



ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE IN TERM TIME POLICY

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Ratified By	Full Board

TOGETHER WE EMPOWER EXCELLENCE

Rationale

The Learning Academy Partnership (hereafter 'the Trust') is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, excellent attendance is crucial. We organise and do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems, which impede full attendance, will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital all children are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Purpose of our Policy

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for register keeping which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
2. To ensure that excellent attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers, and is actively supported by the Family Support Team
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and the Academy's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging excellent attendance.
5. To understand the action that can and will be taken by the Family Support Team to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

Academy

1. All staff will understand the registration process in the Academy.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and returned to the academy office promptly.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

3. The Academy will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through a variety of media: twitter, newsletters and parents meetings.
4. The academy will inform parents weekly of class attendance figures and annually of the whole school attendance target via the school newsletter.
5. The academy will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
6. All pupils with attendance below 98% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the Academy, in order to identify persistent absentees and those children at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
7. The Academy will identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
8. The Academy will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures.

Parents/Carers

1. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the Academy at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action in accordance with s444 Education Act 1996.
2. Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing the Academy at which their child is registered of the reason for any absence by phone call, or where possible, in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. This should be done by 9.15am
4. Parents should not arrange family absences in term time.
5. Parents/Carers can expect the Academy to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.
6. Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the Academy's prior written permission.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by a parent/carer. The Academy will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)

Absences from the Academy will not be authorised for:

- Absences not agreed, this will always include first and last day of half terms unless medical evidence provided
- Birthdays, if ill on a birthday medical evidence will be required
- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Visiting relatives

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 3 consecutive days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 98% and/or the child is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited.

If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided. Referral to School Nurse/Family Support may be made to offer advice and support to the family.

(2) Medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of Academy hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during Academy hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the Academy unauthorising the absence. All non-emergency appointments will not be authorised.

Holidays in term time/ Leave of absence

Legislation

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006¹ came into force.

¹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments>

These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Requesting the absence

All requests for a child to be absent from School during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from the Academy office.

The Head of Academy or person with delegated responsibility will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the Academy may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Penalty Notice to the parent(s)/carer(s) for the unauthorised absence. Only **one** PN will be issued per parent/carer per child **within a two year period**. This means that if you paid a PN and then committed a further offence contrary to s444(1) Education Act 1996 within the next two years, you are likely to be summonsed to Court for the most recent offence.

If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £1000. If you are convicted of an offence under s444(1) Education Act 1996, and you commit a further offence within the next 5 years, you will be summonsed for the more serious offence contrary to s444(1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £2500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the Academy will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued.

If the parent(s)/carer(s) can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a referral for legal action will not be made to the Local Authority.

Please be aware:

Parent(s)/carer(s) who take their child out of school without prior written authorisation from the school may be subject to a £60 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority.

Parent(s)/carer(s) must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

Non-payment of the penalty within those timescales may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court under s444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person who has parental responsibility.

Please note: Only one Penalty Notice will be issued within any two year period under the Local Authority's Code of Conduct. If a second offence is committed within a two year period, this is likely to result in the parent(s)/carer(s) being summoned to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £2500 or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

Parents are reminded of the first day contact procedure at the beginning of each term via the Academy newsletter.

On the first day of absence the parent/carer should ring the Academy between 8.00am and 9.15am to inform the office that their child will be absent and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is to be provided. A letter explaining the absence should be sent to the Academy office on the first day the child returns to school.

Administration staff keep a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.

Between 9.15am and 10.30am attendance/administrative staff will phone the parents/carers of any pupil whose absence is unexplained.

If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they will liaise with the administration staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they should relay their concern to the Head of Academy or Family Support Team. If there is no reply from the parents/carers a text message will be sent and if there is no response to this text message a letter will be sent at the end of the first day of absence.

The Academy will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work.

If there is no contact on the second day the attendance/administrative staff will phone all contacts and send a further letter, a member of staff will visit the home address or sooner if necessary.

If there is no contact a further letter will be sent on day three advising that medical evidence will be required for further absences, or the absence will not be authorised. If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address or sooner if necessary.

If, after three days, the academy has any concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the Academy will contact the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) for advice.

It remains the Academy's responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary.

If child is absent from school for 5 days, but the school knows where the child is, the school should make a referral to the LA for legal action. If the child is missing for 20 consecutive days, and after making reasonable enquiries, the school cannot locate the child/parents, CME form should be submitted.

***** If the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or if the Academy has particular safeguarding concerns and feels the child is at risk of immediate harm, the Academy will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Attendance Improvement Officer.***

A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

Pupils who arrive 5 minutes after registration begins will be considered late. An appropriate mark is recorded in the registers and entered on the computer through the attendance programme.

The strategies that the Academy will use to tackle lateness will include:

- Pupils who arrive 5 minutes after registration are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Children who arrive after 9:15 am should be considered as 'Late (after registers close)' (U unauthorised absence).
- Registration staff will record the appropriate late mark in the registers and these will be entered into the computerised attendance programme.
- Late gates will be implemented daily.
- All children's attendance records will be checked fortnightly for "lates before registers close (L)" and "lates after registers close (U)". Where these lates cumulate to 3 or more in a half term the school will send a letter to the parents/carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

***** 10 or more 'late after registers close' (U) codes could result in the Academy making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken ** A child is late after registers close when they arrive after 9.15 am.***

Attendance letters

All pupils with attendance below 98% will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the Senior Leaders and administration team, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees. (Persistent absentees are pupils who have missed 19 days which equates to 38 sessions during the course of the academic year).

Absences may be unauthorised by the Academy where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer for an absence or if the Academy feels the reason for the absence is untrue. A member of the Family Support Team may telephone for clarification.

Where a pupil's attendance is below 96%, the following actions should be taken:

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the class teacher/Head of Academy/Family Support Team as considered appropriate by the Academy.

Attendance letter 3 will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the Head of Academy/Family Support Team.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Each week the class with the highest attendance percentage will be celebrated during Friday's assembly.

Certificates and rewards are distributed:

- At the end of each term to every child who has achieved 100% attendance.
- At the end of the school year to every child with 100% attendance across the whole school year.
- Each academy may implement a reward scheme at their discretion.

Attendance targets

The CEO will set Partnership attendance targets annually.

Conclusion

It is the policy of the academy to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our Trust will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our pupils.

Our Partnership will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance

If, at any time, a child has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a 6 months period, the school will consider making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution at a Magistrates Court. Please see the Local Authority website for further details.
