

Skegness Infant and Junior Academies



Attendance policy

Approved by	Executive Principal/ Head of School
Last reviewed on	October 2023
Next review due	October 2024

Introduction

Skegness Infant and Junior Academies are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

At Skegness Infant and Junior Academies we-

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued
- expect students to arrive on time every day
- will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances

How to notify the Academy of an absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the academy on each day of absence by: Calling the office on -

01754 762059 (Skegness Infants) or 01754 879166

(Skegness Juniors) Emailing us at -

admin@skegnessinfantacademy.org admin@skegnessjunioracademy.org

Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Pupils are entitled to a full-time education and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life. The aim of this

document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance. It includes how we:

- › Promote good attendance and punctuality
- › Follow up absences
- › Communicate and work with families to reduce absence
- › Monitor absences and analyse patterns of absence
- › Work with local partners to support high attendance and reduce absence

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

3. How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

We build a whole school culture. Good attendance is everybody's concern. Assemblies and targeted information keep the profile of attendance high amongst children, while tailored training is delivered through staff workshops to provide staff with specific information updates to carry out their role including administrative, pastoral and senior leaders

The profile of good attendance is shared throughout the school community so that there is an understanding and ownership of the school, class and individual attendance data. Information to parents and carers is clear; explicitly linking attendance to learning. It's about raising the profile through planned whole school and class activities. In short, everyone should lead and model the importance of good attendance.

We understand there may be barriers to good attendance may and these require sensitive and detailed unpicking. Positive relationships with parents and carers are essential. An important factor for success is deciding who is best placed to build the initial relationship, to listen, so that barriers can be removed. This may vary on an individual basis and may not always be the head of school, attendance officer or Family Key Worker. It could be a trusted class teacher, pastoral worker or teaching assistant but what is important is beginning the

discussion. Our targeted Attendance Plan includes details on the support families can expect to receive and at which stage.

For example, when attendance drops to between 96-93%

- Informal discussions with the pupil may take place to explore whether they have any concerns or issues that could be a barrier to attendance.
- Reminder information sent home
- Parents/carers invited to discuss any concerns and the PASS set up with the attendance officer (Parent And Student Support).
- A bespoke plan may be created to support children's individual needs.

For persistent absentees -

- The Parental agreement is reviewed
- During the Parental plan review, those involved will identify whether any additional support could be offered by the school or partner agencies
- Consider implementation of the ATTEND framework-If poor attendance has been identified due to the child suffering from mental health issues including anxiety, the school will activate support for the child and family following the Lincolnshire EBSA Ladder and use the ATTEND Framework to support underlying reasons behind the child's reluctance to attend school or leave home. This will comprise of a graduated approach of support starting with a Plan, with support from the Lincolnshire Local Authority and local NHS services.
- An individual pupil audit may be carried out to determine ATTEND involvement.
- Teachers will be informed of individualised plans to support children with their attendance and reintegration into learning.

4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive in school by 9:00am on each school day. The table shows registration timings. Registration ends at 9.15.

	Morning timings	Afternoon timings
SIA	9.00	12.45 (nursery an Reception) 1.15 (KS1)

SJA	9.00	1pm
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Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must 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 academy.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Contact the academy on 01754 762059 or email admin@skegnessinfantacademy.org for Skegness Infants.
- Alternatively contact 01754 879166 or email admin@skegnessjunioracademy.org for Skegness Juniors to report their child's absence before 9:00 am on the day of the absence, and on each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the academy with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child. This is essential so that contact can be made in case of emergencies.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office by 9:15am when registration closes.

Admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer, Heads of School or Family Key worker in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- The Attendance officer is responsible for:
Monitoring and analysing attendance data

Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leaders responsible for attendance including the Head of School.

Working with staff and families to tackle persistent absence.

- The Attendance Officer is Mrs Sam Bryan and can be contacted via sbryan@skegnessinfantacademy.org or on 07931 594917

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the academy
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Evaluating and monitoring processes
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Overseeing the arrangement of calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Overseeing the delivery of targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with local partners to implement bespoke strategies to improve attendance for those children with persistent absence or severe absence

The designated senior leaders responsible for attendance are Mrs K Lewis-Bettison, Head of School at Skegness Infants and Mr B Jacklin, Head of School at the Juniors. They can be contacted via the school office or admin email addresses detailed above.

With the Executive Principal, the Head of School is also responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the academy
- Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to the trust
- Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases.
- Working with local partners when formal procedures such as parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required.

5. Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each

school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will use the DfE codes to detail the attendance and absences.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:15am or as soon as practically possible by emailing the Academy using the admin email address or calling the academy office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Parents can request a term-time absence by completing the online form for Skegness Infant Academy and Skegness Junior Academy using the following link <https://forms.office.com/r/4H3HWFaLn0>.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Children arriving late will be noted in the attendance log in the office and regularly monitored by the Head of School, attendance team and Family Key Worker. Parents/carers of children who are consistently late will be invited into school by the attendance team for a supportive parent and student support meeting (PASS) where a parental agreement will be set up and further areas of support from external agencies explored.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend does not, or stops attending without reason, the academy will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the academy may ask the Family Support Worker to do a home visit. If the Academy has not been informed of the reason for absence over consecutive days, the police may be asked to do a safe and well check.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the academy will consider involving the best approach, which may be support offered via the Attendance Officer, Family Key Worker or signposting to a further outside agency depending on the circumstances.

Reporting to parents/ carers

Parents have continual access to their child's attendance percentage on the Xpressions app. The academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance, absence levels and punctuality through letters at the end of each half term. Information about attendance is also given at parent/carer feedback evenings.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term time absence

The Head of school/Executive Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted with discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

What are Exceptional Circumstance?

Exceptional circumstances are defined as being unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child outweighs the loss of learning time.

Below are examples not defined as exceptional circumstances-

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather in school holidays
- Overlap of timings with the beginning and end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake/did not check/ relative booked for them
- Family wedding attendance
- Family birthday
- Availability of time off work
- Can only get time for holidays in term time
- Family time
- Day trips
- Visits to see other relatives
- Holidays taken without following the correct procedure

Exceptional circumstances may be defined as-

- Illness and medical dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

There are other, infrequent, occasions where absences are permitted and coded as 'Authorised Circumstances'. This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. serious family illness or bereavement.

Parents/carers should communicate with school if there are such circumstances. The Head of School/ Executive Principal decision is final in such matters. The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the following links: Skegness Infant Academy / Skegness Junior Academy. Please use this link for the absence form <https://bit.ly/3W1GQKp>

Evidence may be required to support any request for a leave of absence. Other valid reasons for authorised absence include:
Illness and medical//dental appointments.

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. Parents must provide the exact nature of their child's illness. We cannot accept broad reasons such as: 'illness', 'poorly', 'feeling under the weather' or 'tired'. In order to authorise the absence, we need to know exactly what is wrong with your child. In some circumstances we may request further evidence of a child's illness to allow the absence to be authorised. We reserve the right to seek additional evidence related to the illness if we have any concerns regarding a child's attendance.

Please Note, family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning. We will not authorise any holidays unless they fit the criteria for very exceptional circumstances.

Unexplained absence for 10 school days

If a child is missing for ten school days, then the child will be referred to Education Welfare as a child missing in Education (CME). This may involve additional home visits and in some circumstances the police or other external agencies. If the missing child does not return to the school for a further ten days (20 school days in total) and there has been no contact from the parents/carers, then the child's place may be removed from the register. This decision will be made by the Head of School/Executive Principal after an individual assessment of risk has

been made. School will notify the local authority if a pupil is removed from the school register.

Legal sanctions

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or not appropriate (such as an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority can take forward legal intervention to formalise support and/or enforce attendance. This includes fines or a penalty notice. The arrangements for these procedures are found here <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-business/fixed-penalty-noticescode-conduct/print>

Information from Lincolnshire County Council on Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

APPLYING FOR A FIXED PENALTY NOTICE (FPN) FOR NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RE: HOLIDAYS & PERSISTENT ABSENCE

As you may be aware the DfE are intending to issue their own national, Code of Conduct for the issuing of FPNs which the DfE will require everyone to adopt. This is to provide consistency in the approach to FPNs. This should be with us in a number of months but in the interim LCC wishes to provide an update on the requirements in Lincolnshire, for the issuing of FPN's with revised changes in relation to FPN's for term time holidays.

SUMMARY

All schools should ensure their Attendance Policy is up to date, displayed on their website and includes all relevant guidance, legislation and any FPN templates. Schools and academies are required to be proactive in sharing these documents with parents, including the relevant legislation relating to the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences.

- **When promoting good attendance schools should also make reference to their Attendance Policy throughout their communications with parents/carers, including via their website and parent hub/school app communications. This will ensure that parents are kept up to date with any changes to legislation and this provides a new method of prior warning parents, without the need to continually re-issue formal legal warnings.**
- **The Local Authority will now accept emails (together with other forms of communication such as parent hub/school app messages sent as a direct, or generic message to all parents), when specifically applying for FPN's in relation to holidays taken during term time.**

- **Formal Warning letters will still be required when applying for an FPN for persistent absence, when poor attendance continues to be an ongoing concern.**

Please see below for each relevant scenario:

FPN: TERM TIME HOLIDAY - PARENTAL HOLIDAY REQUEST RECEIVED

Where there is a request for a term time holiday (leave of absence) that is then refused by the school because it does not meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances', the school must issue a letter **or email** in response to parent, giving their reasons for refusal, to authorise. The letter/or email should include the LCC template warning and confirm to the parent that if the child is not in school on those days requested, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised absence** (as the school will presume that they have gone away on their intended holiday). Schools should then advise the parent that they will now be requesting the Local Authority to issue an FPN, for a holiday taken during term time.

FPN: TERM TIME HOLIDAY – NO PARENTAL HOLIDAY REQUEST RECEIVED (but evidence suggests the absence was a term time holiday.

For cases where no application or request for leave is received from parents in advance of a holiday, and where there may be other factors which imply to the school, that the family were away on a holiday. The school can apply for a FPN retrospectively. Whilst best practice would see all schools write out to families, to make reference to their Attendance Policy, and any recent communications regarding their stance on holidays taken during term time, schools can now request an FPN from the Local Authority, without formally issuing parents with a warning letter (this relates only to holidays during term time).

Over the last 2/3 years, the use of FPN's for term time holidays has grown and is now established nationally, as a method to discourage absence during term time. **Schools who have regularly communicated with their parents regarding the use of FPN's, are now in a position to request these, specifically in the case of holidays, without issuing a formal written warning, prior to the holiday.** Schools will however be able to demonstrate to the Local Authority how they have communicated to parents, via their Attendance Policy, and through regular informative updates (for example, emails, school publications, parenthub/apps), especially with regards to this new process.

FPN: PERSISTENT ABSENCE/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- **HOWEVER, when requesting an FPN from the LA for persistent absence, schools will still be required to share copies of all recent and relevant communications**

with parents which demonstrates that they have provided guidance, to all parents, on the use of FPN's for unauthorised absences.

Schools who are intending to request that the Local Authority issues a parent(s) with an FPN as part of their on-going casework regarding persistent absence, should first discuss this with the LA's Attendance Team. Schools have a designated, Attendance & Safeguarding Education Welfare Officer to discuss attendance matters and should consult with them prior to requesting an FPN for persistent absence. FPNs for persistent absence are only successful if issued within the first term of poor attendance, and this should be taken into account when considering issuing an FPN, in these circumstances.

If an FPN is agreed as a next action by the Attendance Team, schools will issued parents with an FPN formal warning letter. The letter must be sent to each, individual parent informing them that if the child's school attendance does not improve, the school will request the local authority to issue an FPN. If the FPN fine remains unpaid the Local Authority could choose to prosecute the parents for failure to ensure regular school attendance.

PLEASE NOTE: THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WILL NOT DISCUSS PARENTAL COMPLAINTS/APPEALS OR QUERIES REGARDING FPNs ISSUED. THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WILL ADVISE PARENTS TO LIAISE WITH THEIR SCHOOLS REGARDING FINES ISSUED AND WILL ONLY WITHDRAW OR RE-ISSUE A FINE IF DIRECTED SO BY THE REQUESTING SCHOOL

7. How we monitor attendance

Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the academy and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The academy will compare attendance data to the trust and national average.

Analysing attendance

The academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

Attendance is monitored and analysed regularly. Daily monitoring takes place via the office and calls are made in the first instance to all parents and carers where children are not attending, and the academy has not been informed. Where a vulnerable child does not attend, a call may be made to the social worker or family key worker to carry out a home visit. Each week the Attendance Panel meets to discuss the previous week's attendance and punctuality of individuals and discuss further action that needs to take place. Safeguarding meeting occur fortnightly where attendance of vulnerable children features. Analysis of the attendance of individuals, classes and groups of children takes place at the end of each term. This analysis is used to target individuals or groups of children who need further support. Information on attendance is fed back to the Trust board and the Academy Advisory Council. The academy uses reports on attendance data (for example via the ISDR, FFT) for further analysis.

Using data to improve attendance:

The academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other academy leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence (SA) is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance such as Family Action, Safer Families, social workers, Early Help workers, BOSS (Behavioural Support Service) and PIU (Lincolnshire Pupil Reintegration Unit).
- Carry out an individual pupil audit to determine ATTEND involvement.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Head of School/Executive Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the academy's Education Director.