



# Youth Challenge Attendance Policy

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## **Introduction**

It is the aim of Youth Challenge to support all pupils to have maximum attendance and achieve their true potential. Pupils need to attend the academy regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Youth Challenge fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in the academy and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this academy and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our academy on our academy website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Academy Leads and Governors at our academy work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from academy frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

## **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our academy are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the academy.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff, schools and the Early Intervention Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good academy attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on academy attendance matters.

- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at the academy which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at our academy.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from academy for a legitimate reason and the academy has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the academy to explain the absence.
- Only the academy can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from the academy without the permission of the academy.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from the academy without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- Late arrival to school. Pupil registration begins at 9.30am until 9.50am where pupils will receive their attendance mark. If a pupil arrives between the times of 9.50 – 10.10am, this will be marked with an 'L' mark on SIMs and this will be monitored. Persistent lateness will be addressed and appropriate actions will be put in place to reduce the number late arrivals. When pupils arrive more than 20 minutes past the end of registration – after 10.10am, their mark will be counted as an unauthorised absence – this will be represented by a 'U' on SIM's. Wherever possible we will support families to address issues with lateness, however lateness can be used as evidence in the fixed penalty notice procedure.

## **Procedures**

Our academy will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the academy.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- To work with our mainstream schools to monitor the attendance of pupil's who are dual registered.
- To refer to the Early Intervention Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to academy initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Bolton LA and the DfE where requested.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of the academy staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Keyworkers/Outreach Mentor**

These are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Informing the Deputy Academy Lead where there are concerns
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their pupils the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the EIT Service
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Discussing attendance issues at Staff briefings where necessary
- Monitoring students' personal success targets for attendance

### **Attendance officer**

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring pupils arriving late are registered
- Contacting parents of absent children within an hour where no contact has been made
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Making referrals to the EIT service
- Referring any attendance concerns to the key working team
- Overall monitoring of academy attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Monitoring and reporting attendance to the Academy Lead including overall data on personal success targets
- Any child on a CP plan or LAC, but are living at home and are absent contact the EIT team to arrange a home visit.

### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends the academy regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment
- Contacting the academy office on the first morning of absence
- Informing the academy in advance of any medical appointments in academy time
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised
- Talking to the academy as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to academy so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## **Lateness**

Pupil registration begins at 9.30am until 9.50am where pupils will receive their attendance mark.

If a pupil arrives between the times of 9.50 – 10.10am, this will be marked with an 'L' mark on SIMs and this will be monitored. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the academy will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

When pupils arrive more than 20 minutes past the end of registration – after 10.10am, their mark will be counted as an unauthorised absence – this will be represented by a 'U' on SIM's. Wherever possible we will support families to address issues with lateness, however lateness can be used as evidence in the fixed penalty notice procedure.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to academy later than 10.10am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

## **Absconding from school**

**To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.**

Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

**Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:**

- A] pupils who abscond before the end of the registration period
- B] pupils who abscond after registration
- C] pupils who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds

### **A] Pupils who abscond before the end of the registration period**

Schools are required to register their pupils at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. The register will be open for a period of 20 minutes.

If a pupil absconds from the school during the period of registration, the class register should show the pupil as being absent.

Should the pupil return to school after the end of the registration period, the class register should be amended to indicate a late arrival.

It is good practice when a pupil absconds in these circumstances for the school to make every effort to advise the parents/carers.

### **B] Pupils who abscond after registration**

Once a pupil has been registered as present, the registration period has ended and the class register closed, the school is "in loco parentis".

Should a pupil abscond after the end of the registration period, the school, technically, remains "in loco parentis".

Every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child has absconded from school. When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them.

Contact with parents/carers should be by telephone in the first instance and details of attempts to establish contact should be recorded. If the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence.

If the parents/carers cannot be contacted, the attendance register should change to reflect that the pupil is not on site, however, a comment must be added and continual contact

must be attempted until parents/carers have been spoken to. For each incident, the DSL must be consulted and at this stage the course of action may be to report the pupil missing via a police report. However, the responsibility for the pupil remains with the school until parent contact is made. If the DSL is not available, the decision remains with the academy lead. In their absence the most senior member of staff will make the decision.

### **C] Pupils who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds**

If deemed safe to do so staff should calmly try to speak to the pupil, using a non-confrontational manner to try and persuade them to come back into school. Staff should not pursue the pupil or try to force her/him back into school. However, there may be circumstances where school staff will need to use their judgement, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety in deciding what to do.

A pupil's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be taken into account. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular pupil wander about the school grounds. The demeanour of the pupil will need to be taken into account. If the pupil is upset or angry, care must be given to how he/she is approached.

In all cases, ***staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger.***

### **Pupils who return to school after absconding**

Most pupils who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place either at school, at home or on the way to school.

For those pupils who return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers. In some cases it may be deemed that it is not safe for pupils to return to school after absconding. This decision will be made by a member of the senior management team and reasons will be clearly shared with parents/carers.

### **Risk assessments**

All children attending Youth Challenge are risk assessed and if they have a history of running off, absconding in their mainstream school, they have a personalised Risk Assessment and a Personal Evacuation and Exit Plan. These will cover potential risks during evacuations, transport to and from the site, academy reward trips off site enrichment activities and at the start and the end of the school day as they are entering and leaving the premises. If a child does abscond during these times staff follow the same procedures outlined in this policy.

### **Parent & Carers**

Parents / carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school. They are responsible for encouraging their children to keep to all school procedures and policies.

Once school has informed the parents that their child has absconded, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting the school with the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to school to help secure the safety of the child after he / she has absconded as well as meeting with the Academy Leads or another member of the senior leadership team in order to agree subsequent actions.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Each incident will be recorded monitored and evaluated. Individual Risk Assessment for the pupil will be amended if needed.

### **Procedures**

If a pupil is suspected of leaving the school site without permission and is deemed as vulnerable or in an emotional state:

- The member of staff will alert the Academy Lead or (in their absence) the Deputy Academy Lead, or most senior member of staff on site.
- If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the pupil, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident which led to the pupil absconding, the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.
- If there is no doubt that the pupil has absconded, the school will contact the police as an emergency situation and the pupil's parent to inform them. Staff will not chase or follow the pupil as this could lead to the pupil wandering further afield, acting impetuously or causing a traffic accident.
- If the child is within an easy distance of the school, staff are not to engage in conversation as the child might be in a distressed state and unable to act in a controlled manner. This would mean there is still the potential for traffic accidents.
- If the child appears to be missing but there is no evidence that he / she has left the site, a quick but thorough search of the site should be conducted before the parents / police are informed.
- If the pupil returns of his / her own volition, parents and (if necessary) the police will be informed. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by the SLT so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions. A written log will be filed on the incident on CPOMS. The Safeguarding Lead and Deputy are to be informed
- If possible, the pupil who has absconded should be brought back to school the same day. The parent, child and Academy Lead will then discuss the issues and any consequences. This policy will be discussed.

If the Academy Lead is aware that a pupil is not acting emotionally but has left the school grounds (e.g. by mistake), the above procedures may be adapted.

Please see **appendix 2** for actions to be taken when a child leaves the site



## **ABSENCES**

Parents/carers should contact the academy on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Academy Leads have the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then the child's Keyworker or the outreach mentor will contact home requesting these details.

### **Absence Follow Up**

Where a child is absent from the academy and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first hour contact process. **(appendix 1)**

- The attendance officer check all of the registers from 9.30am – 10am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. In the instances where the children are dual registered with their mainstream school we will contact the schools to inform them of the pupil's absence.
- In the case of children on a safeguarding plan we will inform the social worker on each day of absence.
- In a child is absent for 3 consecutive days without contact from a parent/carer a member of staff will visit the home.
- If we are unable to locate a student we will refer through to Bolton's Missing in Education team **(See safeguarding, Keeping children safe in education policy.)**
- If we have any safeguarding concerns due to a child attendance we will refer to the designated safeguarding officer who will take the appropriate action **(see safeguarding, keeping children safe in education policy.)**

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from the academy long term, the academy will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their academy work.

### **Parental Request for Absence from Academy for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of an Academy Lead to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Academy Leads will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits at Youth Challenge. It is the responsibility of the Academy Lead, Deputy Academy Lead, Keyworkers, Outreach mentor and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends academy regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the academy with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of

time then the academy has a responsibility to make a referral to the Early Intervention Service.

The Early Intervention Service (EIT) may issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EIT from the academy as part of the academy's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

### **Response to Persistent Non-Attendance**

Some of the students who join us have historically had low levels of attendance for prolonged period of times. We appreciate that for these students, attending school full time may be a very daunting prospect and there may be a transition period in which we work with them and their family to gradually encourage on site attendance. For these students we introduce a temporary distance learning package. Students who are on a distance learning package are always encouraged to attend site and a full-time timetable is always available to them. The distance learning package consists of two academic lessons, either at home or in the local community, per week and is devised to reduce students' disadvantage and aim to prevent a fixed penalty notice being issued. Should a distance learner's attendance to their bespoke timetable fall below 75%, an emergency review meeting will be called to discuss the reasons for non-attendance. This review may result in the distance learning package being removed and the commencement of the fining process.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

Our attendance officer, have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Deputy Head, Attendance Officer and Keyworkers to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

## Appendix 1

### Youth Challenge Secondary - Pupil Absent Follow Up

#### What happens every morning?

- Attendance officer check registers from 9.30am – 9.50am
- Attendance officer identifies those pupils who are absent by 9.50am
- If there is no contact from home by 9.45am, Attendance officer will contact parents/carers by telephone to ascertain reasons for absence.
- If a valid reason is given the absence is to be recorded on SIMs  
If no reason is given this will be chased by the keyworker



#### If a child is on dual roll or on a Traded Place

Children on dual register or a traded placement the attendance officer will contact the main school to inform them of the pupil's absence.



#### If a child is on level 4 of the Framework for Action

Children on a safeguarding plan the attendance officer will inform the social worker on each day of the absence. The EIT team will also be contacted before 10.30am .



#### If a child is Looked After

The attendance officer will inform the social worker on each day of absence.  
The attendance officer will contact the EIT team before 10.30am



#### In a child is absent for 3 consecutive days without parental contact

- A member of staff (Attendance officer) will visit the home to identify the issues
  - If necessary, the child's key worker will create an attendance plan (EHA)
- Any safeguarding concerns we will be investigated and referred to appropriate agency.



#### If the child's attendance becomes a concern

- Key worker home visit takes place to explore the issues and create an attendance plan (EHA)
- If no progress formal school meeting to take place SLT
- If attendance continues to be a concern, staged warning letters and ultimately a fine to be triggered.
- Referral to other agencies, including the Early Intervention Team

## Appendix 2

### Youth Challenge Secondary – Procedures for when a child absconds

It is important to determine the emotional state of the child as they have absconded.

