



Attendance Policy - Pupils

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**Policy Reviewed and Adopted by
Governing Body:**

Date of Next Review: 30th Nov 2019

Responsible Officer: J Fleckney

Introduction

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend the academy on time, every day the academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

This policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Purpose of this policy

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring regular attendance at the academy is the legal responsibility of parents and absence from the academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Law relating to academy attendance

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory academy age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have. This would normally be through regular attendance at academy. A child is of compulsory academy age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory academy age on the last Friday in June of the academy year in which they reach the age of 16.

Statutory Responsibilities

Under the Education Act 1996, the local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for young people of compulsory academy age and, where necessary will use legal enforcement.

Legal Sanctions

Where there is an absence, we will do all we can to ensure children and families are supported to improve attendance and a referral may be made to our pupil welfare officer to offer further support and guidance. When these interventions fail to bring about an improvement, the Local Authority will be notified via our pupil welfare officer and legal action in a magistrate's court may be taken. The academy will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular academy attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a academy and is of compulsory academy age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

It is the aim of this policy to ensure that regular Attendance is promoted and that all those with a responsibility to ensure regular attendance are supported in doing so.

Linked Documentation

<https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/Information-for-parents-and-carers/School-attendance.aspx>

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact the academy on 1st day of absence and each subsequent day of absence
- Attend meetings in the academy
- Participate in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperation in support and interventions offered by the academy or other agencies if appropriate
- Provide the academy with at least 2 contact numbers.

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of the academy, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend academy/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by the academy or other agencies

Principal:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the academy
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the academy conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider any request for leave against the academy criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision.
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process.

Designated Staff:

First day response:

- Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole academy attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance

All Academy Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- Be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- See pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all academy staff
- Participate in training regarding academy systems and procedures

Governors:

- Adopt the whole-academy policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the academy's attendance figures
- Work with the Principal in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Definitions

PA- Persistent Absenteeism

Related Procedures

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of academy staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the academy which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you termly on how your child is performing in academy and what their attendance and punctuality rate is;
- Celebrate improving and excellent attendance;

- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high academy;
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and academy
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with academy, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from academy has to be classified by the academy as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in academy time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the academy using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off academy unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at academy after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the academy. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, academy may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised.

Whilst any child may be off academy because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the academy, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend academy it is better to speak to academy to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the academy year for **whatever reason**. Absence at this level is, the government says, doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority Social Care Team and the Academy Attendance Team.

Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent the parent must:

- Contact the academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence and then on a daily basis for the duration of the absence, either by phone or in person to the academy office.

If a child is absent we will:

- Text then telephone the parent on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- Invite parents in to discuss the situation with our Family Liaison Team and/or Principal if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the academy's legal representatives if appropriate

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have up to date contact numbers at all times. The academy will request up to date information annually but it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure the academy is informed of any changes in personal details required for safeguarding purposes.

In-school Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

Parents are expected to contact academy at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. The academy may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality:

- Meetings in academy between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Principal;
- Parenting contracts;
- Use of the 'Team around the Family' (TAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Academy Attendance Team)
- Penalty notices

The Academy Attendance Team:

We will try to resolve any attendance difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they miss work and time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of academy.

How we manage lateness:

The academy opens at **8.50am** and classroom doors and other entrances will be locked at **9.00am** in readiness for a prompt start to learning. If pupils arrive after this time then they must enter by the academy office on Johnsville Avenue accompanied by a parent who will be asked to sign them in.

If a child has a persistent late record the parent will be asked to meet with the Principal and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem. However, we encourage parents to approach us at any time if problems with punctuality are experienced.

Leave in Term Time:

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in academy time to go on holiday.

Any application for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for exceptional leave of absence' form from the academy office. **Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be exceptional.** Any leave of absence taken without the agreement of the academy, or in excess of that agreed, will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in a penalty notice being issued. If issued, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in prosecution under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will be used in accordance with Blackpool Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

There are specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll and these are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013)

Religious Absence:

The academy will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Academy targets, projects and special initiatives:

The academy has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for academy is 95% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress towards this level.

Through the academy year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Summary:

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents

have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All academy staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible

Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Principal, who reports to Governors about the effectiveness of the policy on request.

Appendices

N/A