



# ERASMUS DARWIN ACADEMY

Policy Title:	<b>Attendance Policy (New Policy)</b>
Policy Reference:	A4
Version:	1
Member of Staff Responsible:	Principal
Status:	Statutory
Date adopted by governing body:	13 July 2020
Date for review:	March 2021
Date reviewed:	22 March 2012 24 April 2013 (Reviewed - no changes – Community Committee) April 2015 (Reviewed changes made as detailed in change record) 12 May 2016 16 May 2017 3 July 2018 (New policy) 9 April 2019

<b>Change Record</b>		
Version	Date	Description
1.1		
1.2		
1.3		
1.4		

**“Erasmus Darwin Academy promotes the safeguarding and welfare of children in its care; all policies support the “Safeguarding Policy”.**

## 1. Aims

Our Academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to attendance by:

- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

At Erasmus Darwin Academy we expect students to attend school and achieve an attendance rate of at least 96%.

## 2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Academy Procedures

### 3.1 Attendance Register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.35 am on each school day. The official attendance register will be taken at 8.40 am which is the start of the first session of each school day. This will be kept open until 9.30 am. The register for the second session will be taken at the start of Period 4 (not after lunch) and will be kept open for 20 minutes. Due to the timings of the academy day being different on a Wednesday, the official afternoon register is taken at a different time:

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday:** Start of Period 4 at **12.25 pm**  
**Wednesday:** Start of Period 4 at **12.10 pm**

Registers will also be taken within the first 10 minutes of every lesson throughout the course of the Academy day.

Registers 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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

### 3.2 Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the Academy (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

### 3.3 Unplanned Absence

Parents/Carers must notify the Academy on the first day of an unplanned absence and for every day of absence following that – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8.40am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 4).

Parents can contact the Academy using the ConnectED App, via text message, email or by phoning reception.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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 will be notified of this.

### 3.4 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration, or any session, for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we strongly encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible or as early or late in the school day as possible (arrival into school before 09.30am or leaving school towards the end of Period 5). Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Medical coding for absence does impact on a student's overall rate of attendance if they miss morning registration or the start of Period 4.

To notify the Academy of medical appointments, parents can contact reception via the ConnectED App, text message, email or phone call. Alternatively, parents can ask their child to show an appointment card to our Attendance Officer on Reception.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the academy can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### 3.5 Lateness and Punctuality

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate

code. Our official morning register closes at 09.30am.

A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent for the time missed, using the appropriate code. If a reason is not provided, the absence will be unauthorised.

Students who are late to school without a valid reason will be issued with a break-time detention. Students who are repeatedly late may also receive additional sanctions.

Staffordshire guidelines released on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 state that where a school or academy have concerns with regards to persistent lateness, a fixed penalty notice may be issued. (See Appendix 5)

### 3.6 Following up absence

The Academy will follow up all absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

All N Codes (see Appendix 1) will be chased within the same day to ensure that all students are accounted for and safe. If no reason is provided for student absence, the absence will not be authorised.

### 3.7 Reporting to parents

Attendance is updated daily and accessible to all parents/carers via the ConnectEd App.

## 4. Planned Leave of Absence.

The Principal may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. DfE Guidance on School Attendance (2019) states that '*Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. 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.*'

### 4.1 Exceptional Circumstances

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as situations that are of sufficient seriousness that the absence can be justified. The Academy considers each application for term-time leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion if it is deemed to be the result of exceptional circumstances

Valid examples of exceptional circumstances which would lead to an **authorised leave of absence** include:

1. Unavoidable medical/dental appointments – as explained in section 3.4.
2. An absence from school which is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Medical documentation will be required for this, especially if the absence is in the form of a holiday during term-time.
3. The death or terminal illness of a close relative.
4. A parent being service personnel who is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is clearly evidenced that the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
5. Out-of-school events involving music, the arts or sport, where pupils are operating at an elite standard of performance. Documentary evidence of this will be required.

6. Religious observance. The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c) states that a child should not be regarded as having failed to attend school *“on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”*
7. To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative. (Leave should only be authorised for a wedding when the Principal is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is an exceptional circumstance.)
8. Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes. This covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school
9. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 8 above, the Principal will make a recommendation based on the extent to which the situation has caused or will cause the pupil or family to suffer acute trauma.

#### 4.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those for which no 'leave' has been granted by the Principal. This type of absence can lead to the Academy using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised Absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark for registration
- shopping, looking after other children, birthdays or other celebrations
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, occasionally some young people may be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

#### 4.3 Legal Sanctions and Criteria for Fixed Penalty Notices following Unauthorised Absence

Schools can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days (per parent, per child). The payment is made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent/carer or withdraw the notice.

**The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. Penalty notices may be issued if one of the following criteria is met:**

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the Principal or in excess of the period authorised by the Principal (e.g. family holiday). This applies to any G coded period of absence including one-off instances of unauthorised absence such as holidays/leave of absence taken in term time without permission (Each instance will be investigated thoroughly on a case by case basis)

- Persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed. “Persistent” means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child’s first five days of exclusion. An “excluded child” is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

## 5. Persistent Absence (PA)

A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents/carers’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this.

PA students are tracked regularly and monitored carefully.

Any PA students and their parents/carers may be subject to an Early Help Assessment (EHA). The EHA may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor, or participation in activities based around raising attendance. The EHA may also include a request for additional support from outside agencies. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the student’s House Principal and their tutor.

## 6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

There are a number of ways in which we regularly encourage **parents/carers** to support their child with regards to attendance:

- encourage them to be up early enough to have a healthy breakfast before they come to school. Ensure they follow a healthy lifestyle including the appropriate amount of sleep, exercise, relaxation and study.
- ensure that they arrive punctually with all the equipment/kit they need for the day. If you bring your child to school in the car and traffic is queuing on Pool Road, to prevent students being issued with a late mark, they should be asked to get out and walk instead of waiting to be dropped by the gate. If the weather will have an impact on travel times, extra time should be allowed for preparation as well as the journey to avoid lateness.
- check your child’s planner to ensure expectations for the day are met.
- attend parents’/carers’ evenings.
- encourage your child, or make contact yourself with school to discuss any issues or concerns sooner rather than later. If our students are happy in school, they will want to attend regularly, will be more successful in their outcomes.

## 7. Attendance Monitoring

### 7.1 Daily

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis. Where possible, we adopt an approach of early intervention to avoid issues escalating and attendance and engagement in academy life declining.

Parents/carers are expected to notify the academy before 8.40am if their child is going to be absent or late. Parents/carers should then call on each day of continued absence unless advised differently by a member of academy staff. If the academy is not contacted, the student will be marked with an ‘N’ on the register.

All N codes will be followed up on the same day and no absence will be left without an official code, see

Appendix 1. If no reason for absence is received by the end of the day, this may be classified as an unauthorised absence and coded as 'O' (unauthorised absence).

All Persistent Absentees (less than 90%) will be checked, monitored and may be followed up when absence is reported.

## 7.2 Weekly

Analysis of all absence by year group takes place weekly, highlighting those within each year that have had an absence during the previous week or those with an attendance rate of less than 90%.

All students who are entitled to Free School meals will be checked and followed up.

Follow up constitutes, ongoing monitoring, parental communication, student mentoring or a meeting with the Attendance and Engagement Manager or the child's House Principal.

## 7.3 Half Termly

Complete analysis of whole school attendance by year groups, student groups and sub-groups. Data to be shared with SLT, other relevant staff groups and Governors.

## 7.4 Annually

Annual report on attendance for Governors, highlighting trends over the last three years. A review of the Attendance Policy will also take place annually.

# 8. Roles and Responsibilities

## 8.1 The Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. They also hold the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

## 8.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

## 8.3 Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team will meet with the Attendance and Engagement Manager to determine when Attendance is a barrier to progress. This meeting will take place after each Data Capture point.

## 8.4 The Attendance and Engagement Manager

The Attendance and Engagement Manager:

- Reports to the Senior Leadership team on a regular basis with regards to whole school attendance
- Provides information for House Principals on a weekly basis regarding student intervention and attendance issues
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Utilises outside agencies and links with other professionals to request additional support for families who may be struggling with attendance issues amongst their children.
- Advises the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Works with individual students, liaising with parents/carers, staff and outside agencies

## 8.5 The Attendance Officer

- Monitors attendance and absence on a daily basis to ensure the safeguarding of students
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Attendance and Engagement Manager
- Produces a list of first day absence on a daily basis
- Follows up on N Codes and reasons for absence ensuring all students are accounted for

## 8.6 Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for recording the first registration mark during Tutor time, using the correct codes, and submitting this information using the SIMS system. Morning registers must be taken at 8.40am. Tutors will also inform the attendance team of attendance related information received from or about a student in their tutor group.

## 8.7 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis and for completing the registration mark on a Wednesday, using the correct codes, and submitting this information using the SIMS system. Registers must be taken within the first 10 minutes of each session/lesson. Registers must be completed for every lesson throughout the course of the Academy Day. If there are any issues preventing a member of staff taking a register, reception must be notified as soon as possible.

## 8.8 Reception/Office Staff

Reception/Office staff are expected to take messages from students and parents about absence and record it on the school system. Reception staff will update the register on SIMS when a child signs in when arriving to school after 8.40am or leaves at any time throughout the school day.

## 9. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Attendance and Engagement Manager and the Assistant Principal i/c of Attendance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

## 10. Links with Other Policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## Appendix 1

### Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

**TEMPLATE LETTER – ATTACHED TO LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM**

Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for your request for a Pupil Leave of Absence form for your son/daughter. Please consider the following points on the back of this letter, prior to completing this form, to assess the likelihood of your request being authorised. Also, please be aware that your child's current attendance rate will also be factored into the decision-making process.

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Staffordshire County Council's Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be:-

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure your child(ren) are as successful as possible, are able to reach his/her full potential and gains maximum benefits from his/her educational experience.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

If you still wish to make an application for Leave of Absence for your son/daughter, complete the form as soon as possible and return it to Reception.

Yours faithfully

M Maydew  
Principal

## PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Pupil Leave of Absence

- Every single absence from school has a negative impact on a child's learning, progress and achievements. Therefore, schools should work proactively with parents to minimize rates of pupil absence and parents should aim to keep their requests to an absolute, unavoidable minimum.
- There is **no** automatic entitlement in law for pupils to be taken out of school during term-time, in order to go on holiday. Therefore, the expectation is that parents should refrain from doing this.
- The latest DfE guidance on school attendance (2019) make it clear that the Principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. (See below) The Principal should also determine the number of school days a child is allowed to be away from school if the leave is granted.

### Examples of Exceptional Circumstances

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as situations that are of sufficient seriousness that the absence can be justified. The Academy considers each application for term-time leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion if it is deemed to be the result of exceptional circumstances

Valid examples of exceptional circumstances which would lead to an **authorised leave of absence** include:

1. Unavoidable medical/dental appointments – as explained in section 3.4.
2. An absence from school which is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Medical documentation will be required for this, especially if the absence is in the form of a holiday during term-time.
3. The death or terminal illness of a close relative.
4. A parent being service personnel who is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is clearly evidenced that the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
5. Out-of-school events involving music, the arts or sport, where pupils are operating at an elite standard of performance. Documentary evidence of this will be required.
6. Religious observance. The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c) states that a child should not be regarded as having failed to attend school *"on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs"*
7. To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative. (Leave should only be authorised for a wedding when the Principal is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is an exceptional circumstance.)
8. Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes. This covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school
9. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 8 above, the Principal will make a recommendation based on the extent to which the situation has caused or will cause the pupil or family to suffer acute trauma.

### Some Examples of Circumstances NOT Considered to be Exceptional

- Holidays for the purpose of visiting a relative, except where that relative is seriously or terminally ill.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost permutations or because of problematic parental work issues (such as issues associated with annual leave restrictions, except where the parent is armed forces personnel)



**APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME**

**THIS FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST 15 WORKING DAYS IN ADVANCE OF THE PROPOSED ABSENCE**

To: The Principal, Erasmus Darwin Academy

I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:

my child (full name) ..... Year ..... Tutor Group .....

for the period from (date) ..... to (date) .....

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**PLEASE NOTE: EVIDENCE FROM OFFICIAL ORGANISATION REQUIRED, PLEASE SUBMIT WITH THIS FORM.**

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s)) ..... School(s) attended

.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....

(Signature of 1<sup>st</sup> parent/carer(s) ..... Print Name

.....

(Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> parent/carer(s) ..... Print Name .....

**Please return completed form to the Academy Reception. You will be informed in writing of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.**

**For Office Use Only**

Current Attendance.....% Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time ..... (this academic year)

CA comment .....

.....  
Suggested Code ..... Date .....

**Agreed/Not Agreed**

Rationale to decline request: .....

Signed .....Principal      Date ..... Code .....

TEMPLATE LETTER – LEAVE OF ABSENCE AUTHORISED

Dear

**Re: Pupil Name (Reg Group)**

Thank you for your Leave of Absence form dated DATE requesting permission for NAME to be absent from school on DATE.

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore, pupils will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

Having looked at your application, I feel that your request can be supported in this instance. **Therefore, the absence to include the dates requested will be authorised.**

Our key priority is to ensure that your child is as successful as possible and is able to achieve her full potential. I would therefore ask that you support your child in catching up on the time she will miss in school and that no further absences are taken.

Yours sincerely

**M Maydew  
Principal**

**TEMPLATE LETTER – LEAVE OF ABSENCE REFUSED**

Dear

**Re: Pupil Name (Reg Group)**

Thank you for your Leave of Absence form dated (**DATE**) requesting permission for «Forename» to be absent from school from **DATE to DATE**.

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and Academy Governors support this; therefore, pupils will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional. **Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period it will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence.** I also remind you that our Policy states that the Principal's decision is final on this matter.

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Staffordshire County Council's Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be:-

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996.

I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure your child is as successful as possible, is able to reach his/her full potential and gains maximum benefits from his/her educational experience.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks' school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

M Maydew  
Principal

**School Attendance, Absence and COVID-19**  
**1<sup>st</sup> June 2020**

**Introduction**

On 20th March 2020, as a result of Covid-19 and the Government's resulting social distancing strategy schools closed to all learners except those of critical workers, those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and those learners categorised as vulnerable. As such, although Erasmus Darwin Academy has never fully closed, there are many pupils who have not been in school for a protracted period of time.

Following the latest Government guidelines, we have committed to the wider opening of our academy based on the condition that there will be sound national medical and scientific evidence that it is safe to do so. 'Wider Opening' means a resumption of some face to face learning for our Year 10 and Year 12 pupils. We want our pupils back in school so that we can support them more effectively from an academic, social and welfare perspective.

This addendum supports our school's attendance policy in clearly outlining the processes that will be followed in recording attendance, in line with the Government's guidance, as well as ensuring school attendance is maximised for those groups expected to be in school. This addendum applies from w/c 15 June 2020. It will be in operation until further notice and will be reviewed in line with the Government's reviews of legislation and guidance in the coming weeks and months.

There may be circumstances where it is necessary for the school to close to some or all groups of pupils, i.e. where we are instructed to close by the Local Authority in the event of a localised Coronavirus outbreak. In the event of this happening, the provisions of this addendum will be suspended in part or whole for the duration of the school closure.

**Our Guiding Principles**

1. We will follow Government guidance on the wider opening of our school; however, we have made local decisions about the extent of provision that can be offered to families. This is to maintain the health and safety of our pupils and staff and is a function of the school building(s) as well as the resources available to us.
2. We will continue to provide educational provision for the families of key workers, children with EHCPs and those identified as vulnerable.
3. We will provide educational provision for all Year 10 and Year 12 pupils. We will continue to provide additional provision for other groups of pupils. For these other groups, we will prioritise educational provision in this order: vulnerable pupils and children with EHCPs; children of key workers; other children. Prioritising of pupils will apply where the Principal/Head of School identifies a high risk of limited capacity in school, this may be due to staff absence or where the anticipated number of pupils arriving in school is too high to maintain a safe adult to child ratio. Government guidance states that settings have the flexibility to focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups and then to other children.

Additional information can be found on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

4. We will follow existing Government guidance on attendance and absence and the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/contents/enacted>). We will not penalise parents/carers if their child does not attend school at this time.
5. We will follow the Government's guidance in recording and reporting on attendance as our school opens its doors to more pupils.

**This addendum will be reviewed following any Government review of the guidance.**

This addendum relates to recording and reporting on the attendance and absence of five groups of pupils:

1. Children of key workers, some of whom may not be on this school's roll ordinarily.
2. Vulnerable children
3. Children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
4. Other children, i.e. year 10 and 12.
5. Children whose education is being supported remotely at home who are not in one of the groups identified above.

*NB These groups are not mutually exclusive.*

The Government guidance issued on 28 May 2020 stated that from the point at which they open to wider groups of pupils schools will need to do the following:

- Schools should resume taking an attendance register for all pupils.
- Schools should use the codes suggested in the guidance to record attendance and absence in the attendance register.
- All settings should submit daily attendance figures using the educational setting status form by midday every day.

## **Legislation**

The Secretary of State for Education, under the Coronavirus Act 2020 Section 17, has currently disapplied section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996. The notice states that "It is therefore appropriate and proportionate to temporarily disapply section 444(1) and (1A) **so that parents can be sure that keeping their children out of school during this period will not expose them to a risk of criminal prosecution and conviction.** It remains a parent's duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education during this period in whatever way they can under section 7 of the Act."

There will be no absences recorded under the register as unauthorised and no referrals to the Local Authority Education Enforcement Team regarding non-school attendance.

## **Recording pupil attendance on the school's attendance register**

From 23rd March 2020 to the day before school's wider opening, the following applies:

- Use # for all pupils on the attendance register.
- Complete and submit attendance data to the DfE using the relevant form, including staff numbers in school/on site.

From 15 June 2020 when the academy opens to wider groups of pupils, the following guidance applies. This supersedes the processes outlined above.

Pupils who are eligible to attend and do attend, i.e. pupils in one or more of groups 1 to 4 above

- Use / = am \ = pm.

Pupils who are not eligible to attend a session i.e. those in group 5 above who will not return to school nor in groups 1 to 4.

- Use X on the attendance register.

Pupils who are eligible to attend a session but do not this could apply to children in group 1, 2, 3 or 4 above for a variety of reasons, apply the following code on the attendance register dependent on circumstances. The Government guidance states that 'at this time, all absence should be regarded as authorised'.

- Use Y (pupil absence due to exceptional circumstances) where (a) a child is shielding, (b) a child is self-isolating<sup>4</sup> or (c) have an EHCP and a risk assessment has determined that their needs cannot be met in school. See below for further information.
- Use I (illness) where a pupil is too ill to attend school due to coronavirus symptoms.
- Use C (authorised absence) where a pupil who is expected to be in school does not attend. The pupil may be in any one or more of groups 1 to 4 above.

Pupils who are unable to attend school

- 'Extremely clinically vulnerable' pupils - these children have been advised to shield and relevant medical advice should be followed. This will be indicated in the notes on SIMS (code Y)
- Pupils with EHCPs whose needs are unable to be met at this time, following a risk assessment. The RA should be reviewed periodically. This should be indicated in the notes on SIMS (code Y).
- Pupils living in 'shielding households'. At present, Government advice is that pupils living in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable should attend school only if all pupils in their 'bubble' can adhere to stringent social distancing. This may not be possible. This will be indicated in the notes on SIMS (code Y).
- Pupils who are self-isolating. This will be a temporary absence of at least 14 days. This will be indicated in the notes on SIMS (code I).

Absence due to other reasons

- Use the appropriate code to record absence of pupils due to other circumstances, e.g. M for medical appointments, etc. This applies to only those pupils who are expected in school.

## **Absence procedure**

If a pupil is expected to arrive in school and attend on a given day (if the academy is open for a Yr.10 or Yr. 12 pupil or if a parent/carer has booked a place in the key worker/vulnerable provision), it is a requirement that parents/carers contact the academy in line with our usual policy to report an absence.

The school absence line should be contacted by parents/carers with a reason for absence. Parents should maintain daily contact with school for the period of absence unless advised otherwise.

If there is no contact from parents to advise of the reason for absence (in line with school attendance and safeguarding policy), school will undertake first day calling and then follow the school's escalation process. This may include contacting other emergency numbers, a socially distanced home visit or referral to other outside agencies.

**Please ensure that school has up to date contact details for parents and emergency contacts.**

Parents of children who are not expected or eligible to attend school do not need to follow the first day absence procedure.

#### Partial timetables – Year 10 and Year 12 pupils

- Where a partial timetable has been agreed for an individual pupil who falls into one or more of groups 1 to 4, the X code should be used on the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend.

#### Staggered start times

- Where a staggered start time is in place, pupils arriving within the timescales agreed with parents or carers use the attendance codes as normal. For pupils arriving later than 30 minutes after their agreed start time the L code should be used.

#### Pupils who do not attend for other reasons

We anticipate that a significant minority of pupils of those who can return to school in the w/c 15 June will not do so. In these circumstances we are sympathetic to parents'/carers' views and the decision they have made with regard to their child or children returning to school. In the interim, work will continue to be provided for children to undertake at home, in line with the academy's plans for providing remote learning for all pupils.

### **Recording attendance in small groups**

Pupils in our academy will be taught in class sizes of no more than 12, in line with Government guidance; in practice, the size of the 'option group' or 'bubbles' are going to be smaller than this. Our academy will follow all relevant guidance for maintaining the safety of pupils in school and will review and adapt provision should the guidance change.

We will adapt our academy registers as needed to enable staff to record attendance accurately and efficiently, this will include creating new groupings for the pupils expected to attend. We will also adapt our reporting facility in SIMs, as necessary, to enable school leaders to accurately track and monitor the attendance and absence of pupils. This, in turn, will support the academy in providing information to its senior leadership team, the DfE and the LA. There is no expectation that attendance or absence figures will be used for accountability purposes for the duration of the provisions of this addendum, in line with the Government's statement.

### **Reporting on pupil attendance and absence to DfE and the Local Authority**

We will continue to provide information to DfE by midday on a daily basis via the online form.

Links to relevant Government guidance and legislation

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

### **Support**

Academy staff remain available to answer questions, offer advice and support parents/carers and pupils. If you have any worries, or concerns about your child's return to school or regarding their attendance at school, you can contact the academy at any time via email, telephone or the App.