

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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## 01 INTRODUCTION

- 01.1** Freedom Foundation Alternative Provision recognises that some children find the school environment difficult. We want to work with our local schools to provide support with creating environments that ensure every student receives a full-time education that maximizes opportunities for each student to realise their true potential. To ensure good attendance at our own provision, we are committed to creating an alternative provision which works for everyone.

This policy outlines our approach to attendance and punctuality, in line with government and Department for Education (DfE) regulations and takes into account the "Toolkit for Schools: Communication with Families to Support Attendance" as well as the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024 guidance.

## 02 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- 02.1** This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance:
- The Education Act 1996: Establishes the legal framework for school attendance and the responsibilities of parents and schools.
  - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006: Provides the statutory requirements for the registration of students, including the management of absences.
  - Working Together to improve School Attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (DfE, Aug24):
  - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024: Outlines the safeguarding responsibilities that include monitoring patterns of attendance as a critical factor in identifying potential safeguarding concerns.
  - Equality Act 2010: Ensures that the attendance policy is applied consistently and fairly to all students, taking into account any special educational needs, disabilities, or other protected characteristics.

## 03 AIMS

- To ensure that all students attend school regularly and punctually.
- To reduce the number of absences and persistent absentees.
- To ensure that students and parents understand the importance of regular attendance
- To identify and address any patterns of poor attendance at an early stage.
- To fulfil our legal obligations to safeguard and promote the welfare of students through attendance monitoring.

## 04 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 04.1 FREEDOM FOUNDATION SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)

Attendance data will be monitored and reported to SLT weekly.  
SLT will regularly review and challenge attendance data and seek assurance that:

- Leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Attendance is being effectively managed in line with policy
- Staff receive adequate training on attendance

Advisory Board will hold the head of provision to account for the implementation of this policy

### 04.2 FREEDOM FOUNDATION AP

- Ensure accurate recording of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor attendance daily and address any issues promptly.
- Engage with parents to support regular attendance.

- Provide a safe and welcoming environment that encourages attendance.
- Work with external agencies, including local authorities, when attendance issues indicate a need for additional support or intervention.
- Ensure that attendance data is regularly analysed and reported to the Home School.

#### **04.3 CLASS TEACHERS (FACILITATORS)**

Facilitators are responsible for recording attendance each session and submitting it to Freedom Foundation's AP administration team who will submit this information to the Home School.

An attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each day and once during the second session. Non-attendance will always be followed up as soon as possible after a register is taken, with a target time of completing this within 30 minutes of the absence being noted and reported to the Home School.

When Freedom Foundation AP has not been informed of a student's absence, a phone call will be made to the child's parent/carer to ascertain the reason and ensure that the student is safe. If we cannot reach any of the child's emergency contacts, we may contact the Home School's DSL or Head teacher and may call the police.

#### **04.4 PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call Freedom Foundation AP to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide Freedom Foundation AP with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Work with Freedom Foundation AP to address any attendance issues

#### **04.5 STUDENTS**

Students are expected and supported to:

- Attend Freedom Foundation AP regularly and punctually
- Attend every timetabled session on time
- Seek help from staff when attendance at school might otherwise be difficult for emotionally based reasons or if there is a reason, they do not want to attend Freedom Foundation AP

### **05 RECORDING ATTENDANCE**

#### **05.1 ATTENDANCE REGISTER**

We will keep an attendance register and place all students 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 student is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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

## 05.2 UNPLANNED ABSENCE

The student's parent/carer must notify us to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return. The home school for the student will be informed of this absence.

Freedom Foundation AP may request medical evidence to support absences due to illness, particularly if a student's attendance falls below 93% or there is a pattern of frequent absences.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, we will refer the matter to the student's home school. As students may only attend the provision 1 day a week – If the student misses 2 consecutive sessions Freedom Foundation AP will contact the Home School to investigate further

## 05.3 PLANNED ABSENCE

Absences will only be authorised in accordance with DfE guidelines, which include illness, medical appointments (where unavoidable during school hours), religious observance, and exceptional circumstances (as approved by the Headteacher of the Home School).

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

Requests for leaves of absence should be made to the Home School and the Home School will communicate them to the head of provision.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

## 05.4 LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, Freedom Foundation AP will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If Freedom Foundation AP cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may contact police
- The matter would be referred to the home school who will determine whether the absence is approved or not and the correct attendance code to be used
- Liaise with home school to determine whether a home visit would be appropriate

## 05.5 REPORTING TO PARENTS/CARERS

Freedom Foundation AP will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. The quickest and most preferred methods for contacting parents and carers will be identified before a student starts a placement at our provision.

## 05.6 REPORTING TO HOME SCHOOLS

Commissioners will receive attendance updates twice daily.

## 06 AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

As an Alternative Provision, we are responsible for recording and monitoring attendance. However, the decision whether to authorise an absence lies with the home school or local authority. Freedom Foundation AP will have a simple system to record attendance which will be agreed with the Home School and noted in the SLA. The Home School will be responsible for using the correct attendance codes to log the student's attendance.

### 06.1 ABSCONDING

**Absconding: A student is considered to have 'absconded' if they intentionally/ knowingly leave the provision site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission.**

**Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other**

education settings owe a duty of care towards their students. This duty of care requires that all responsible steps are taken to ensure that students are safe and remain within the care of the provision at all times throughout the school day and during provision led activities.

## PROCEDURE

**Where a student, present at morning registration, is found to be absent from the provision without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:**

Freedom Foundation lead staff will inform the head of provision if registered students abscond from the Freedom Foundation AP. The Home School will be informed immediately if a student absconds.

- SMT will organise a search of the buildings and known places that the student may have gone to.
- If the student is not found then all available staff will complete a more thorough sweep of the provision and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- A member of the SMT will phone the parents and then the police when the area has been fully checked if the student has not been found.
- Consideration will be given as to whether the search should be extended beyond the provision perimeter. This decision will be based on staff's knowledge of the student and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the student's best interests.
- Any member of staff who leaves the school grounds will take a mobile phone to contact the provision.
- Once the student has been found then the SMT will consolidate with the Headteacher of the students Home School to outline the response towards the student and the support the student will need in the future.
- A report will be filed via the incident form regarding the incident.
- A courtesy call will be made to the student's parents/ carers.

**Where a student attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:**

- Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the AP.
- If a student is deemed to be high risk to themselves or other people then staff should adhere to the Physical Intervention and Restraint Policy with reference to restraint, if appropriate.
- The police must be contacted immediately to safeguard the student and a phone call to parents must be made.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the AP and may also cause the student to panic, possibly putting themselves at risk by running onto a busy road.
- If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the AP, the AP office/manager on site must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
- Staff will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view.
- The SMT lead may direct additional staff to join the search where possible and safe to do so in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact the AP.
- If the searching adults lose sight of the student, they must contact AP office giving details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing.
- The Home School will be informed immediately by the Head of provision.

If the student(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the provision grounds and is no longer visible SMT, DSL and/ or Headteacher from the students Home School will make the decision as to how to take matters further, which will take into account the age of the student, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident, which led to the student absconding, the student's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes. If the student returns of their own choice, parents/ carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon the students return to the provision, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the SMT

and/ or the Head of provision so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions.

A report via the Freedom Foundation Incident form will be filed on the incident and a relevant Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) referral to be made.

## **07 STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is one of the topics covered at the referral meeting, keyworker meetings, and review meetings. At Freedom Foundation AP, we believe that by creating an education provision which works for everyone we can provide a better school experience which can lead to better engagement and attendance.

### **07.1 MONITORING AND INTERVENTION**

- Attendance data is monitored daily, with trends identified and acted upon.
- Early intervention strategies include contacting parents/guardians if a pattern of non-attendance or lateness is identified.
- Persistent absentees (attendance below 90%) are closely monitored, and an action plan is developed in collaboration with the Home School, parents/carers and, where necessary, external agencies.

### **07.2 COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

- Regular communication with parents/carers emphasises the importance of attendance through newsletters, the school website, and direct communication from teachers.
- Meetings are offered to parents to support them in ensuring their child's attendance.
- Freedom Foundation may use the "Toolkit for Schools: Communication with Families to Support Attendance" to guide its engagement strategies.

### **07.3 ATTENDANCE REWARDS**

- Freedom Foundation AP has a system of rewards to recognise and celebrate good and improved attendance. This may include certificates, presentations, and other incentives.

### **07.4 REDUCING PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE**

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

Freedom Foundation AP will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the home school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Work with the Home School to provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

### **07.5 SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS**

Freedom Foundation AP recognises that some students may face additional challenges in maintaining regular attendance. This includes students with special educational needs, disabilities, or other vulnerabilities.

Individual attendance plans will be incorporated in a students Personalised Plan for these students in collaboration with parents/guardians, the Home School's SENCO, and relevant external agencies the Home School deems fit.

## **08 LEGAL INTERVENTIONS**

Freedom Foundation AP have no legal power to pursue legal intervention but will support the Home School where necessary so the Home School can fulfil its legal obligations as outlined in the Education Act 1996 and subsequent regulations regarding attendance enforcement.

The curriculum at Freedom Foundation AP is designed to engage students and encourage regular attendance. We recognise that a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum supports attendance by making days enjoyable and meaningful for students.

Attendance is incorporated into the PSHE curriculum, with lessons on the importance of good attendance and the impact of absenteeism on future opportunities.

## **09 CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME)**

**09.1** Freedom Foundation AP is committed to working in partnership with the Home schools to proactively reduce the risk of children falling out of the education system. Children who are missing education is defined as, 'Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is not on a school roll being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who had been out of any education provision for a substantial period of time' (DfE). Attendance and Children Missing Education Policy 2024 10 A child being absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may be absent or become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future.

It is the Home School's responsibility to inform the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Freedom Foundation AP Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being absent, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will contact the Home School immediately and request the Home School DSL make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger

## **10 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

**10.1** This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and annually as a minimum by the head of provision. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## **11 REVIEW**

**11.1** We keep this policy under regular review

Review of this Policy: April 2025

Next Review Date: April 2026

Reviewed By: Laura Grant

Position/Role: Director of Freedom Foundation