

## Attendance Policy



### Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy is effective for all academies within The Mead Educational Trust, the Teaching School, the SCITT and all other activities under the control of the Trust and reporting to the Trust Board.

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### Revision History:

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes:
1.0	15/06/2022	ET	New Policy
2.0	15/05/2023	GA	Clarification of Medical Evidence Additional Information around Leave of Absence Requests Clarification of suspected holidays Inclusion of Mental Health Guidance Reference
3.0	11/07/2023	BRA/ MRU	Updated to ensure in line with school management procedures for absence.

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## **Attendance Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

Castle Mead Academy recognises that scholars will only benefit fully from their education if they attend school regularly and on time. Regular attendance is critical if our scholars are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Attendance will be maximised through an effective partnership between scholars, their parents/carers and the school.

The Mead Educational Trust will ensure that this partnership and associated actions are undertaken rigorously; monitoring and evaluating action and impact, through regular analysis of data and review of practice.

### **2. Principles**

To manage and improve attendance effectively we will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, scholars and parents understand
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify scholars or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance, and work with families to remove them
- Support scholars with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

3.1. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Local Academy Councillors (Governors) at our school, work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all scholars are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

3.2 We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Ensuring every scholar has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Providing an environment for scholars in which they feel valued and safe
- Promoting a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Developing positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Rewarding good attendance and punctuality
- Closely monitoring the attendance of every child
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Enabling parents/carers to play an active role in resolving attendance issues

- Setting targets to improve the attendance of the whole school
- Offering tiered support in order to improve the attendance of identified scholars
- Working in partnership with scholars, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all scholars realise their potential
- Showing understanding of our community's religious and cultural beliefs and the significance of religious observance to our scholars

3.2 This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Local Academy Councillors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance

#### **4. Legislation and guidance**

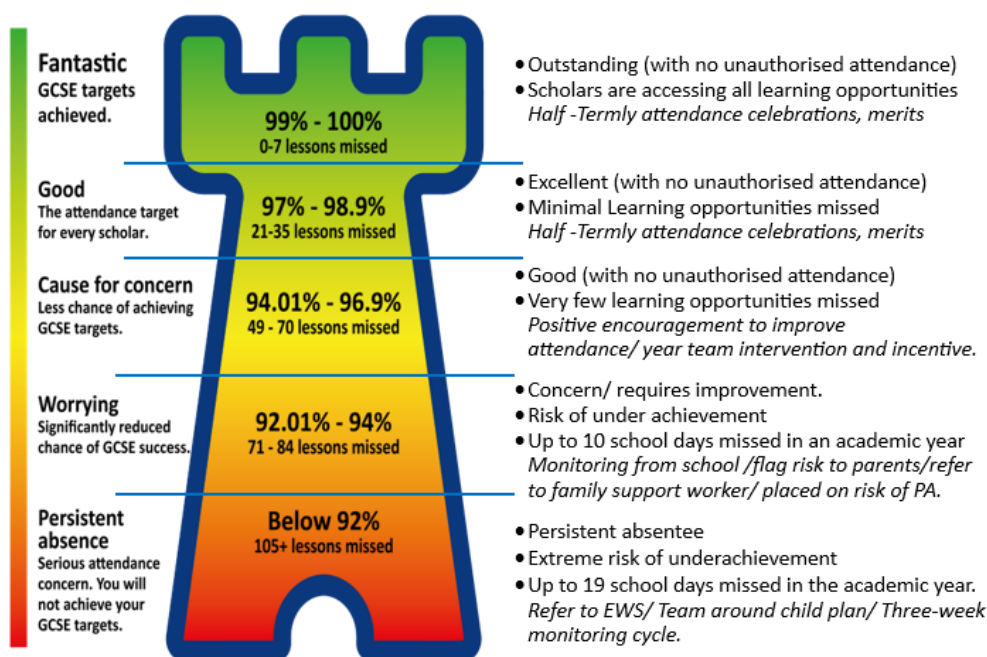
4.1. This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and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

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Scholar Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (Feb 2023)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

#### **5. Attendance Bands**

At Castle Mead Academy, we strive for all children to achieve their full academic potential and aim for 100% attendance. Our classification of the different attendance bands are as follows:



## 6. Daily Routines

### 6.1 Daily routines for children

External school gates are opened at 8am daily when staff are present manning the entrance. Scholars enter the school grounds and make their way to the line-up area.

The school offers a free breakfast club facility daily for families who require this. The breakfast club runs from 8.00am .

The whistle is blown at 8.20am. Scholars make their way to line up with their year groups awaiting the arrival of their Form Tutors to take them into the building. Scholars arriving before this time are able to play in the sports area or access breakfast club and are monitored by school staff.

### 6.2 Daily routines for parents

Parents are expected and encouraged to promote strong attendance habits with their children.

If a scholar is unwell and unable to attend school, parents should call the school before the start of the school day to inform them of this.

Parents are able to either speak to a member of staff in the office from 8:00am or leave a voicemail on our phone system at any time. Parents can also report Scholar absence via the My Child At School app. The office team will record reasons given for absence on our attendance register and contact parents, where appropriate, to follow up reasons for absence.

Parents are able to contact the school office to discuss reasons for absence throughout the school day and the school will be able to signpost/offer advice wherever possible.

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## 7. The Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record whether each scholar is:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

#### **7.1 Present at School**

Scholars are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken.

Scholars are marked absent if they are not in school when the register is taken.

- Our scholars should arrive by 8.20am on each school day. They are marked late if they arrive after 8.30am.
- Our morning register is taken at 8:30am and will be kept open until 8.50am
- Our afternoon register is taken at 11:40am and will be kept open until 12:30pm

## **8. Punctuality**

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and reduces classroom disruption.

Any child arriving after the gates have closed miss the vital settling in period at the beginning of the day.

Children are expected to arrive between 8:00 and 8:20 where they meet their tutors for line-up.

Any children arriving after 8.30am must report to the school office as gates are locked promptly for safeguarding purposes. The office staff record latecomers and ask for a reason for lateness in a late log. Scholars who arrive late to school will receive a same day after school detention.

A scholar who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late (L)

A scholar who arrives late after the registers have closed will be marked as absent. If the scholar is late arriving due to a valid reason; such as, an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be marked accordingly.

If the scholar arrives late for any avoidable reason, they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after registers close' (U).

### **Summary**

- Registers in class close promptly at 8.50am.
- Late registration code (L) between 8.30am – 9.30am.
- Unauthorised lateness code (U) given after 9:30am leading to an unauthorised absence for the morning session.
- If a scholar leaves the school premises after registration for an appointment, they must be signed out of school by an appropriate adult.
- The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance, Attendance Manager or Family Support Worker will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late to school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

## **9. Following up absence**

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason. Parents will receive a text message to notify them that their child has not been registered in the morning and asking parent to inform school of the reason for absence
- Attendance calls to parents will be made to ascertain reason for absence
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not, this will be dependant on previous absences, evidence may be requested
- Identify the correct attendance code to use in line with the LA and DfE guidance

## **10. Following up Unexplained Absences**

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone, or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence.

When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. This will be dependant on previous absences evidence that may have been requested.

If we are unable to establish the reason for absence by the end of the first day of absence, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the O code.

If we are concerned about a scholar's absence and are unable to contact the parent (s), we may contact the scholar's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the scholar's whereabouts.

If we are still unable to reach a family member, a home visit will be made by school staff.

## **11. First Day of Absence Response**

If the school has not been informed as to the reason for a child's absence, then they will contact the person allocated as priority 1 on the child's emergency details by text message. The school aim to do this by 9:30am each day. The school will prioritise those children considered vulnerable e.g., Looked After Children; children subject to Child Protection Plans; children open to Social Care as a Child in Need; children who have previously been reported missing.

Parents will be asked to supply details of at least three people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed on a termly basis through parents' evenings and or newsletter reminders. If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided and is concerned for the welfare of the scholar, we may make a home visit or request a Welfare Check from the police.

## **12. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence**

The school will record reasons for absence using the school data system; Bromcom. Office staff will include as much detail as needed. If a phone call is made home, then the time and details of the phone call and any details of messages left will be recorded.

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.

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



### 13. Authorised Absence

‘Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a scholar of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

#### Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school’s absence reporting procedures, will be logged. A decision will be made on whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a scholar is absent from school due to illness for more than 3 days, medical evidence will be required to authorise the absence. Where a scholar has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

Parents should telephone the school by 9:00 on the first day of absence. There is a dedicated absence line and parents are encouraged to leave a message. Alternatively, parents can leave absence messages on the My Child At School app.

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school **each day** to provide an update on the child’s condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Team to record absences from the absence line and make an accurate recording of these on the attendance register.

Medical evidence may take the form of:

- A doctor’s note,
- A medical appointment card,
- A letter from a healthcare professional stating that a condition prevents your child from attending school regularly,
- A copy of a doctor’s prescription or photographs of prescribed medication for any short-term illness (eg antibiotics for tonsillitis), with the name of the student and the date clearly visible,
- Any letters concerning upcoming hospital/clinic appointments,
- Many doctor’s reception teams will now print off a record of a patient’s last few consultations if requested by a parent/carer.

The presence of evidence for a medical appointment will lead to the authorisation of the appointment date but does not necessarily cover recovery time or subsequent days following this to take prescribed

medication. All of our schools have Administration of Medication Policies and are able to support scholars/parents with completing courses of medication.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illnesses which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

### **Scholars taken ill during the school day (I Code)**

If a scholar needs to be sent home due to illness, this will be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the scholar must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' sheet. No scholar will be allowed to leave the school site without parental approval.

It is the responsibility of Attendance Manager and the Attendance Administrator to record any children who are sent home during the school day and to make an accurate recording of these on the attendance register.

### **Medical/Dental Appointments (M Code)**

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours, wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the scholar should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a scholar must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No scholar will be allowed to leave the school site without parental approval.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter - only then will the absence be authorised.

### **Religious Observance (R Code)**

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise up to one day of absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Where more than one festival/observance falls within an academic year, we ask that parents consider carefully which of these days they wish to request off for their child.

Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

### **Traveller Absence**

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller scholar of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.

This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such cases, the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

### **Suspensions**

If the school decides to send a scholar home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as a Suspension. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions.

Only the Principal (or Acting Principal) can suspend a scholar.

The school will notify the parent of the suspension. If the scholar is a Looked After Child, the school will notify the scholar's carer, social worker and Virtual School. In other instances, where a scholar is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

See TMET Exclusions Policy for full details.

### **14. Roles and responsibilities**

Good attendance is a foundation for success, and we believe that supporting and promoting good attendance is a whole school responsibility. The Academy Council, Principal and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Castle Mead Academy.

#### **Key staff**

Senior leader with responsibility for attendance: Ms Rueben, 0116 2143150

Attendance Manager, Ms Rai, 0116 2143150 [brai@castle-tmet.uk](mailto:brai@castle-tmet.uk)

Administration Assistant, Ms Callender, 0116 2143150 [vcallender@castle-tmet.uk](mailto:vcallender@castle-tmet.uk)

All staff at Castle Mead Academy recognise the role they play in promoting good attendance:

- Form tutors and class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information into the school's data system Bromcom.
- Office staff and the Pastoral Care Team record information left on the absence line into the school's data system Bromcom. Office staff will then follow up any unexplained absences and record responses accordingly. Office staff are also able to take calls from parents about absence during the school day and record it on the school system.
- Office staff are also the front line in highlighting the daily absence of identified vulnerable children to the DSLs or Attendance Manager so that actions can be followed up in a timely manner.
- The Head of Safeguarding and DSLs ensure that the office staff are aware of vulnerable children to monitor their daily absence and punctuality. If there is no reason given or there is reason to think that a child may be at risk, then the Attendance Officer/DSL will contact children's social care or the police to do a welfare check.

- The Principal is responsible for:
  - The implementation of this policy at the school
  - Ensuring the monitoring of school-level absence data and reporting it to the Academy Council
  - Authorising the issue of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- The Heads of Year who are Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's) will ensure the Early Help process will be instigated for families with issues that impact on attendance and support put in place to improve attendance. This may be in conjunction with other professionals such as the attendance lead and Family Support Worker.
- The DSLs regularly checks attendance data for children on CIN (Child in Need) or CP (Child Protection) plans and takes appropriate action based on any concern. Regular liaison with parents will include the implementation of timely action plans and regular meetings to review progress against targets.
- The Attendance Manager role includes:
  - Monitoring attendance data at the school and individual scholar level
  - Reporting concerns about attendance to the Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as appropriate
  - Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
  - Co-ordinating requests for Term-Time Leave of Absence (this includes liaison with the DSL and Safeguarding Team) and advises the Principal as requested
  - Follow-up action-plans for scholars with low attendance
  - Timely liaison with home – this may be through letter, phone call or email
  - Referral to outside agencies
  - Works with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence
  - Advises the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices
  - Works with Family Support Worker to identify and families in need of additional support
- The academy council is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis through scrutiny of attendance data included in the Principal's report. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy
- The academy council is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis through scrutiny of attendance data included in the Principal's report. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.
- The Academy has a link Academy Councillor for attendance, who visits the school regularly to consider support and challenge with regards to adherence to this Attendance Policy. This Academy Councillor is also our link Safeguarding Academy Councillor, due to the crossover between these two strategic areas.

## **15. Promoting good attendance and Incentives**

At Castle Mead Academy we recognise the importance of building good habits of attendance and support scholars in doing so. One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our scholars, and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

- Scholars with 100% each week are rewarded on a weekly basis with Merits
- Tutor groups with the highest attendance are rewarded with an Attendance Breakfast half termly
- Children with 100% attendance for the whole academic year, receive a special attendance reward trip and certificates.
- On occasions, additional attendance incentives are run for individual scholars, classes and cohorts in order to promote strong attendance patterns.

## **16. Safeguarding and Attendance**

At Castle Mead Academy, it is our legal responsibility to ensure that every child is safe and receives a suitable education. We will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all scholars as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a scholar's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any scholar who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the scholar's welfare.

If we have not received a reasonable explanation for a child's absence; have reasonable grounds to doubt an explanation received; or have been unable to contact a parent or carer to explain an absence, a 'safe and well' check will be carried out at the child's home address. This will be undertaken by either the Family Support Worker accompanied by another member of staff; or by the Education Welfare Officer; or member of the Police.

For scholars with a social worker, we will inform the social worker if there any unexplained absences, or if their name is to be deleted from the school register.

## **17. Children absent from school or missing from education**

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Principal and the Education Welfare Service, when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below: -

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area, but no Common Transfer Form (scholar file) has been requested by another school.

## **18. Support for scholars with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities**

We are committed to supporting scholars and families of scholars with a medical condition or special educational needs or disabilities to maximise their attendance.

Pastoral support staff and the SEND team will work with families and scholars to identify and reduce any barriers to attendance. Where required, we will put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the scholar's EHCP is accessed.

This support may come from external partners, through timely referrals.

We will proactively and regularly monitor data for such groups, including at Trust and Academy Council level to ensure attendance for these vulnerable groups is maintained and maximised.

Where a child requires support for a mental health condition, the school will take necessary steps to promote regular attendance. The school will ensure that the school is a calm, safe, and supportive environment where all scholars want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

It is important to recognise that, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future. Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams or variable moods. It is important to note that these scholars are still expected to attend school regularly. For scholars facing anxiety, the school will mitigate these as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance; including the support of the Pastoral Team.

## **19. Tracking and monitoring attendance**

### **19.1 Data & Monitoring**

In order to support good attendance, we will monitor attendance on a regular basis through a range of measures.

Attendance data will be generated, analysed and actioned in order to ensure that effective intervention strategies are implemented as a matter of routine. This data will be used to:

- Track the attendance of individual scholars
- Identify scholars who need support
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Devise strategies based on the data
- Benchmark against local, regional and national levels

### **19.2 Attendance monitoring**

Heads of Year monitor attendance for their year groups. Form Tutors will be provided with regular updates to monitor patterns of attendance. Regular liaison occurs in school with key members of staff including Head of Safeguarding, Heads of Year, Pastoral Care Team, Family Support Worker and the Attendance Manager to discuss and implement strategies for dealing with poor attendance/punctuality.

The Attendance Manager at our school monitors scholar absence on a daily basis.

Where an unauthorised absence has been recorded, the Attendance Team will write to parents informing them that this has happened and highlighting that further unauthorised absence could result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

In the case of a pattern of unauthorised absence developing, a face-to-face meeting will be held with parents to engage the family in supporting the scholar in resolving any difficulties whilst also informing them of the possible consequences. In some cases, this may result in a formal action plan being produced in the form of an Attendance Contract or support from an Attendance Contract or support from the Family Support Worker.

If parents fail to attend the meeting, this would provide further evidence of lack of engagement and would not in any way hinder the process of referring the case to the Local Authority Court Officer.

If a scholar's absence is a cause for concern, taking account of the point in the year, the school will contact the parent/carer of the scholar to discuss the reasons for this and to understand the barriers to attendance.

19.3 Scholar-level absence data will be collected each term and published at National and Local levels through the DfE's 'School Absence National Statistics Releases'. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the National Average and share this with the Academy Council on a termly basis.

19.4 The Trust reviews attendance through the academy data dashboard. Directors of Education review the overall attendance reported for each Academy, reporting to the Education Committee on four occasions each academic year.

## **20. Reporting to parents**

Parents can access and monitor their child's attendance via the My Child At School app. Their child's attendance is also included in their termly achievement reports.

For children where there is an attendance concern, regular communication will take the form of in person conversations, telephone discussions, and attendance concern letters.

## **21. Escalation of procedures**

Sometimes, scholars can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and scholars to be open and honest with us about the reason for the scholar's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse.

As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a scholar is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support scholars and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a scholar, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this.

However, if parents do not make use of the support offered to improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions.

### **21.1 Formalising support**

We will support scholars and parents to address any in-school barriers; however, if a scholar's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will intensify support. Where absence does not improve, or earlier support is not engaged with, we will engage the Education Welfare Service and other local partners to support families (Tier 3 of our Graduated Response).

The school will use a range of strategies to engage families and support them in meeting their responsibilities regarding attendance. This could include Parenting contracts, Education supervision orders and/or engaging social care.

## **22. Penalty Notices**

The Penalty Notice is designed to be an early intervention.

A Penalty Notice will only be applied if the progress being made either by the scholar or their parents/carers is deemed unsatisfactory.

Scholars who obtain more than 10 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 5 full school days) in any term or 20 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 10 full school days) over two consecutive terms may be subject to a Penalty Notice issued by the Local Authority.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

This will at least be evidenced via the sending of an Attendance Concern Letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances without first exhausting our internal support systems.



In such circumstances, our school will take a holistic approach to the issue and involve other agencies as necessary.

In cases where attendance is below 65% but includes unauthorised absence of more than 10 unauthorised absences in any term or 20 unauthorised absences over two consecutive terms, a Penalty Notice would be deemed inappropriate and court proceedings may well be actively pursued leading to prosecution.

Where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies or fail to implement the suggested changes, we will also look to escalate this through the Education Welfare Service. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

If a child has more than 20 continuous days of absence and parents are not able to provide medical evidence or a reasonable justification, action will be taken in line with the Education Welfare Service to remedy this. Parents will be appropriately challenged in line with council procedures and Safeguarding Legislation. If a child is removed from school roll in conjunction with Education Welfare Procedures, there will be no automatic entitlement to a place back at the school. Parents would be required to follow the usual in year admissions process if they wish their child to return to Castle Mead Academy.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a scholar who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

### **23. Persistent Absenteeism & Severe Absenteeism**

Persistent Absentees are defined as children with an attendance percentage below 90%. This is equivalent to having one day off every two weeks. Severe Absenteeism is defined as children with an attendance of 50% or below, equivalent to missing over half of all educational sessions. Persistent and Severe Absentees miss significant amounts of their education and are in danger of falling behind academically, socially and emotionally. These children will be monitored fortnightly by the EWS and Attendance Team to ensure support and strategies are put into place to help improve their attendance.

We adopt a tiered system of support so to ensure scholars facing difficulties receive the right level of support at the right time; this could include working with partners and external agencies and other local schools (where siblings might attend) to offer support.

We will work in partnership with parents, but if parents fail to engage with this process, we will hold more formal conversations and inform them about the need for legal intervention in the future.

If there are safeguarding concerns, we will intensify support through children's social care.

For Severely Absent scholars, we will work with the EWO and Local Authority to agree a joint approach.

### **24. Unauthorised absence**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence will be unauthorised if a scholar is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not. Unauthorised absence might include but is not limited to:

- Absences which have not been properly explained (O code)
- Scholars who arrive at school too late to get a mark (U code)
- Confusion over school dates

- Shopping /Birthdays /Waiting at home for a delivery
- Long weekends and holidays in term time
- In the case of term time leave - if a scholar is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

## **25. Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’**

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The legal reference states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless both of the following apply:

1. The Principal considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application
- AND
2. An application has been made in advance by the parent

The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance.

The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the scholar can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal’s discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times. Where these situations occur, a proportionate and minimal amount of time away from school is advised.

Parents must complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. A meeting will then be arranged with the Attendance Manager to discuss the request. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols.

## **26. Holiday Absence Policy**

There is an established, proven link, between good attendance and effective progress. Castle Mead Academy aims to encourage and develop all our scholars’ learning across their school career by avoiding term time holidays which can seriously jeopardise scholar progress. For this reason, scholars will not be given authorisation to take holiday leave except in exceptional circumstances. It is very unlikely that requests for holidays or extended leave will be authorised. However, if parents wish the school to consider such a request, they must complete leave of absence request form. Parents must be aware that family work patterns or the financial implications of going on holiday in term time, do not meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances. Parents will then receive a response informing them of the school’s decision. If parents/carers still take their son/daughter out of school, then the

absence is deemed unauthorised and may incur a Penalty Notice (see above policy relating unauthorised absence). In cases where the school is not notified but holidays are taken in term time these will also be recorded as unauthorised and are also likely to incur a Penalty Notice.

If the school suspects that a scholar or family have taken unauthorised term-time leave without notification, they will follow safeguarding procedures to locate the child; including, a home visit and referral to the Education Welfare Service. If parents are unable to provide sufficient evidence that a holiday was not taken then absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice will be issued. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued by the Local Authority, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide evidence to support the reason for absence.

## **27. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

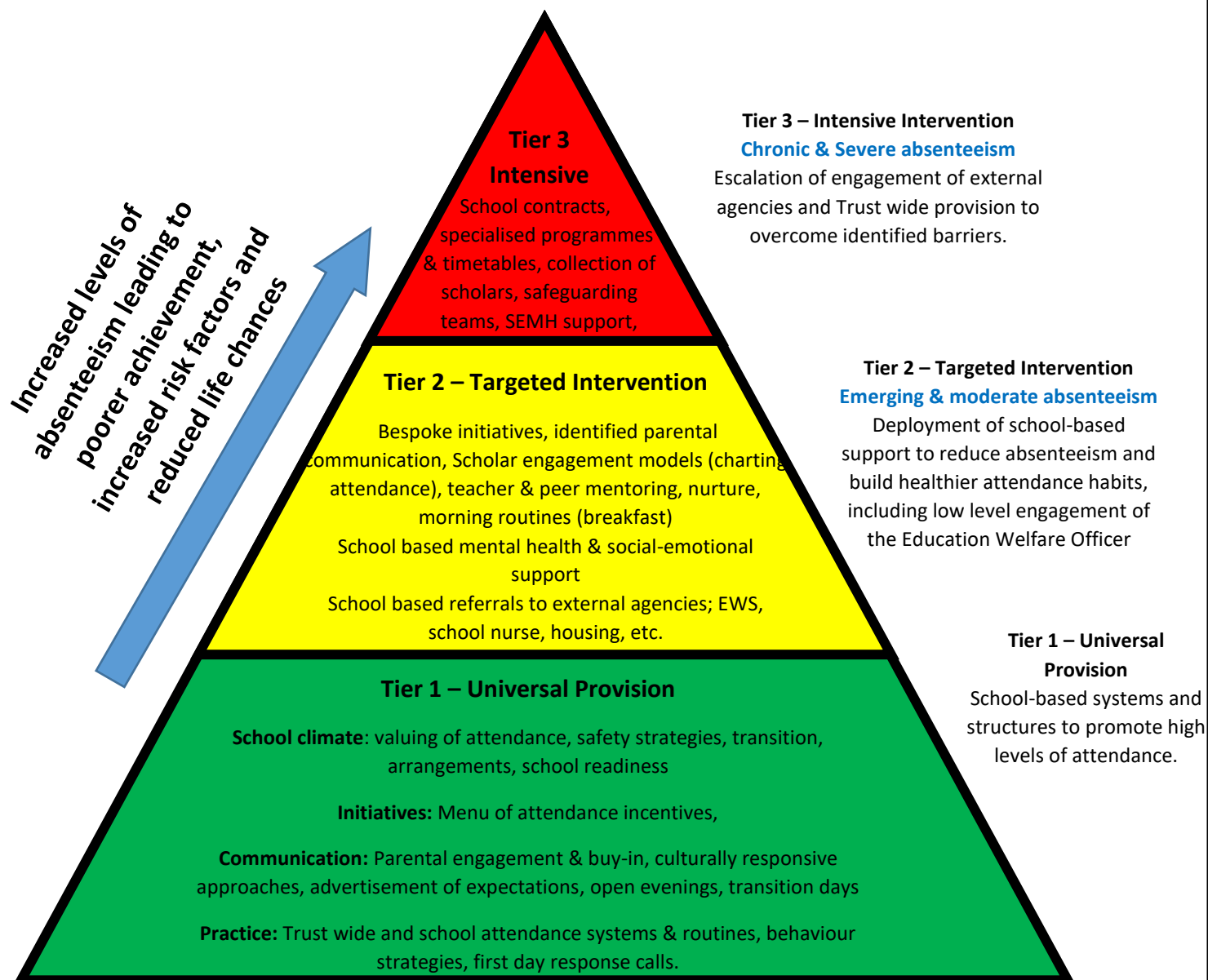
- Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Behaviour policy

- Exclusion policy

## Appendix 1 – TMET’s Shared approach to promoting high levels of Attendance

### TMET’s Shared approach to promoting high levels of Attendance



## Appendix 2 – Department for Education (DfE) Attendance Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING	Frequency
/	Present (AM)	In school	Daily
\	Present (PM)	In school	Daily
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity	As required - only used with approval of SLT
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) E.G., bereavement, home office appointment, funeral	Authorised absence	Occasional
D	Dual registration (i.e., present at another school or PRU)	Approved Education Activity	As required – only used with approval of SLT and written agreement
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence	As required - only used with approval of Principal
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence	As required
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	Rarely
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence	As required
J	Interview Approved	Education Activity	Rarely
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present	As required
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence	As required
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence	As required - follow up required
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence	As required - follow up required
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity	As required
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence	Once a year
S	Study leave	Authorised absence	Year 11 - As required
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Rarely
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence	As required - follow up required
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity	As required
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Education	As required - Year 10/11
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age scholars	Not counted in possible attendances	Nursery children
Y	Where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause; or the transport provided by the school or local authority for scholars (who do not live with walking distance) is not	Not counted in possible attendances	Rarely – Snow Days, Industrial Action Days

	available; or where a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the scholar from attending school; or a scholar is detained in custody for less than four months.		
<b>Z</b>	Scholar not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances	Prior to beginning at the school – in year admissions/transfers
<b>#</b>	School closed to all scholars	Not counted in possible attendances	INSET Days, half-term and holidays, Bank Holidays