

Staffordshire University Academy		Academy Policy Document			
Approved by:	SLT	Issue date:	Sept 2020	Review date:	Sept 2022
Policy Title	Attendance Policy				
Policy owner:	Attendance Intervention Manager		Page 1 of 5		
Audience:	Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LAC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parents <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Attendance Reporting Process

The Principal is responsible for the operational management of the policy and can delegate lead to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The Intervention Manager will follow up individual students and analyse attendance data to identify trends for individual students, classes and year groups enabling the academy to target efforts. Wherever possible, action will be taken by the academy to improve a student's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to the Local Authority.

It is not appropriate for the academy to authorise absences for holidays, shopping, looking after other children/siblings, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments where there is no option but to arrange during school time (copies of appointment cards/letters must be provided preferably prior to appointments being attended). Where possible students will be accommodated in the academy before and after their appointments. It is expected that parents do not ask for time off for children's dental appointments.

Information about individual academy targets, projects and special initiatives

The Academy has adopted the following attendance targets:

- we are working towards each student achieving at least 96% (the national attendance target is 95%)
- we are committed to significantly reducing persistent absence to below 10% (the DfE's agreed minimum for all schools)
- we are committed to reducing the number of unauthorised absences and to continue to build and maintain excellent partnerships with parents

Academy procedures for recording and monitoring attendance

Recording

Students should arrive at academy at **8.40am (first period is 8.45 am)**. The students should make their way to period 1 where the teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school. **Any late students should enter the academy through the main student entrance.** All staff need to be aware that any student arriving late **MUST** be registered for the purposes of fire regulations. The register must be taken by 9am. Persistent lateness will be challenged. The academy implements a consequence system for late attenders by logging detentions on that day. It is worth noting that if a student is 15 minutes late everyday this is equivalent to missing 10 days of school over the year.

The registers **officially** close at **9:00am** and any student arriving after this time will be marked with a U code for the session. A reason for the lateness will need to be provided and a decision made by the Attendance Intervention Manager as to whether to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence. If unauthorised the 'U' code will be used just the same as if the student were absent for the morning session. Parents should be aware that if a student reaches 20 'U' absences, there is the risk of a Penalty Notice being issued against them for poor attendance. Student attendance marks will be awarded at the discretion of the Attendance Intervention Manager.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact either their form tutor, the Intervention Manager or their child's Head of Year at an early stage to work together in resolving any problems. This is a positive move as the majority of times issues can be resolved. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the academy or the Parent/Carer may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker (EWW) from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed.

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Procedures

The academy applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Parents/Carers will know that students are expected to be in the academy every day. The importance of good attendance is stressed through written and oral communications with students and parents.
- In the event of absence/lateness, Parents/Carers should contact the Attendance Support as soon as they are able to inform of the reasons for the absence. We will challenge any poor attendance particularly where minor issues are being prioritised over the student's education at the academy. If attendance falls below 90%, absence will be authorised with some medical evidence of illness. Please keep in contact with the Intervention Manager on these occasions.
- Students who arrive late will need to explain politely reasons for their lateness. If it is not an acceptable reason (decided by staff) they will be issued with a sanction. Students need to get into good habits of arriving on time to the academy.
- There will be consequences for those students who are regularly late through the Behaviour for Learning system.
- Parents/carers should not arrange non urgent medical and dental appointments during the academy day.
- Students who need to leave the academy during the day must have a note from Parents/Carers explaining the reasons for this. Permission will be granted (or refused) by their Head of Year.
- For any unexplained absences the academy will contact parents who have not offered a reason and will mark the absence as unauthorised if no suitable reason is provided. **A reason for a period of absence is always required.** The Intervention Manager will also undertake home visits where reasons have not been gained, or to discuss where attendance is a concern.
- Letters are sent out to Parents/Carers if their child's attendance is drops under 96%. Their tutor will contact Parents/Carers. Further letters from pastoral leaders and the Intervention Manager will follow if attendance does not improve. Parents/Carers will be asked to attend a meeting at the academy.
- Reward certificates are awarded at the end of each term for students maintaining 100% attendance. Letters are also sent to parents of those students who are maintaining excellent levels of attendance (above 96%).
- All requests for leave of absences from the academy must be made in writing, however Parents/Carers should be aware that leave of absence for holidays during term time will only be authorised in **exceptional** circumstances. Where the absence is unauthorised the academy will assess a student's attendance record and may submit a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice. Parents/Carers should avoid booking holidays until they have completed a Holiday in Term Time Application Form (Exceptional Circumstances). When a holiday request is refused, Parents/Carers are welcome to arrange a meeting with a member of Senior Leadership to discuss the reasons for refusal. The academy will be guided by Local Authority guidance in relation to term time leave of absence.
- Attendance is monitored by the Intervention Manager and Heads of Year on a daily basis with reports produced and shared with the Assistant Principal weekly. Tutors are also provided with information regarding their tutee's attendance and will, where appropriate, have 1 to 1 conversations with students regarding strategies to improve their attendance. The tutor will also contact Parents/Carers. Where students are identified as a concern in their attendance, monitoring and actions will be taken in the following circumstances:
 - Below 96%-Tutor actions plus 1st letter of concern
 - Below 94% Pastoral Leaders actions plus 2nd letter of concern
 - Below 90% Intervention Manager actions plus 3rd letter of concern
 - This will continue until the student's attendance returns to above 96%.
- If concerns about attendance persist then the academy will involve the Education Welfare Worker. Throughout this process, staff will be looking to identify and address reasons for attendance issues so that the student can return to the academy (with support if necessary) as quickly as possible.

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Points to be considered

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence (where student attendance falls below 90%) that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing medical evidence. This can be in the form of appointment cards or letters, along with copies of any prescribed medication or a note from a medical professional. This is standard procedure for all schools and these guidelines are set for schools by Department of Education.

Practicalities of Managing Medical/Illness Absence

- In most instances, students will have an informal discussion with the Attendance Intervention Manager/Pastoral Coordinator on their return, to firstly ensure they are fit for school, offer support on any work they may have missed and then to further discuss the importance of attendance and the impact this can have on their education. Where possible, the Intervention Manager will liaise with other departments to arrange any support where it is needed.
- If concerns are highlighted regarding the level of medical/illness absence that a student has incurred, contact will be made with the Parents/Carers to discuss it further and look at ways to support a student with medical conditions in school through the use of a Care Plan. Most medical conditions can be managed well within the academy and we have trained staff to provide support where appropriate.
- If still concerned the Intervention Manager will suggest that the student visit their GP or other health professional, if this has not already been done.
- Students and Parents/Carers will be invited to attendance meetings with the Intervention Manager once their attendance becomes a concern.
- Parents/carers of students whose attendance at the end of each half term is below 90%, will be asked to attend an interview with the Intervention Manager to explore whether there are any underlying issues that may be contributing to their poor attendance, which we are not already aware of.
- If Parents/Carers do not engage and all other efforts have been exhausted the academy will make a referral to the EWW. The EWW may pursue a Fixed Penalty Notice, whereby the Local Authority will instigate a time limited period of monitoring, offering a further period in which significant improvement must be demonstrated. We would very much hope that a good working relationship with our Parents/Carers will be established so that any penalties can be avoided. Parents/carers will understand that we have the child's best interests at heart and them building resilience and gaining a good education for the future, is incredibly important to us.
- Following investigation and close monitoring by the Local Authority, any unresolved issues could result in the Parent/Carer receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 section 444.

Persistent Absence (PA)

The academy is committed to reducing persistent absence (which is attendance less than 90% attendance) and has specific procedures for dealing with this. There are strong and proven links between student attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (equivalent to 9.5 days or more absence in a school year) has been shown to compromise student attainment. An attendance of 90% is equivalent to missing 19 days or nearly 4 weeks from school in

a year. Only 10% of students who are persistently absent from school achieve the equivalent of 5 A*-C grades at GCSE (now grades 9-4). It has been found that if a school could improve its overall attendance by 1% it could see an improvement in attainment of around 5%.

As earlier stated the academy will inform the parents of concerns and offer support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a student from attending. Students falling to below 96% attendance will be monitored as to whether their

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attendance improves or deteriorates. The aim is to avoid a student falling behind in their work and failing to achieve the knowledge and skills they need to gain the GCSE grades they are capable of.

Once a student is categorised as persistently absent, the Attendance Intervention Manager will endeavour to work closely with a family and put in place appropriate support, which can include targets and dates via attendance reports, within which the student must demonstrate a significant improvement. Whilst we appreciate that some illnesses may be genuine, the academy has a duty to ensure we support students to be in as much as possible to gain the most benefit from the education they are offered, ultimately helping them to achieve a good academic base on which to commence their adult life.

On a termly basis the following number of sessions absent will result in a student being considered persistently absent:

By the end of half-term 1 (Autumn Term)	7+ sessions (3.5 days)
By the end of half-term 2 (Autumn Term)	14+ sessions (7 days)
By the end of half-term 3 (Spring Term)	20+ sessions (10 days)
By the end of half-term 4 (Spring Term)	26+ sessions (13 days)
By the end of half-term 5 (Summer Term)	31+ sessions (15.5 days)
By the end of half-term 6 (Summer Term)	38+ sessions (19 days)

1. PA data is consistently monitored to track and review attendance of PA students so that concerns can be addressed.
2. Half termly meetings are held with the EWW to discuss all students who have fallen within this category.
3. Parents/Carers, the child, the Assistant Principal and EWW are all spoken to about concerns relating to PA.
4. Actions are taken by EWW in line with Staffordshire County Council Policy.

Alternatively, Parents/Carers or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the academy and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the academy reception or by contacting the Local Support Team.

Requests for Leave of Absence

If a Parent/Carer wishes to request a period of leave they are required to complete a leave of absence request form. If the request is denied the academy will inform the Parent/Carer of the reason by letter and the request will be noted in the electronic register. Leave of absence will be refused except under special/exceptional circumstances and unauthorised leave could result in a fixed term penalty notice in line with national legislation. Absence request forms are available from reception or to download online from our website. It is worth noting that a student who takes a **2 week** family holiday in term time (10 school days) will only be able to achieve a maximum attendance of **94.7%**. This is assuming the student has no illness or medical appointments for the rest of the school year. This automatically puts the student into a category where their attendance will be monitored.

Attendance is monitored within the academy by:

Mr S Williams (Assistant Principal) who holds strategic responsibility for monitoring and improving academy attendance.

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Mrs J Bird provides administrative support for attendance.

Ms O Glackin (Intervention Manager) should be contacted each day and is responsible for communications/queries regarding attendance from parents, working directly with parents, tutors, teachers and external agencies in order to support students and families to maintain excellent attendance. She is responsible for liaison with EWO on students within persistent absence levels and instigating statutory action where support has not resulted in significant improvement.

Summary

The academy 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 on time, every day and a duty to work with staff if there are any issues. Academy staff are committed to working with Parents/Carers to ensure their children get into good habits of punctuality and have over 96% attendance.

There are reward incentives for students who have excellent attendance although they should always know that the greatest reward is a great education and better life chances.