

Academy 21

The Online Alternative Provision Experts

How Academy21 enables schools to
implement the DfE's updated guidance:

Working together to improve school attendance



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Attendance codes for remote education

Schools and other education providers work tirelessly to improve attendance, ensuring vulnerable students can access education and remain connected to their teachers and communities.

In this guide, we share how Academy21, our DfE accredited online alternative provision, supports schools to do this whilst meeting the requirements set out in the Department for Education's updated attendance guidance

This updated guidance clarifies that schools are expected to:

- Remove barriers to education with the right support;
- Deliver the same quality of education to those with additional or special needs;
- Provide timely and effective interventions;
- Adjust education and put in place additional support for those with SEND or mental/physical ill health.

Academy21 is proud to help thousands of providers to fulfil these expectations.

The Department is clear that schools may continue to use remote education in line with the remote education guidance and recognises the value it can add to pupils who would not otherwise be able to access education. Schools and local authorities are expected to provide support to pupils facing barriers to attendance and should do so in the pupil's best interests rather than how it is recorded in the attendance register.

Academy21 is often used for two key reasons:

1. It improves student attendance through a placement that grows their confidence, reduces learning gaps and makes reintegration back into school much more likely.
2. It meets student needs, giving them the high-quality education they are entitled to by adjusting provision for those with medical or special educational needs.

The updated guidance supports schools choosing to use online providers to meet these obligations. It has clarified that the code schools can use for remote education, such as Academy21, is an **authorised absence code** (not unauthorised). Schools are expected to monitor pupil engagement, something our teachers and platform enable through daily reporting and live lessons.

The DfE have made it clear in their webinar series ([here](#)) that a school won't be looked on unfavorably for having the correct absence codes. Schools can indeed add register notes that they have chosen to use Academy21 as a 'DfE accredited' online alternative provision.

We hope the information below will help schools to show how they can use Academy21, regardless of the attendance code, to tackle absence and support those facing barriers to education, especially where other support and provisions are not available.

If you have any questions, please do contact our team – we are here to help.



ATTENDANCE BARRIERS

Schools must remove barriers to attendance and put the right support in place.

The guidance states...

*"At all stages of improving attendance, schools ...should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to **remove any barriers to attendance** by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the **right support in place.**" p8*

*"Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. As a minimum, this should include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to **understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support.**" p12*

Academy21 supports schools by...

In many cases, Academy21 is the 'right support, at the right time'. We give schools a flexible intervention, with immediate capacity, that they can use right away to fulfil their obligation to remove barriers to attendance.

Schools know that there are limited spaces in alternative provision, but many of our young people still require additional support, support that sometimes a school cannot provide easily.

Academy21 can create a break from the growing challenges and stressors of the school environment. It gives students and staff time to address issues, such as anxiety, specific needs, or overwhelming environments.

Our high-quality teaching, daily monitoring and feedback and efficient communication gives students' self-belief and helps them to develop learning routines and trust so that schools can reintegrate more quickly and successfully. Academy21 gets students to a place where more consistent attendance is possible and thus improves the school's and the child's attendance.

Our flexible contracts mean that Academy21 can be used exactly when needed. Then, once our provision and solutions have made the desired impact, our support can move somewhere else. Families feel listened to because Academy21 is a high-quality, DfE-accredited provision. It feels like an investment in their child: to help their child receive excellent teaching regardless of circumstance; help them to reconnect with learning and help them to, whenever possible, reintegrate into their mainstream school.

"Parents were similarly positive, singling out the engaging and supportive teachers. Comments included, 'My child has been off school for over a year due to extreme anxiety and not being able to attend school. Academy21 has given my child another chance at education where she is thriving and enjoying school again. I cannot thank them enough."

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MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

All students are legally entitled to an efficient, full-time education. Schools are expected to make adjustments and put in place additional support for those with more complex challenges.

The guidance states...

"The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have." p6

"Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided."

Academy21 supports schools by...

Schools can rely on Academy21 to help provide their students with an efficient, full-time education that is on par with what their peers get in a traditional school environment.

For students who cannot attend the school site regularly, Academy21 gives them a class teacher delivering live and engaging lessons, and continuous feedback on their work. It provides a sense they can succeed and are not held back academically by their challenges. This isn't possible with work sent home, irregular support or limited contact with teachers. It requires routine, live learning and care - Academy21 enables schools to provide just that.

Academy21 is an ideal tool for early intervention, helping schools demonstrate that they are making the right choices for a child at the right time to prevent problems from deepening. It enables schools to accommodate students with additional needs and ensure they receive the same high standard of education, even if they cannot attend physical school settings due to physical or mental health needs.

Academy21 offers support right away to prevent any issue from escalating, especially when other services can't provide immediate support. Instead of waiting months for additional expert services, you can enroll your students in Academy21 and get them reconnected to learning so they are ready to transition back into school sooner rather than later.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Schools are expected put in place additional support for students absent due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs.

The guidance states...

"For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, schools are expected to... consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability."

School should:

"...Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place". p9

And...

"Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support." p9



Academy21 supports schools by...

Many of our students have a SEND or medical needs – inclusivity is central to what we do. **Academy21 offers a calm learning environment, adaptive teaching methods and superb monitoring. Schools can have peace of mind they can fulfil their duties to provide adjustments that students are entitled to** under the Equality Act 2010, quickly and effectively.

Often, students who are absent due to mental or physical ill health are not ready to return to mainstream schooling. They need a time-limited intervention that works quickly and connects them to quality teachers in a new environment, so they feel less overwhelmed and ready to reintegrate. This is exactly what Academy21 does.

Providing a ready-to-go schooling experience for students with more complex challenges – medical, social, emotional, or otherwise. Academy21 is a low-cost, high-quality intervention that allows schools to fulfil these students' right to education and, whenever possible, give them a pathway back to more regular attendance. Alternatively, where attendance onsite remains, students can continue to receive the same high standard of education as peers by being with Academy21, and this flexibly fits around any needs, therapies of other interventions.

"Pupils are taught through live, interactive lessons led by highly skilled, qualified teachers... the positive learning environment they create promotes pupils' confidence, and this has an important impact on the progress they go on to make."

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TIMELY INTERVENTIONS

Schools are expected to put in place timely and effective interventions and can use other organisations as necessary, if other support is not available quickly.

The guidance states...

"Supportive approaches are most effective when they are put in place as early as possible and therefore it is essential all partners work together in a timely manner. If a pupil's absence requires support from an outside agency which is not provided quickly (e.g. subject to a waiting list), schools and/ or local authorities should consider other avenues of support or other temporary solutions whilst waiting..." p13

"As a minimum, this should include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support." p16



Academy21 supports schools by...

There is no long waiting list to access our services. Using Academy21 as a DfE-accredited provider means a school can immediately meet the expectation to provide additional support but do so without a significant administrative burden or cost.

Academy21 tackles absence head on. Where there are limited school resources or a lack of alternative provision locally, Academy21 has the capacity to enrol students quickly, and offers a flexible programme that fits in with other commitments. Many schools use Academy21 for a series of weeks to get a student ready to return. They find that in-school attendance improves because Academy21 transforms their confidence, motivation and ensures they do not fall behind peers. We offer a platform to reintegrate successfully and not allow persistent absence to prolong. Most importantly, we ensure children are safeguarded when unable to study in school – attending Academy21 is a protective intervention.

Over a thousand schools use Academy21 every year because our services are affordable, agile, and effective. Our reporting, feedback and whole offer will help you understand the student's barriers so effective reintegration can be planned. A placement with us can blend with onsite learning or a phased return with ease. This works because we provide:

- Small class groups;
- Daily feedback;
- High quality, live teaching and routines;
- Flexible timetables;
- A bespoke and engaging platform;
- Daily reporting and attendance monitoring;
- Full safeguarding systems.

We are a service that schools can refer to knowing we will respond quickly and offer a programme that parents can understand and agree to.

MEDICAL NEEDS

Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

The guidance states...

*"All children, regardless of circumstance or setting, should expect to receive the same high standard of education...provision for children who are not attending school due to their health needs, ...**should offer good quality education equivalent to that provided in mainstream schools**, as far as the child's health needs allow". p8*

*"Children unable to attend school because of a health need **should be able to access suitable and flexible education appropriate to their needs**. The nature of the provision must be responsive to the demands of what may be a changing health status." p10*

*"If a child returns home and is not well enough to return to school, the local authority, home school, parent and medical practitioners should **consider whether the child should be supported to be educated at home or whether alternative provision is more appropriate**. Any alternative should be arranged as quickly as possible and in full consultation with the child and the parent / carer". p13*

"There is a driven focus on providing the best online provision possible for the pupils they serve. This extends to all aspects of Academy21's work, including the quality of teaching and safeguarding."

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Academy21 supports schools by...

Schools have to offer 'good quality' education but often the options in the local area are limited due to funding or space. Equally, flexibility can sometimes be a challenge to provide in school given the huge scale of work teachers and leaders must do.

Academy21 provides interactive, quality-assured and accredited teaching on a bespoke platform so schools know it matches the mainstream school environment. It is inclusive and adaptable to meet needs, fitting around appointments, therapies or other commitments to provide an education a school can be proud of offering. What is more, we make sure schools have the tools to monitor this with daily reporting, live attendance tracking and alerts, a full catalogue of lessons and half termly reports.

Given schools are expected to put in place AP as quickly as possible and the DfE acknowledges the value of remote learning, Academy21 is the right partner to provide this within 48 hours of a request. There is no quicker form of AP that gets students back into learning, enjoying their studies and able to manage their needs alongside with dignity and a sense of success.

Academy21 ensures students are not penalised for their additional medical needs and helps schools demonstrate they have explored viable alternatives. The close and transparent communication between Academy21 and the school is crucial to helping these students remain a part of the community and, if possible, ready to reintegrate.





At a glance

How Academy21 supports attendance

Confidence to reintegrate

Academy21's aim is reintegration. Time in our provision builds the confidence, routines, and positivity that get students back to a point where they are more confident about returning to the mainstream classroom, with fewer gaps in learning and a more positive outlook. Academy21 gets students back into school quicker than other interventions.

Where student attendance is very low, our clients often opt for a period of time with Academy21, and this is an authorised absence. This time at Academy21 gets them back into a space where they enjoy education again, regularly attend classes online, and can thus imagine themselves back in a classroom.

Bridging gaps in motivation and learning

Academy21 puts a student on the journey to renewed confidence, motivation and positivity about learning – a bridge to reintegration. This makes a return to school more likely for a child because their learning gaps are diminished and their relationship with school and learning improves. The conversation about returning to school is on a different footing than before – built on positives, supported by data on engagement and by feedback on work, all provided and supervised by Academy21.

An early intervention

Academy21 is an upstream solution, resetting students, preventing escalation and buying time for investigation or better integration. It is a short-term investment to stem issues that can be changed if not working due to our flexibility. It means a student is more likely to attend successfully than if left without provision or adequate intervention due to constraints.

Supportive of the whole community

A period in Academy21 means the school has time to plan how to adapt a student's outlook and approach to school. Vulnerable students need additional support. Schools put in place so many actions but sometimes a student and the school need to reset. Quality online AP does this and gives the school time and space to plan a more positive reintegration.

Connected to school

Academy21 keeps students connected to their school community – it can be used for hybrid working or an intervention that students can take back into school. This enables a genuinely phased return that keeps them connected to something familiar, a foundation to make reintegration stick.

Capacity now

We know there is very limited space in physical APs or specialist settings. Instead of waiting months for those spaces, you can enrol your students in Academy21 and get them reconnected to learning and growing in confidence now, so they are ready sooner to transition back into school. You can't predict when students will need extra support, so Academy21 is agile enough to always have immediate capacity to give students the support they cannot access elsewhere.

Making a difference, together.

About Academy21

We are the UK's leading online alternative provision specialists. We work in partnership with schools and local authorities to provide students who have additional needs or challenging circumstances with access to the high-quality education they need and deserve.

We combine unparalleled expertise and knowledge with a deep understanding of the needs of students and schools from 20 years leading the online education sector. Together with our fully qualified teaching staff, focus on welfare, safeguarding and renowned customer support, we've created the most comprehensive online alternative provision available today.

We know that what we do makes a profound difference to the lives of young students, both now and as they make their way into adulthood. We're here to support them, their schools and families and provide the best possible path through their education and towards the lives ahead of them.

Get in touch

If you are interested in finding out more about Academy21 and how we can support you, please reach out to our team.

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