



Attendance Policy (2014/15)

1. Introduction

1.1. It is vital that students attend the Academy regularly in order to learn and progress. Any absence has a negative impact on a child's learning; regular absence has a significant impact on achievement and opportunity.

1.2. Ideally, all students would have an attendance rate of 100% although, clearly, we recognise that occasionally students may not be able to attend. For this reason, attendance of 95% and above is considered as acceptable. Attendance below 95% is a concern. A child with an attendance rate below 85% is classed as a Persistent Absentee.

1.3. This policy document sets out the procedures we have in place to:

- encourage all students to attend regularly;
- monitor student attendance and intervene as necessary; and
- provide advice and support to parents and students.

2. Legal Framework

2.1. Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring that a child, of compulsory school age, attends school regularly and punctually. A parent is described by the DfE as both natural parents, whether married or not, any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person, or any person who cares for a child or young person.

2.2. The Education Act 1996 also places a statutory responsibility on the Local Authority to ensure that parents secure education for children of school age and allows for the Authority to use legal enforcement as necessary.

2.3. The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 requires schools to take the attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. Register must be marked in accordance with DfE regulations using the designated attendance codes.

3. Daily attendance procedures

Our daily attendance procedures are led by the Attendance Officer who is supported by the Student Services team.

3.1. Reporting a student absence

3.11. We hope and expect that all parents will encourage students to attend regularly and punctually. If a child is unable to attend school, for whatever reason, parents should contact the Academy by 8:30am to explain the reason for absence. Reception is open to take calls from 7:30am and Student Services from 8:30am. Clearly, students should only be absent where absolutely unavoidable.

3.12. Parents are asked to contact the Academy on each day of absence and may, in certain circumstances, be asked to provide medical evidence as to why their child is off school.

3.13. Parents will be contacted, and home visits made where appropriate, if we do not receive any notification of a student absence, as detailed in section 5.

3.14. Where a student is absent, the Academy will decide whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason given and any other circumstances as appropriate.

3.2. The start of the day

3.21. School starts at 8:30am, Tutorial is from 8.30am to 8.45am and registers are taken by 8.35am.

3.22. If a phone call or message about a student absence is taken by Student Services staff, then the appropriate code is entered in the register. The entry in the register is flagged and initialled to indicate that we have had a phone call from parents/carers about the absence. The Attendance Officer will check these marks and query those where there are attendance concerns about a particular student.

3.23. Students arriving late, between 8:30am and 9:00am, enter the building through the external door of the Make wedge and sign in with the Attendance Officer rather than at Reception. A member of SLT is also present each morning to speak with the students as they arrive. At 9:00am, the Attendance Officer enters any late marks in registers as appropriate.

3.24. Students arriving after 9:00am sign in with Student Services at Reception. Registers close at 9:30am; students arriving before 9:30am receive a late mark in the register and students arriving after 9:30am receive a U mark.

3.25. Any student in receipt of an L or U mark in the register receives a 30 minute detention that evening. Any student who is late on two or more occasions in any particular week is required to attend a two hour Principal's detention on the Friday evening of that week.

3.26. Student Services check that all registers have been completed and saved during morning Tutorial and chase up any that are missing.

3.3. Absent students

3.31. Year Managers check all registers at 9:15am. If a student is absent, a phone call home will be made by the Year Manager before 10:00am. If Year Managers are unable to make their calls on any particular morning, they will ask Student Services to make them on their behalf.

3.32. If Year Managers are able to contact parents and ascertain the reason for absence, then the appropriate code is entered on the register. The entry in the register is flagged and initialled to indicate that we have spoken with parents/carers about the absence.

3.33. If there is no answer to a phone call, then the attendance mark will remain as an N in the register. The entry will, however, be flagged by the Year Manager to indicate that a call has been made and, if appropriate, a voice message left.

3.4. Follow up texts and home visits

3.41. At 10.00am, the Attendance Officer sends out text messages to parents/carers of all students with an N recorded in the register. Before sending out texts, the Attendance Officer checks with the Bridge, in case any of their students have arrived without registering, and with Student Services staff to ensure that all messages received from parents/carers have been recorded.

3.42. If there is a response to the text then the Attendance Officer will enter the appropriate code on the register. The entry in the register is flagged and initialled to indicate that we have had contact with parents/carers about the absence.

3.43. If there is no answer to the text by 10:45am then the mark in the register will be changed to an O. An O mark triggers a home visit. An O mark in the register is flagged and initialled after a home visit has been made. Year Managers will let the Attendance Officer know if they are unable to make home visits on any particular morning.

3.44. Home visits may also be made to vulnerable students, PA students or other students who we are concerned about even if we have received a message or contacted parents/carers. This is at the discretion of Year Managers and the Attendance Team. Again, the home visit will be flagged on the register.

3.45. During an Attendance Blitz, home visits will be made to all students who are absent irrespective of whether there has been communication with home or not.

3.46. If all these procedures are followed correctly, all absence marks should be flagged and initialled, and annotated where appropriate, to indicate whether contact has been made with parents/carers or not and whether a home visit was made.

4. Monitoring and managing Attendance

4.1. The Attendance Officer maintains an attendance spreadsheet detailing all those students with attendance below 92%. Weekly attendance data is recorded for each student; a cell on the spreadsheet will be shaded in green if a student's attendance has improved that week and red if it has dropped. The spreadsheet is also annotated to indicate any interventions or actions. A

student will remain on the spreadsheet until his/her attendance is above 92%. Similarly, a student will be added to the spreadsheet if his/her attendance drops below 92% during the year. Students on the spreadsheet are discussed at weekly meetings with Year Managers.

4.2. Year Managers will contact parents and meet with students during the week, as appropriate, if there are concerns around attendance. Details of meetings, conversations and interventions are recorded on the SIMS Communications Log and will be discussed at weekly attendance meetings with the Student Services Manager and the Attendance Officer. Year Managers will not initiate or send out any formal Attendance letters or initiate any formal proceedings.

4.3. Weekly attendance meetings are held each Friday as detailed below:

11:15am	Year 8
11:30am	Year 7
11:45am	Year 10
12:00pm	Year 9
12:15pm	Year 11

4.4. The standing agenda items for these meetings are:

- An overview of the attendance data for the year group on SIMS
- Students below 92% attendance
- Other students who may be causing concern
- Any attendance issues/actions over the last week as recorded on the SIMS Communications Log
- Formal proceedings

4.5. The use of any formal proceedings will be initiated and processed by the Attendance Officer following the weekly meeting with Year Managers.

4.6. Additional meetings are arranged with Year Managers as necessary.

5. Formal proceedings

The Academy operates a staged approach to encouraging good attendance.

Stage 1

5.1. Tutors and Year Managers will normally speak with children if their attendance falls below 95% unless there are known, and genuine, circumstances for any absence. A phone call may be made to parents/carers to advise them that we are concerned, offer support if appropriate and inform them that the child's attendance will be monitored over the coming weeks. Any communication or actions are logged on SIMS Comms.

Stage 2

5.2. If a student's attendance drops below 92%, he/she will be added to the attendance spreadsheet and his/her attendance monitored formally on a weekly basis. It is likely that a Stage 2 letter will be issued if there are unauthorised absences or if there are concerns given about the reasons for absence; the Stage 2 letter warns parents/carers that we may have to consider issuing a penalty fine or prosecution if there is no improvement in the child's attendance.

5.3. If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, then parents/carers may be invited to attend a Stage 2 Attendance Panel Meeting where they will meet with the Year Manager and Attendance Team to discuss our concerns and formulate an Attendance Improvement Agreement. A letter will be sent to parents/carers if they fail to attend the meeting expressing our concerns and, again, indicating the possibility that we will issue a penalty fine if there is no improvement in the child's attendance.

5.4. If a student at Stage 2 has 10 unauthorised sessions in a term then the Academy will apply to the Authority for a Penalty Warning Notice to be issued to parents/carers. Requests to the Authority have to be made on fixed submission dates; there are 7 possible submission dates during the academic year. The Penalty Warning Notice letter warns parents/carers that a Penalty Fine will be issued should their child have any unauthorised absences over the next 15 school days.

Stage 3

5.5. If a child's attendance drops below 85% he/she will be classed as a Persistent Absentee.

5.6. If there are known, and genuine, circumstances for the persistent absence, then the child will remain at Stage 2 and his/her attendance monitored closely.

5.7. If the persistent absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term time, and the parents/carers have been fined as detailed below, then the child will remain at Stage 2 providing that there are no other attendance concerns and that his/her attendance rate is improving.

5.8. If there are unauthorised absences and parents/carers are condoning absence from school and failing to work with us to bring about any sustained improvement, then parents/carers will be invited to attend a Stage 3 Attendance Panel Meeting. If parents/carers choose not to attend this meeting then we will initiate a case for prosecution.

Stage 4

5.9. The Attendance Officer will initiate procedures to prosecute parents/carers if they fail to attend the Stage 3 Attendance Panel Meeting or, having attended the meeting, fail to support the Attendance Agreement put in place and there is no improvement in their child's attendance.

6. Leave of absence in term time

6.1. Following changes in legislation in 2013, parents are no longer entitled to take leave of absence during term time. Leave of absence during term time will only be granted under exceptional circumstances; this does not include family holidays or weddings.

6.2. Requests for leave of absence in term time should be put in writing to the Principal by letter or email. The Principal's decision is final and cannot be appealed. If parents take their children out of school without making a request, or if parents still take their child out of school after a request has been denied, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and they will be issued with a Penalty Notice fine by Tameside MBC.

6.3. The Penalty Notice fine is £120 per parent per child; this is reduced to £60 per parent per child if the fine is paid within 21 days. If not paid within 28 days, parents will be prosecuted by the Local Authority for failure to pay and this may result in a further increase to the fine.

7. Encouraging good attendance

7.1. The Academy is open to students from 7:30am and provides a free breakfast from 7:45am to 8:15am. This provision is very well supported and encourages many students to arrive in good time for the start of the day.

7.2. Termly attendance bulletins are sent to all parents/carers detailing their child's attendance and reminding them about the importance of good attendance.

7.3. The Academy also runs a number of Reward Schemes to encourage good attendance; these include trips to Alton Towers and Blackpool and a raffle where students with 100% attendance can win a mountain bike.

7.4. Additional support to encourage or facilitate good attendance can also be provided for parents and students as detailed in section 8.

7.5. Periodically, the Academy may hold an "Attendance Blitz" where visits are made to the homes of all absent students and reminders given about the importance of good attendance. The visits are usually accompanied by a member of SLT and a PCSO. If the Attendance Blitz is part of a co-ordinated Tameside initiative, then it will be supported by Police Officers and Community Support Officers who will patrol the local community, question any children found out of school and, if appropriate, return them to school.

8. Support for Parents and Students

8.1. The Academy understands that all students and families are unique and may have their own challenges and barriers to attendance to deal with. As such, support and advice on a range of issues is available through Heads of Year, Year Managers and the Academy Attendance Officer. We are also able to signpost or refer parents/carers or families to external agencies who may be able to offer additional support. These may include:

- The School Health Adviser
- Branching Out (Drug & Alcohol Support Service)
- Inspire
- Family Intervention Programme
- Children's Social Care
- Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Off the Record Counselling Services
- Positive Steps

9. Roles and Responsibilities

9.1. The Governing Body will:

- set targets for whole school attendance and persistent absenteeism in agreement with the Principal;
- support this policy; and
- monitor attendance through the regular termly attendance updates.

9.2. The Principal will:

- set targets for whole school attendance and persistent absenteeism in agreement with the Governing Body;
- support this policy and ensure it is implemented consistently across the Academy;
- monitor attendance data on a daily, weekly and half termly basis;
- consider requests for leave of absence in term-time; and
- sign off the appropriate documentation in the event of any legal proceedings.

9.3. Heads of Year will:

- monitor attendance data on a daily and weekly basis;
- support this policy and those responsible for implementing it; and
- promote excellent attendance in their Year Group and provide opportunities for students to celebrate good attendance.

9.4. Form Tutors will:

- monitor attendance data and share this information with students;
- promote excellent attendance within their form group;
- discuss concerns about attendance and punctuality with individual students below 95% and encourage them to improve;
- pass any medical evidence or letters relating to attendance to the school Attendance Officer; and
- take the morning register promptly and accurately and update with details of any student who arrives late to form.

9.5. The Student Services Team will:

- take incoming calls regarding absence and record reasons on SIMS;
- assist Year Managers with making daily telephone calls to parents of absent students;
- assist the Attendance Officer in sending out text message to parents of absent students;
- record on SIMS and file letters relating to student absence; and
- assist in sending out attendance letters as appropriate.

9.6. Year Managers will:

- promote excellent attendance within their year group;
- make daily telephone calls to parents of absent students and use SIMS to record any parental contact and the reasons for absence as detailed in section 3 of the policy;
- monitor and manage attendance of students effectively as detailed in section 4 of the policy;
- attend Attendance Panel meetings for students in their year group; and
- offer support and signposting to other services for parents who request it.

9.7. The Attendance Officer will:

- ensure registers are completed accurately and on time and follow up, as appropriate, if there are concerns or issues;
- check register marks at the end of each day to ensure that there are no missing or unexplained (N) absence codes;
- carry out all those actions as detailed in section 3 of the policy on daily attendance procedures and assist Year Managers with home visits;
- carry out all those actions as detailed in section 4 of the policy on monitoring and managing attendance;
- organise and administer the necessary meetings and documentation in line with our staged approach to attendance and any formal proceedings, including Penalty Notice warnings and prosecutions, as appropriate; and
- provide attendance data as requested by the Student Services Manager and SLT.

9.8. The Student Support Manager will:

- line manage the Attendance Officer and ensure that the appropriate staff fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with our agreed procedures;
- work with and support the Attendance Officer in monitoring and managing attendance and in initiating our formal procedures;
- review and develop our attendance policy and procedures as appropriate
- provide attendance data and the appropriate reports as requested by SLT and Governing Body; and
- intervene where there are issues with registers being completed incorrectly.

9.9. We hope that Parents/Carers will support this policy and encourage their child to attend the Academy regularly and punctually. In particular, we ask that Parents/Carers:

- contact school on every day of their child's absence;
- provide medical evidence for any absence if requested;
- arrange medical appointments out of school time or, if this is not possible, collect students from school and/or drop them back off after the appointment rather than keep their child off for the whole session;
- do not book holidays in term time;
- put requests for leave of absence during term time, in writing, to the Principal; and
- are aware of their legal responsibility regarding school attendance, and understand that the Academy will use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices and prosecution where necessary.

9.10. We expect students:

- to attend school regularly and punctually;
- not to leave the Academy during the school day without prior permission from a member of staff, and without signing out; and
- to discuss any barriers to attendance with their Head of Year, Year Manager or Attendance Officer.

10. Monitoring and evaluation

10.1. Whole school attendance data, and attendance data by year group and student group, is monitored on a daily and weekly basis. The attendance of identified students is also monitored on a daily basis. In addition, a termly report is prepared for the Governing Body.

10.2. The effectiveness of our policy and procedures are evaluated throughout the year through discussions with the Attendance Team, Year Managers and SLT and against our attendance data. The Policy is formally reviewed by the Governing Body annually.