

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Author	Sadie Hampton, DSL
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INTRODUCTION

St Andrew's Academy is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any students' absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is **your** legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of every student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance.
- Behaviour Management.
- Health and Safety.
- Access to the Curriculum.
- Anti-Bullying.

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, students and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report details on attendance in our regular home/school letters.
- Report to you through the home/school diary on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

THE LAW RELATING TO ATTENDANCE

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of very child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- (a) To age, ability and aptitude
 - (b) To any special educational needs he/she may have
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

THE LAW RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on Local Authorities and the Governing Body to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCES

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

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

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

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Children who leave school early before the end of the school day, without prior agreement/revised hours agreement in place, unless in an emergency.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the student. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

PERSISTENT ABSEENTEEISM (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need your fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor; use of circle time; individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

School will take an attendance register twice daily and this shows whether students are present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or absent. If a student of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- Send a note in or write in the school diary on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with a member of staff.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 85%.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Amendments to the registration regulations, which came into force on 1 September 2013, remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice, which can amount to a fine of £2,500, a Community Order or three months' imprisonment.

SCHOOL TARGETS, PROJECTS AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Our aim is to achieve better than the targets because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the city.

Throughout the school 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 our home-school letters and we ask for your full support.

We know that attendance rates for special schools are generally below those of mainstream schools because of the complex nature of some of our students' special needs, including associated medical needs. As a result of this some of our students are more prone to illness and hospitalisation. We also fully understand the value of a close home-school partnership.

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. Student attendance figures are reported to Shaw Education Trust and to the school Academy Council monthly.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.