

# Victoria Lane Academy



## Attendance Policy 2023 - 2024

A Member of the Tudhoe Learning Trust



## Attendance Policy Victoria Lane Academy

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### Attendance key contact List

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**Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:**

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Francesca Azzouzi	Safeguarding, Attendance and Welfare Officer	<a href="mailto:francesca.azzouzi@victorialaneprimary.co.uk">francesca.azzouzi@victorialaneprimary.co.uk</a> 01388 603588
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## **Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos**

**Victoria Lane Academy** seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

### **Why is regular attendance so important?**

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

### **Here's what the data shows:**

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Victoria Lane Academy endeavours to promote good attendance as part of its ethos and values since strong attendance results in pupils meeting school's over-arching

aims, linked to positive learning dispositions. We want children in school so that can access the range of experiences we offer, developing their literacy and language skills, whilst encouraging them to raise their aspirations of who they can be and what they can achieve.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. We feel that good attendance habits lead to improved independence and resilience which will serve children well in later life.

Victoria Lane Academy seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. School strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils so that:

- All groups of pupils benefit from the education school provides;
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities receive the support they need;
- Vulnerable children are safe, secure and achieve well.
- Support for Anxious about school children and Severely Absent ( under 50%)

Ultimately, we fully recognise that regular school attendance is crucial to maximising pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to. We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked to future success and well-being.

## **The school and all partners will work together to:**

### **EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



### **MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



### **LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



### **FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



### **FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



### **ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## 1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximize pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

As outlined above, school is determined to develop positive learning dispositions and habits. Good attendance is promoted and encouraged through a range of rewards and incentives. Attendance percentages are shared via the school newsletter and website, at termly parents' meetings and also annual reports to parents will contain a record of individual pupils' attendance, meaning parents are aware of the importance placed on attendance and school's determination to eradicate poor and sporadic attendance. Parents also have access to school's system Arbour, here they can log in and view their child's current attendance daily.

Unless there is a clear reason for low attendance, school expects pupils to attend regularly, with no episodes of poor attendance and/or patterns of repeated absence for particular days or periods of time. To achieve this school has built a curriculum that provides a wealth of positive experiences and opportunities. This is communicated to parents.

## 2. Attendance data

All of our procedures and steps we take to improve attendance are either set by the government, or have been agreed with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team. The government recognises attendance as good **if a child is at school for 96%** of the time or more. This means about 180 days out of a possible 190 school days. The government recognises attendance as poor **if a child's attendance drops below 90%**. This means 170 days or less out of a possible 190 school days. The government classes this as persistent absence. **In other words, a child only has to be absent for 7 school days per term to fall below 90%** Schools are directed by the government to take action when a child's attendance drops below 90%.

In order to promote good attendance, school tracks the attendance of all children on a regular basis:

- 12 week rolling attendance, including across school years, identifying patterns of improvement or decline. School endeavours to intervene where there is indication that pupils are at risk of triggering the criteria above for Persistent absence.

- Half termly attendance, across a school year, to identify those children who are at risk of attendance issues within a particular school year.

- Termly and yearly attendance to ensure that children are accessing education consistently over time and to determine patterns of concern, term by term, year by year, and then take action to prevent or ensure they are not repeated.

### **3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

The school uses its online data system, Arbour, to analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than expected. This is to ensure parents are fully aware of any concerns with their child's attendance and to offer support to improve in future. Initial letters will be used to notify parents of a concern; if issues persist then further correspondence will be sent and meetings arranged to discuss reasons for poor attendance and to establish targets and support for improving attendance in the future.

### **4. Facilitate support**

If following the schools attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or a parent has not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the attendance, the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for additional action and support. This could include implementing the support of Early Intervention outlined in the new KSIE September 2022 guidance along with Safeguarding Services for individual families.

### **5. Formalise support**

School and parents can agree a plan to help improve your child's attendance which can result in drawing up a **Parenting Contract**. 'Attendance Planning Meeting' A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision.

A contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early intervention plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. A parenting contract is not a punitive tool it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. The agreement should include:



- a statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the agreement; and
- a statement by the LA or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the agreement.

The agreement is not legally binding as such but can be used as evidence if the Local Authority later decides to prosecute.

Where a parent does not comply with the requirements set out in the contract, the lead practitioner should contact the parent and seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable, and the contract remains useful. If the explanation shows that the contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of the parent, then a meeting should be arranged with the parent to review and amend it. Where no explanation is given, or the lead practitioner is not satisfied with the explanation, they should serve the parent with a warning to explain that the contract is not working and may be terminated, and another course of action pursued, if the parent does not engage.

## **6. Enforce**

Parents have a duty of care to make sure their children attend school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, they will be breaking the law if they do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school. The School and Local Authority want to help parents if an issue with attendance is identified. However, if parents fail to engage and/or attendance does not get better because the help and support offered had not been accepted, the Local Authority, on behalf of the school, may issue a warning notice, Penalty Notice or request attendance at an interview to determine whether the law has been broken and/or a safeguarding issue exists. If court is required and a parent found guilty of an offence, a fine could be issued: £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

### **General / frequently asked questions**

#### **When can children be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance

- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

### **What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?**

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

### **Can I take my child on holiday during term time?**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

## **Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes**

### **Attendance and absence management**

#### **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

Victoria Lane Academy are continually promoting and incentivising good attendance. The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils who have improved their attendance, or have 100% attendance. At Victoria Lane Academy we promote through our school website, newsletters etc. Parents of children whom achieve 100% attendance will receive weekly messages of celebration. Certificates will be given to children with 100% attendance, half termly whom attend our setting. Whole class rewards are given and incentives are put in place for whole class rewards, extra breaktimes. A class trophy is given to display to promote the success of working together. School will endeavour to promote the importance of attendance by discussions in assemblies, visual displays in halls and classrooms to empower children to make valuable contributions to Victoria Lane Academy's ethos and values.

#### **Communication**

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

As a school we encourage children to arrive at school at 8:30am for Early Morning Reading. School starts at 8.40am for the morning session 10 minutes are given for registration purposes after which time the children will be recorded as late. Children arriving after 9.10am will be classed as late and receive an unauthorised absence mark.

We feel that it is important that children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and in a suitable condition to learn. Children arriving after 8:40am should report to school office. They will be entered in the late book to record their presence in school in the event of an emergency evacuation. Children will be given a Late Card to give to their class teacher, to verify they have been admitted by school office. Similarly, parents wishing to collect their children from school early must report to the school office.

Occasionally, appointments have to be made which prevent children from arriving on time. Although we do ask for your co-operation to ensure, wherever possible, these are taken outside of school time.

The school is committed to ensuring as high an attendance as possible and therefore if a child is absent, it is the responsibility of parents to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. School should receive notification as soon as possible for absence. If we have not heard from you by 9.00am, we are required to follow up the absence, for safeguarding purposes; every absence must have a reason and school will determine whether they authorise this or not. School may also carry out home visits if there is no response from carers or parents. For safeguarding purposes, a police welfare check may be requested if there is believed to be concern for child or family. School will liaise with safeguarding services, key workers if a child is not present in school and no reasons / contact are available.

The Head Teacher will decide whether or not absence may be authorised. Absences are authorised in cases of genuine illness and medical appointments and some religious festivals.

### **On the first day of absence**

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Office staff will then send an email or text message if there has been no reason provided by the phone call. Information is then passed to schools Designated Safeguarding Team through schools recording system (CPOMS). It will be discussed if a home visit will be undertaken with the possibility of a request for a police welfare check if there is believed concern for children and families.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

### **Periods of extended absence**

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will contact parents/ carers to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action. Procedures are outlined above.

### **Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

### **Punctuality:**

Registration time is at 8:40am at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 30 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 30 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

### **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbor).

### **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions**

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Head will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils.

### **If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason**

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher, Deputy Head and / or Safeguarding, Attendance and Welfare Officer for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

## **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality**

School will follow the Local Authority's Staged Model of Intervention. Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

## **Help & Support**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

## **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

## **Pupils with specific needs**

Pupils with specific needs will receive the support they need on an individual basis to ensure their attendance is good. If in the case of a child with an Education Health Care Plan, school will put in place a student Pastoral Support Plan which will join up pastoral and SEN discussions. This will be reviewed and consider if the child and family will need any further extended support packages which underpin The Equality Act 2010 and The UN Convention on The Rights of the Child.

## **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital**

**that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter. School will liaise with the Local Authority Lead for Child Missing in Education and details will be shared.**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.

Date of Policy Implementation: September 2023

Date of Last Policy Review: January 2024

Date of Next Policy Review: September 2024

Signed: *T Dodds*      Headteacher

Signed: *P Lawton*      Chair of Governors