be paid to the Secretary of State

Work and absence

Every lesson missed is an opportunity missed. Although every effort is made to support students in catching up with work missed, simply cannot be made up, so students inevitably lose out and their progress will be affected.

- Students who have permission to be absent from school (see above) are expected to get work in advance from teachers and make up any written work missed as soon as they can.
- Students who are off school for an extended length of time may obtain work to complete during their absence. This may be obtained by contacting the relevant pastoral leader.
- Students who are absent without notice (e.g. due to illness) are expected to complete all work missed. We ask that parents/carers also monitor this, to ensure all work is completed.

Request for leave of absence

If medical or dental appointments have to be made in school time, an appointment card or a letter from parents/carers should be shown to the Attendance Officer at least 48 hours prior to the day concerned and a pass will be issued.



Parent/carers who would like to request a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances should write a letter to the headteacher in advance.

Part-time timetables

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a student's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package:

- A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution.
- Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the student is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.
- A review must take place every two weeks.
- There must be documented evidence of parent/carer agreement to the part-time timetable, effectively agreeing to supervise the student when not in school

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a student being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

Schools must inform the Local Authority, through the secure portal, of the initial arrangements for part-time timetables for all students and upon each review where the arrangements continue.

Students attending Off-site Provision-eg Alternative Provision, MET, work experience etc

All students who attend an off-site provision are members of the student community (and often vulnerable) and schools must ensure they are safeguarded at all times. Therefore, schools will:

- always make a daily phone call to the off-site provider to check if a student is present or absent;
- follow the same protocols as with other student absences by also contacting the parents/carers, in addition to any contact that the off-site provider may also make to pursue the reason for absence; and
- prioritise a home visit (where contact cannot be established with the parent/carer) to ensure the student is safe and well by the end of day 2.

Elective Home Education and Deregistration

The 1996 Education Act states that, *'it is the duty of parents to secure an appropriate full-time education for their children of compulsory school age'*. Parents/carers can carry out this duty by ensuring their child attends school or parents/carers may decide to take on the duty to educate their child/children themselves and educate them at home – this is called Elective Home Education.

We respect the right of parents/carers to educate their child at home, however, are aware that sometimes this is a response to dissatisfaction with school or other difficulty. We encourage parents/carers to discuss concerns with appropriate school leaders in order to allow the opportunity to find solutions and provide support.

On receipt of a written request to home educate, school leaders must complete all actions in line with the latest Worcestershire guidance, including documenting any meetings/interventions after elective home education has been discussed. The letter and learner profile (including risk assessment) and, where possible, the elective home education checklist must be sent to the Local Authority, through the secure portal, within 5 working days of the request being made.

In addition, an appropriate member of school staff will contact a family 3 weeks after the decision to home educate to offer further support or to enable the speedy process of readmission if a return is requested.

The numbers of students moving to home education is closely monitored by school leaders, MAT leaders and by Trustees. Schools must keep detailed records regarding elective home education and this is scrutinised regularly to ensure all legal processes and best practice guidelines are met.

Schools are permitted to remove compulsory-school-aged children from roll only under certain circumstances defined in Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Removing a child from the school roll is a very important decision. Children who fall out of the education system are likely to have poor outcomes and may be exposed to increased risk of harm. Schools must follow correct procedures to ensure that they do not breach their legal and safeguarding duties. Students must not be deleted from the school roll without authorisation from the headteacher.

Where students have moved out of area, students are only deleted from the register when the school is satisfied that the student has been added to the register of a new provider. In cases where this cannot be established, schools must follow the 'de-rolling checklist' provided by the Local Authority.

If, having completed the checks, the student's whereabouts have not been determined, the school may remove the student from roll after 20 days of continuous unauthorised absence. The school should then immediately:

- Upload the student's CTF file to the LA data base entering the appropriate code
- Inform the Local Authority using the secure portal

Schools must keep detailed records of the actions taken as part of the de-rolling checklist.

After a permanent exclusion, schools must ensure that a student's name is removed from the school admissions register if 15 school days have passed since the parents/carers were notified of the governing board's decision to not reinstate the students and no application has been made for an independent review panel; or the parents have stated in writing that they will not be applying for an independent review panel.

Where an application for an independent review panel has been made within 15 school days, the school must wait until the review has been determined, or abandoned, and until the governing board has completed any reconsideration that the panel has recommended or directed it to carry out, before removing a pupil's name from the register. Schools must inform the Local Authority immediately of the decision to permanently exclude a student in order to secure suitable sixth day provision.

Children Missing Education

- We ask all parents/carers to provide us with more than one emergency contact number. This gives us additional options to contact a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.
- The Attendance Officer prioritises phone calls and home visits for key students.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) follows appropriate procedures when carrying out reasonable enquiries-e.g. discussions with neighbours, relatives, landlords etc to determine whether a child may be at risk of harm.
- There may be occasion where we have been unable to contact parents/carers after 2 days, have no information as to the whereabouts of the student, there is no answer at the home address and neighbours do not know of their whereabouts. In that case, the DSL or Attendance Officer will request the police do a safe and well check on the second or third day of absence. We inform social services, through the Worcestershire Family Front Door, to let them know we have requested a police safe and well check.
- We inform the local authority of any student who has missed 10 school days or more without permission.
- When appropriate, the DSL will make a referral to social services and/or police.

Safeguarding students attending alternative provision

As part of each school's offsite/alternative provision protocols, schools make daily contact with providers to ensure students have arrived at their placement. Absences are then pursued to fulfil safeguarding duties.

Attendance administration

In line with guidance, all schools keep registers for 3 years. Registers are recorded digitally using the MIS. We only use codes that are in line with current DfE guidance (see appendix 4).



All staff have a responsibility to record registers accurately. Only attendance officers have the access rights to amend registers and have a responsibility to record absence accurately and honestly in line with the coding guidance above.

Monitoring

Staff at each school monitor attendance and punctuality; this includes designated members of SLT team, Attendance Officer(s); pastoral leaders and the form tutor. There are other staff (e.g. school nurse, family support worker) who may monitor attendance as part of their work with individual students and families.

The processes and responsibilities for monitoring are outlined in the appendix for each school.

Notifications to the Local Authority

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers must ensure their children of compulsory school age receive appropriate full-time education according to their age, ability and aptitude. This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision, or otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parent/carers may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Further information can be found at [Legal Measures Information for Parents and Carers - Worcestershire Children First Education Services](#)

A school will intervene at a higher level if:

- A student's attendance declines below 90% unless appropriate medical evidence is provided to excuse absence
- A student's attendance declines rapidly and there is little evidence of parental/carer engagement.
- A student's attendance declines rapidly and parents/carers refuse to accept their responsibility for ensuring that their son/daughter attends the school every day and on time
- Parents/Carers condone their son/daughter's absence or truancy
- Parents/Carers remove their son/daughter from school for unauthorised absence – including for family holidays.

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• A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The local authority's code of conduct states that:

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in cases of:

- An excluded child is found in a public place during the school hours of the first five days of exclusion
- Overt truancy is detected (including being caught on truancy sweeps)
- Parentally condoned absence is evidenced
- Unauthorised leave of absence has been taken (unauthorised family holidays)
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)

We are obliged to refer any issues to the Local Authority who will decide whether to issue a Penalty Notice.



The use of a Penalty Notice allows a parent/carer to discharge their liability for an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 by the payment of a fine. If the fine remains unpaid at the end of the 28-day payment period, the matter will automatically proceed to court for prosecution of the original offence unless the notice is withdrawn and the parent/carer will be notified in writing.

- Begin court proceedings when the school and Local Authority have exhausted all possible strategies
- It is hoped that the working partnership between the school, the parent/carer and the student will lead to positive outcomes with regard to any attendance and/or punctuality issues and avoid the need to begin legal proceedings. However, it should be noted, that if there is not an appropriate improvement in attendance and that if recourse has to be taken to legal action, this may result in a parental/carer fine of up to £2,500, a community order or, in extreme cases, a jail sentence of up to three months. If the court thinks it will help to stop your child missing school. The court may also impose a Parenting Order. Please see the following website for further details:
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/schoolslearninganddevelopment/yourchildswelfareatschool/dg_066966

Support for Attendance Issues

All schools in the MAT seek to be proactive when dealing with attendance issues and aim to provide high quality teaching, curriculum flexibility, mentoring and multi-agency working. If a student's absence gives cause for concern, a school leader will, where appropriate, instigate a support package and use its own internal and external early help services.

Rewards and sanctions

All schools have a variety of rewards for attendance and punctuality. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure students with medical conditions are not disadvantaged.

Students who are late (either to school or to lessons/tutor sessions throughout the day) will be sanctioned in accordance with the school's behaviour protocols if appropriate to the behaviour policy.

Students who abscond from lessons and/or leave the school site without permission at any time during the school day will be sanctioned in accordance with the Behaviour for Learning Protocols for each school.



A Simple Guide to the New Attendance Codes

What they are, when to use them, and their statistical meaning

	Attending an approved educational activity (present for statistical purposes)	Authorised absence	Attendance not possible (doesn't affect attendance score)
K	Attending educational provision arranged by LA, other than at school where they're a registered pupil. Note: Schools must also record the nature of the provision, eg home tutoring or attending courses at college		
C1		Absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance	
C2		Absent with leave, of compulsory school age and temporary reduced timetable does not require them to attend	
J1		Absent with leave for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institute	
Q		Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements by LA to facilitate their attendance	
Y1		Unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home and transport to and from school normally provided is not available	
Y2		Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency	
Y3		Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and pupil cannot be accommodated in parts of the premises that remain in use	
Y4		Whole school closed when school was due to meet for a session, but session has been cancelled	
Y5		Unable to attend because pupil is subject to a sentence of detention	
Y6		Travel to or attendance at school would be contrary/prohibited by guidance/law relating to incidence or transmission of infection or disease	
Y7		Unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause Note: Schools must record the nature of the unavoidable cause	

Notes:

- The new codes come into effect on 19 August 2024
- These codes have been introduced to improve the consistency and accuracy of recording attendance
- For codes K and Y7 you'll need to enter a note detailing the reason alongside the code, as the DfE has asked that this information be available on request

Growing Together