

# Attendance Policy

<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
	D Temperton/J Barker	7 December 2018	10 December 2018
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## Introduction

As part of the North East Learning Trust, Bedlington Academy seeks to ensure that all students receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The Academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the Academy community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide and, therefore, from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all students.

All staff will work with students and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attends the Academy regularly and on time. A whole Academy attendance target of 97% has been set for the academic year 2018/2019 and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The Academy has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DFE 'School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (September 2018) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

For the purposes of this policy Headteacher may also be read as Executive Headteacher, Principal, Head of School.

## Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at the Academy;
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust and the Academy including students, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees;
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks;
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students;
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and the Academy;
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Education Welfare Service (EWS) and with other services and agencies;
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence;
- To reduce the number of students who have more than 3% overall absence and thereby reduce the overall absence rate;
- To reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90% and thereby reduce the rate of persistent absence.

## **Attendance and Attainment**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and attainment of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular attendance at the Academy is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the Academy is dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of the Academy's attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality on the Academy's website and the Parental Guides 'Fixed Penalty Notices' and 'Holidays in School Time';
- Involve parents/carers from the earliest stage of poor attendance;
- Ensure Truancy Call/Student Service Officer contacts parents on the first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents/carers.

To ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality;
- Relate attendance issues directly to the Academy's values, ethos, and curriculum;
- Reward good attendance.

## **The Law**

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

The Academy will offer help and support if there is a problem with attendance. If attendance does not improve or the parent does not accept the help and support offered, the LA may issue the parent with a Penalty Notice or prosecute the parent in accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996.

If a child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated

offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

## **Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from the Academy must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents to classify an absence, only the Headteacher or person identified by the Headteacher is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis taking into account the specific facts and circumstances.

Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for reasons which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

## **Absence Procedures**

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents/carers should, on the first day of absence and subsequent days, phone the appropriate Student Service Officer giving a reason for the child's absence. Should a parent/carer not contact the Academy, Truancy Call/Student Service Officer will contact parents/carers to confirm that the child is not in the Academy and to obtain the reason for the absence.

Doctor and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to the Academy following the appointment they should return.

Parents must provide an explanatory note for all absences.

If a child's absence continues then parents/carers are requested to notify the Academy daily. If a phone call is not received, then Truancy Call/ Student Service Officer will contact parents/carers to verify the absence.

If the Academy receives no reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the LA's EWS to consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence (holiday) taken during term time).

## **Attendance Below 97%**

When a student's attendance falls below 97% the Academy will ensure that:

- The student's attendance is monitored on a weekly basis;
- The Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Officer act as key workers for students where attendance is a cause for concern;
- The Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and Attendance Officer meet weekly with Student Service Officer to discuss students whose attendance falls below 97%.
- The Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and Attendance Officer consider a range of strategies to address the poor attendance of students in this category, including; attendance meetings with both parents/carers and student to agree strategies to improve attendance, Attendance Officer home visits, telephone calls and letters are also strategies that will be used. When necessary, referrals will be made to LA EWS. The Academy may also request that a parent/carer provides the Academy with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences, and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.
- Attendance figures are reported to parents in annual reports.

If parents/carers and/or students need help with attendance, you can contact the appropriate Student Service Officer. You may be asked to attend a meeting in the Academy to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place. Sometimes, the Academy may need to involve other services to help; referrals will be made to outside agencies if the Academy feels such action is warranted.

The Academy will always try to communicate with you regarding your child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concern by letter, making telephone calls to you, and inviting you to attend a meeting in the Academy depending on the circumstances. The Academy will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation.

### **Enforcement Action/Formal Attendance Procedures**

If, following the Academy's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents/carers have not co-operated with attempts to improve the situation the Academy are required to consider referring the matter to the LA EWS.

The High Court has confirmed that the Headteacher authorises absences. If your child misses' school a lot because of illness, or if the Academy do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school frequently, the Academy may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they receive the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

## Leave of Absence in Term Time

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of the Academy for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Academy will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in the Academy at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the Academy website or in person from the Academy reception. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from the Academy. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

## Rewarding Good Attendance

The Academy will look for every opportunity to reward high attendance. Each time a student has attended for a full week, they will receive a raffle ticket which is placed into a draw. There is a grand draw at the end of the academic year, in order for students to have the opportunity to win a valuable prize. High attendance is a pre-requisite for attendance at the Year 11 prom and other reward events in school.

## Punctuality

All students arriving late will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the Academy's attendance data base (SIMs).

- Registration takes place at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. Morning registration begins at 8.45am. Students arriving after 8.50am will be marked **L** (late before register closed). Morning registers will be closed at 9.15am. All students who arrive after 9.15am will be marked using the **U** code, unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation is provided the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- The Academy operates a one strike system for lateness. Any lateness after the one occasion will result in students being issued with a half hour detention on the same evening. Persistent lateness will result in this being increased to one-hour detentions.
- Afternoon registration takes place at 1.00pm. Students arriving after 1.05pm will be marked **L** (late before register closed). PM registers close at 1.30pm.
- Students arriving after the registers are closed will be marked with a **U** code, unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation is provided the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

- The Attendance Officer will monitor the late book and letters will be sent to the parents/carers to inform them of their child's level of lateness.

### **Failure to Attend Registration/Lateness at the Academy**

Where a student is repeatedly late, sanctions may include detentions, parental contact, internal exclusions, in the worst cases, a fixed term exclusion.

A letter will be sent home from the Academy to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Attendance Officer will be offered to discuss ways that the Academy can offer support in finding a way to improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils e.g. through the Academy's rewards system. If there is no improvement, and the student is persistently late to school after the register has closed, then a referral may be made to the LA EWS to consider if a Fixed Penalty Notice is appropriate.

### **Lateness to Lessons**

A class register is taken at the beginning of each lesson. Students arriving after the late bell will be marked late. Those students who are repeatedly late to lessons will be identified by the Student Service Officer using the late list printout. Once this is done, sanctions will be used to address the problem. These sanctions will include: parental contact, detentions and, in the worst cases, internal exclusions.

### **Lateness to Assembly**

- On assembly days students are expected to be in the main hall by 8.45am.
- After a student has been late three times for assembly without good reason, the student will follow the sanctions in relation to lateness.
- If the student is late again, he/she will be given an after school detention.
- After three detentions the student will receive a one day internal exclusion each time he/she misses an assembly owing to lateness.

### **Truancy from Lessons and/or the Academy**

The first time a student is identified as truanting from the Academy and/or lessons, the parent/carer of the student will be contacted by letter and phone, and the student will be given a one hour detention with the subject teacher. The student's name will be placed on the truancy register and regular spot checks will be carried out to make sure the student is in lessons.

The second time a student is found truanting, he/she will be given a one day internal exclusion and parents/carers will again be informed. After coming out of the Bridge, the student will be placed on report. Regular spot checks will take place to make sure the student is in lessons.

The third time a student is found to be truanting, the student will be given a two day internal exclusion. After coming out of the Bridge, the student will be placed on report for a period of time.

### **Leaving the Classroom without Permission**

Any student leaving a classroom without permission will be given a one hour after school detention.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Local Academy Council:**

As part of our approach to maintaining high attendance, the Local Academy Council will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant Trust and Academy policies and guidance directed to parents/carers and staff.
- Annually review the Academy's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow staff, parents/carers, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- At their termly meetings they will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the Academy is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for students who are educated off site.

#### **Senior Management Team:**

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the Local Academy Council to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the Academy's Attendance Policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior leader to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Local Academy Council each term on attendance records, data, and provision.



- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

#### **Staff:**

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully informed and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students, and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure that the correct systems are followed for recording attendance and that registers are taken each lesson and session.

#### **Student Service Officers:**

- Assist in the implementation of the Academy's Attendance Policy.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer and the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) on matters relating to attendance.
- Assist in the organising of rewards for good attendance.
- Monitor levels of unauthorised absence in a designated year group and, if necessary, to contact parents/carers regarding unexplained absences.
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of a student's absence if there is no response to Truancy Call.

#### **Attendance Officer:**

- Assist in the implementation of the Academy's Attendance Policy.
- Distribute attendance data to tutor groups.
- Act as a liaison officer between home, the Academy and the LA on matters related to Academy attendance.
- Offer advice, assistance and support to parents/carers and students on attendance issues.
- Assess reasons for non-attendance and initiate and support appropriate action to improve it.
- Initiate and refer cases for legal action as appropriate, to the LA Education Welfare Team.

- Provide information and reports which may be used in court when necessary.
- Liaise with the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) on matters relating to attendance and monitoring of all sub groups.
- Meet weekly with the Assistant Headteacher and Student Service Officers to discuss students whose attendance falls below 97%.
- Implement the Academy policy on attendance and punctuality at registration.
- Monitor the Late Register and send letters to parents/carers informing them of their child's level of lateness every half term.
- To consider a range of strategies to address the problem of poor attendance, including:
- Attendance meetings with both the parent/carer and student; to decide as to how all parties can work together to improve the student's attendance.
- Home visits, telephone calls and letters to parents/carers relating to their child's attendance.
- Refer all appropriate cases to the LA EWS and involve other external agencies where appropriate.

#### **Parents/Carers:**

- Engage with their child's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at the Academy.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Ensure that you keep the Academy informed of any changes to personal details including home address and emergency contact details.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary absences.
- Keep the Academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Encourage support and motivate their child to attend the Academy every-day, as it is vital that your child receives the same messages at home as they do at the Academy about the importance of attendance and punctuality.