



# Attendance Policy

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# Attendance Policy

## Introduction:



### Article 28

*Every child has the right to an education. We respect this right by supporting our pupils to have good attendance and punctuality at our Academy.*

This is a successful school and every 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 children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents/carers make sure that their child/ren attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## Why Regular Attendance is Important

**Learning:-** 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 a child's regular attendance at school is the parents/carers legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law which may result in prosecution and a criminal record.

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

- Attendance
- Inclusion & Equal Opportunity
- Social and Personal Development
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum

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, pupils and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Provide details on attendance in our regular school Newsletter and on our website;
- Inform parents/carers in their child's school report on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good, whole class attendance in our assemblies;
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and outings/events.

## The Law Relating to Attendance

- Education Act 1944 – Established the duty of Local Authorities and parents/carers to ensure regular attendance of pupils in school.
- Education Act 1996 - (Section 444). The Act states that “The parents/carers of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law.”
- Pupils' Registration Regulations 1986 – Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of Attendance Registers.
- The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991.
- Framework for the Inspection of Schools (OfSTED) – August 1993.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3 (2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).
- Pupil Registration Regulations 1995 (Amended) gives schools discretionary powers to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term time.
- Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003).
- Pupil Registration Regulations 2006, revokes previous Regulations of 1995 and the subsequent amendments of 1997 and 2001 (England only). It places a requirement on schools to put pupils on the admissions and attendance registers on the first day that they are expected to attend not, as previously, when they first attend.
  - Amendment regulations 2013

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that the Principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Principal should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007(Amendment Regulations) 2013

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

## The Law Relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies 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 Absence

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. **(Absence Codes Appendix 1)**

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, or if parent/carers have failed to provide an explanation for their child's absence. This type of absence can lead to Stockton Local Authority Attendance Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised leave includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day (includes internal exclusion)
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, haircuts, looking after other children or birthdays
- Visiting orders, day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Attending appointments that are meant for other people

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 and the parents/carers and the child. If a 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 make things worse.

## Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% 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 parents/carers 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 parents/carers and Stockton Local Authority Attendance Service will be informed of this immediately.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan which will be agreed with parents/carers, school and Stockton Local Authority Attendance Service.

If improvements are not seen Stockton Local Authority Attendance Service will take LEGAL action and parents/carers will be summonsed to appear in the Magistrates Court. The Court may decide to impose fines, community service or custodial sentences.

## Unauthorised Absences

Under the new regulations; The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007(Amendment Regulations) 2013 the Academy may refer to the Stockton Local Authority for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice where ten unauthorised sessions have been recorded over a period of twelve weeks. **(Fixed Penalty Notice Referral Form Appendix 2)**

Parents/carers in receipt of a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter are subject to a further three week monitoring period, if unauthorised absences are recorded within this time the Local Authority will issue the fine.

A Maximum of two Fixed Penalty Notices over a six month period can be applied in respect of the same child. An Attendance Case Conference should take place if further offences occur.

## Absence Procedures

### If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact us, by phone, as soon as possible on the first day of absence; The answering machine will take messages if the line or the office is busy;
- Or, call into school and report to reception

### If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not been informed of a reason;
- Or, we may carry out a home visit and leave a calling card.
- If a child remains absent without any contact from parent/carers, a home visit is unsuccessful and there are safeguarding concerns we may take the following action:
  - Report to Social Services and/or the Police and request a welfare check
  - Make a Child Missing from Education (CME) referral which will be investigated by Stockton Local Authority **(Inclusion Referral Form Appendix 3)**

If a child returns to school and the parent/carer does not provide an acceptable reason for the absence this will be noted and the absence recorded as unauthorised.

### Longer term absence:

- After three days of absence an update should be obtained, by phone or home visit.
- Medical evidence may be requested in order to authorise illness in excess of three days.
- On the sixth day of absence the Academy will meet with parent/carers to assess the needs of the child and access to education. In some cases it may be appropriate to offer fixed additional support in school, a phased return, part time timetable or home/school support.

### Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have up-to-date contact numbers at all times. Parents/carers will be reminded to ensure that they update their contact details in our Newsletters and school will carry out annual data update captures.

### The School Attendance Advisor

The School Attendance Advisor will regularly monitor attendance and contact parents/carers if attendance or punctuality is becoming a concern. Pupils are expected to have an **average** attendance of 95% in any full academic year; attendance should not be below 95% unless there are extenuating circumstances. Attendance below 95% (pro rata) will be monitored and parents/carers will be notified of this in writing. Further absences will not be authorised unless supported by medical evidence. **(Attendance Monitoring Letter Appendix 4)**

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the School Attendance Advisor in resolving any problems together through an action plan. **(Action Plan Appendix 5)** This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Academy Attendance Officer from Stockton Local Authority Attendance Service.

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.

### Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:55am** and we expect pupils to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9:00am** and pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Afternoon session registers are marked promptly at **1:00pm**.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a pupil arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. Persistent unauthorised absences could trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice or referral to Stockton Local Authority Attendance Service.

If children arrive late without their parent/carer then a text message will be sent to notify the parent/carer.

If a pupil has a persistent late record parents/carers will be notified in writing and may be asked to meet with the Attendance Advisor to resolve the problem and agree an Action Plan.

**(Punctuality Monitoring Letter Appendix 6)**

Parents/carers are welcome to contact school at any time if there are problems with attendance and punctuality.

A monitoring and reward system, 'Beat the Bell', may be used to encourage punctuality or work on routines may be completed with the child and parent/carer.

### **Appointments during the school day**

Parents/carers are asked to minimise time missed due to routine medical appointments.

Pupils should attend school and be signed out at the office for appointments. Parents/carers should show office staff any appointment card, letter or text; if possible the child should return to school following the appointment.

Frequent or regular absence for appointments without evidence will trigger attendance monitoring procedures.

### **Holidays in Term Time**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help by not taking children away in school time.

All applications for leave, available from the school office, must be made in advance. **(Application for Leave Appendix 7)**

All requests for leave during term time will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

It is not the Academy's intention to issue a Fixed Penalty Warning Notice for all leave requests. These will be considered on their individual merits and will take into account the amount of leave requested, the child's attendance history and specific needs.

In particular the Academy will consider if the child's attendance is at risk of being below average for the academic year, (95%), if the child's attendance was below average in previous years, any other unauthorised absences, if the period of leave exceeds 10 sessions or coincides with any significant events, SATs etc.

Some applications may be returned to parents/carers without the issue of a Fixed Penalty Warning Notice; however if attendance then becomes a concern this can be issued at any point up until the date of the leave. **(Fixed Penalty Warning Notice Appendix 8)**

If an application is returned with a Fixed Penalty Warning Notice and the absence goes ahead copies of the application and the Warning Notice will be submitted to Stockton Local Authority for the issue of the Fixed Penalty Notice.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and all staff, parents/carers and pupils have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for the whole school is 95.5% attendance and we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about progress to this level. Ten days absence over a full academic year results in an individual attendance level of 94.7%.

Our school hope to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in our area.

Through 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 included in staff meetings and our regular School Newsletter.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

- **Caroline Reed (Principal)**
- **Connie Buckley (Family & Parent Support Advisor, Attendance Advisor)**
- **Lisa Wanless (PA to the Senior Leadership Team)**

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their child/ren attends. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils 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.

**Date of Policy /Review:**

07/05/15

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