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Agate Momentum Trust Attendance Policy

<i>Date of Review</i>	<i>January 2024</i>
<i>Date reviewed by Governors /trustees</i>	<i>31st January 2024</i>
<i>Cycle of review</i>	<i>Annual</i>

Introduction

This Policy has been agreed by the trustees, Governors, Staff and Pupils of Agate Momentum Trust . It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies for improving attendance, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy has been updated taking account of and reflecting the guidance in ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ published by the Department for Education in May 2022 and it will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full time education.

The law entitles every child of compulsory age to an efficient , full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

Where parents decide to have their child educated at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly. This means their child should attend every day 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.

Schools with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have the highest attendance rates.

The importance of school attendance

Improving school attendance is everyone's responsibility. The trust knows that the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates. The foundation for good attendance is that the school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment for all pupils.

The trust recognises that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school therefore we will work in partnership with our parents and pupils to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and ensuring the right support is in place.

The value of consistently good attendance and the impact of absence from school

By the end of KS2 pupils who have consistently good attendance significantly outperform those with lower attendance.

Pupil outcomes in England indicate that average attendance for pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths is 96.5% whereas average attendance for those not achieving the expected standard is 95.3%. This suggests that a difference in regular attendance throughout a child's life at school of only 1.2% (a difference of only two days throughout a school year) makes a significant difference to their likelihood of achieving age related standards. We know that consistently good attendance is important as gaps in attainment for children who fail to reach age-related expectations become increasingly difficult to close once they appear and this is particularly the case for children whose attendance is lower.

Missing a few days of school here and there may not seem particularly significant, however research shows that it has a significant impact on children's learning. Children who develop a pattern of missing school now and again fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up. Patterns of poor attendance often begin in primary school and children who fall into this pattern of poor attendance are more likely to underachieve at secondary school. 35% of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school (that's 19 to 38 days per year) achieve five or more good GCSEs compared to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school days. Friendships are also affected by persistent absence. It is more difficult for children who miss school to form stable relationships with their classmates and research shows that children who have difficulty forming stable friendships are significantly more likely to underperform at school.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Policy objectives:

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

Promoting Good Attendance:

The Trustees, Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include:

- Newsletters
- Home/school agreement
- attendance celebration assemblies including award of attendance cup/trophy
- 'Attendance fairy' will promote good attendance with small incentives for children in EYFS.
- Termly certificates and prizes for 100% attendance eg 100% rulers pencils etc
- Targeting children and families with daily check ins phone calls and praise
- 1:1 mentoring with children on persistent absence list
- friendly meet and greet with praise on the gate for attending school
- corridor praise for targeted children
- certificates for improved attendance displayed on the over and above rainbow and notes home for improving attendance
- Checking Worry /smile boxes to identify children who communicate worries which are impacting upon attendance

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS

Understanding types of absence coding - Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time and family emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Reluctant attenders/school refusal

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

1. Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 9.00a.m., and once during the afternoon session. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. (DfE guidance suggests a maximum of 30 minutes). Pupils arriving before the end of the Registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.

The morning registration period will start at 9.00a.m and end at 9.30a.m.
The afternoon registration period will start at 1.30p.m and end at 2.00p.m.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absence). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year; or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late the Deputy/Assistant Headteacher and the School Attendance Officer will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

2. First Day Absence Contact

Parents are expected to notify the school by calling and leaving a message (for the school attendance officer) or notifying a member of staff in the school office if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness.

Hallsville - telephone: 020 7476 2355 / 07891 181367

Scott Wilkie - telephone: 020 7474 4138 / 07891 181367

If the school does not receive notification it will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible. For this reason it is of vital importance that parents keep the school informed of up to date contact information.

For support and advice about attendance issues parents can contact the school's attendance officer (Hallsville: Ivie Okwuegbuna / Nicole Santos, Scott Wilkie: Georgiette Raveneau)

3. Second Day Absence Contact

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home. The family may be asked to come to school for a meeting.

4. Continuing Absence Procedures

Registers are checked and attendance patterns reviewed on a weekly basis with a particular focus upon identifying children whose attendance is at 90% or below. The attendance of these children is reviewed by the attendance team alongside senior leaders identifying the reasons for absence and identifying and triggering actions that the school can take to support parents in improving attendance.

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made. Any child who is absent without explanation for 8 consecutive school days or who has a pattern of erratic attendance (85% or less), or persistent lateness after registers close will be referred to the Attendance Management Service in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases will be allocated to an Attendance Management Officer who will visit the home, set targets for improvement, signpost sources of support if needed, and ultimately recommend court action or a Penalty Notice if there is no improvement.

5. Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures

Regular trawls of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. Identification of children who are at risk of becoming persistently absent trigger targeted engagement with parents to address and resolve any barriers to attendance.

- **Stage 1:** Letter 1 (Appendix 1) will be issued once attendance approaches 90% and there is insufficient evidence that attendance will improve without school action.
- **Stage 2:** Letter 2 (Appendix 2) which is an invitation to a meeting with Newham Attendance Officer will be issued if attendance does not improve with the targeted support that has been put in place

The attendance lead will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern.

Stage 1: Initially the school will try to resolve the problem together with parents/carers listening to identify barriers to attendance and providing targeted support to address these. This support includes:

- inviting parents to engage with our Triple P parenting workshops (The Positive Parenting Program)
- daily check-ins on family and children in school
- 1:1 catch up sessions with child (mentoring)
- support meetings
- friendly meet and greet on the gate with praise for attending school
- Reaching out and building relationships with targeted families and children

This support falls within our wider programme of support focused upon engaging parents:

- Coffee mornings
- Building parental engagement in school by developing a bank of parent volunteers
- Parental drop in sessions

Stage 2: If the patterns of persistent absence continue the school will refer to the School Health Adviser if the barrier appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appear to be issues requiring external intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through the triage system for external agency support. Parents of persistently absent pupils and the pupils themselves may be invited to engage in drawing up and agreeing an Action Plan or Parenting Contract identifying clearly actions which will be undertaken by parents and the school to improve attendance. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support. Examples of unjustifiable reasons for absence from school would be:

- Going shopping with parents
- birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Children on the persistent absent list will receive a home visit, if possible, on the first day of their absence.

Where persistent absence continues in spite of support having been put in place, where families appear not to be responding to support and/or where absence declines further this may constitute neglect and therefore this triggers raising a safeguarding concern. Further

information about the schools' safeguarding procedures can be found in the schools policy for Child Protection and Safeguarding.

6. Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid after 21 days but within 28 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid within 28 days, court action may be initiated.
- 2) There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice
- 3) Where the local authority initiates court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, this could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.
- 4) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

7. Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

8. Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (CME) procedures

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, an unverified leavers form will be completed and sent to the local authority for further checks to be undertaken. Once the local authority have received the completed unverified leavers form and made further checks they will instruct the school that the child can be removed from the school roll.

9. Non starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME team for further checks.

10. Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, a home visit or by a call to the AMS Duty Desk Tel: 0203 373 3359, in order that a same-day visit can be made. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority

in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

11. SEND children and those with medical needs.

The trust recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to their attendance than their peers. However, the right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these children is the same as they are for any other pupil. The schools will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full time education.

All pupils are entitled to a full time education however in exceptional circumstances and only if it is in the best interests of the child a child may need a temporary part time timetable.. This should only be in place for the shortest time necessary.

12. Using data to target attendance improvements

The school will use data to address needs of pupils or cohorts. These include:

- morning sports or football club
- HT stickers for a full week from a child with medical needs
- breakfast club
- walking bus
- buying alarm clocks
- picking children up
- after school clubs
- lunchtime clubs or playtime drop in sessions with Attendance/ Home school liaison officer
- 1:1 mentoring with child and Attendance/home school liaison officer
- Drop in sessions for parents

13. Support for schools and school staff

Where schools within the Trust are struggling with attendance the Trust Board will work with school leaders to support the school in drawing up an action plan to improve attendance. This will be evaluated and reviewed regularly until attendance has improved and the improvement is embedded. This may form part of the wider school improvement plan and include school to school support in the form of identifying effective strategies to improve attendance and sharing resources for instance.

Attendance teams across the Trust will meet termly to share expertise in relation to attendance matters and to share interventions that have been successful in improving or promoting good attendance.

Annual training and induction procedures will include guidance about the importance of good attendance and everyone's role in promoting it as well as the specifics around the accurate keeping and marking of registers, raising concerns and support for pupils who need it.

The Schools Attendance Officer/Home School liaison Officer will be the point of contact for teachers to report attendance concerns/queries

14. Working with other agencies

Schools within the Agate Momentum Trust undertake to work with the full range of agencies working with families to improve children's attendance. This is particularly important in complex cases and where children are severely absent (missing 50% of school or more) and which require a broader response to address the barriers that a family might be facing.

SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

This is a successful, 'Good' school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. Unless children are genuinely unwell It is better for children to attend school, rather than avoid it, as missing school will result in children falling behind and becoming more reluctant to attend. Your role as the parent is to encourage them to attend. If your child is reluctant to attend school for reasons other than being unwell you should make contact with your child's class teacher and/or the school's attendance officer / home/school liaison officer in order to resolve issues and address any barriers to attendance

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% = half a day off every two weeks	90% equates to a day off every two weeks
85% = one and a half days off every two weeks	80% equates to one whole day off every week
By the time they start year 6 a child whose attendance is 80% will have missed the equivalent of ONE WHOLE YEAR of education.	

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible.

Reporting your child's absence

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence, either by telephone or in person, and
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence

Applications for leave of absence in term time

This school's policy is not to authorise holidays taken during term time, this includes holidays taken during school holidays which overlap with term time. Any applications for leave in term time must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least ten days before the planned departure. There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

While holidays to other parts of the world may well be educational enhancing children's sense of place and the opportunity to visit museums and art galleries etc this has to be weighed up against the detrimental impact of missing school on children's outcomes. As identified early on in our attendance policy in the section '**The value of consistently good attendance and the impact of absence from school**'

- a difference in attendance of only two days throughout a school year makes a significant difference to children's likelihood of achieving age related standards.

It is because we are committed to enabling pupils who attend our school to achieve the best outcomes and to serving our community well that we promote the highest possible attendance and rarely grant leave of absence. If you plan to take your children away on holiday, whether within the UK or abroad you should check our term dates and plan for your holiday to take place within the school holidays.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are issued for a range of attendance-related offences, including unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality, a child coming to the attention of the police in school time, or located twice or more in truancy sweeps in 6 months. Further details are available on <https://www.newham.gov.uk/schools-education/attendance-exclusion-1>.

Your contact details

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

Useful school contacts

Attendance Officer	Nicole Santos - Hallsville Georgiette Raveneau- Scott Wilkie
Headteacher	Kelly Jones - Hallsville Farhathafza Quayum- Scott Wilkie

Legal References

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'*

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.