Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. It is vital that students attend the Academy every day, unless their absence is authorised by the school, 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%, though of course there are occasions when there are genuine reasons for absence (when a doctor deems a child to be too ill to attend school for example). If attendance is above 96% then students have a far greater chance of success – if it reaches as low as 94% then this is a cause for concern. **Where attendance is below 90% this is classed as Persistent Absence and this can lead to prosecution.**

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 Leader who is supported by the Attendance Team and the Student Services team.

3.1. Reporting a student absence

3.1.1 We expect that all parents/carers will encourage students to attend on time each day school is open. 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 7.45am. Clearly, students should only be absent where absolutely unavoidable.

3.1.2 Parents are asked to contact the Academy on each day of absence explaining the reason. Absences for minor ailments will not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided in the form of an appointment card or prescription. If there are attendance concerns, parents will be informed that medical evidence will be required for all their child's absences.

3.1.3 Parents will be contacted if we do not receive any notification of a student absence, as detailed in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

3.1.4 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. Please be advised that it is your duty to contact the Academy each day of absence but note this does not mean the absence will be recorded as authorised.

3.2. The start of the day

3.2.1 School starts at 8.25am, Tutorial is from 8.30am to 8.45am and registers are taken by 8.35am.

3.2.2 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 contact from parents/carers about the absence. The Attendance Team will check these marks and query those where there are attendance concerns about a particular student.

3.2.3 Students arriving late, between 8.30am and 8.45am, enter the building through the external late door and sign in with the Head of Year or Year Manager on duty rather than at Reception. At 9.00am, Student Services enter any late marks in registers as appropriate.

3.2.4 Students arriving after 8.45am 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.

3.2.5 Any student in receipt of an L or U mark in the register receives a 30 minute detention that lunch time (The Academy will determine if a reason for lateness is valid, not the parent). Any student who is late on two or more occasions in any particular week is required to attend a two hour SLT detention on the Friday evening of that week.

3.2.6 The Attendance Team check that all registers have been completed and saved during morning Tutorial and chase up any that are missing.

3.3. Absent students

3.3.1 The Attendance Team check all registers at 9.15am. If a student is absent and we have received no notification from parents, a text home will be sent before 10.00am wherever possible. If the Attendance Team are unable to make their calls on any particular morning, they will ask Student Services or the Year Team to make them on their behalf.

3.3.2 If the Attendance Team, Year Managers or Student Services 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.

3.3.3 If there is no response to the text, then the attendance mark will remain as an N in the register. The entry will, however, be flagged to indicate that a Text has been sent.

3.3.4 The Attendance Team will contact the parents/carers of all absent students each day, either through their morning calls if we have received no reason for absence, or later in the day if Student Services have already taken an earlier call or message about the absence from home, unless there are clear and legitimate reasons for absence. If Student Services/Year Teams have made the morning call

on Attendance Team's behalf, then the Attendance Team will make a further call later in the day if necessary. The Attendance Team will pass a list of all parents contacted to the Attendance Leader by the end of each day.

3.4. Follow up calls and home visits

3.4.1 At **09.30am,** the Attendance Team make calls to parents/carers of all students with an N recorded in the register. Before making calls the Attendance Leader checks with Navigation and the On Board Centre, in case any students have arrived without registering, and with Student Services staff to ensure that all messages received from parents/carers have been recorded.

3.4.2 If there is a response the Attendance Team 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.

3.4.3 If there is no response to both text and phone calls by 10.45am, then the mark in the register will be changed to an O. If there has been no contact **for two consecutive school days**, or if there are any safeguarding concerns around a particular student, then a home visit will be made. The home visit will be made by the Attendance Team or Year Team. An O mark in the register is flagged and initialled after a home visit has been made. (Home visits may also be conducted by PCSO's The Academy's designated Policing team or by a member of staff from an external organisation already working with the family).

3.4.4 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 the Attendance Team, Year Managers and the Attendance Leader. Again, the home visit will be flagged on the register.

3.4.5 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.

3.4.6 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 has been made.

4. Monitoring, managing and encouraging good Attendance

4.1. Monitoring and managing attendance

4.1.1 The Attendance Leader maintains an attendance spreadsheet detailing all those students with attendance concerns. Attendance data, absences and actions are recorded for each student. A student will remain on the spreadsheet until their attendance is no longer deemed a cause for concern. Similarly, a student will be added to the spreadsheet their attendance drops. This will be discussed with HOY's and SLT links termly.

4.1.2 The standing agenda for attendance meetings includes the following items:

● An overview of the attendance data for the year group and the Academy
● Students whose attendance is a cause for concern (usually below 96% and actions to be taken where appropriate)
● Persistently absent students (those whose attendance is below 90% regardless of the reason)

- Other students who may be causing concern
- Other attendance issues/actions over the last week

4.1.3 The Attendance Team will contact parents, meet with students and initiate interventions, such as attendance cards during the week, as appropriate, if there are concerns around attendance. Any conversations and interventions will be discussed at the weekly attendance meetings. This information is shared with Year Teams and SLT Link.

4.1.4 The use of any formal proceedings will be initiated and processed by the Attendance Leader following the weekly meeting with Year Managers. Formal proceedings may include:

- Attendance concern letters to parents and carers;
- The use of Attendance Panels;
- The use of Penalty Notice Warnings and Fines; and prosecution

4.1.5 Additional meetings are arranged with <u>Form tutors, and/or</u> Year <u>Teams</u> as necessary.

4.2. Encouraging good attendance

4.2.1 The Academy is open to students from 7.30am for breakfast club until 8.00am. Students arriving after this time will be allowed entry into the building from 8.15am

4.2.2 The Academy runs a number of Reward Schemes to encourage good attendance; these include trips and a raffle where students with 100% attendance can win prizes.

4.2.3 The use of attendance cards is designed to encourage good and improved attendance. Year Managers will normally operate some form of reward or acknowledgement linked to the use of the attendance card.

4.2.4 Parents and carers receive termly personalised attendance bulletins detailing the current attendance of their child along with guidance and information on attendance and related issues.

4.2.5 Additional support to encourage or facilitate good attendance can also be provided for parents and students as detailed in section 5.

4.2.6 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 may be 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 Leaders and Community Support Leaders who will patrol the local community, question any children found out of school and, if appropriate, return them to school.

5. Support for Parents and Students

5.1. 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 Year Leaders, Year Managers and the Academy Attendance Leader. 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 Nurse
- Branching Out (Drug & Alcohol Support Service)

- Inspire
- Early Help Assessment
- Sign post to Education Welfare Services (new initiative)
- Team around the School (TAS)
- Family Intervention Programme
- Children's Social Care
- Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Off the Record Counselling Services
- Positive Steps

6. Missing in Education:

The Academy has a duty of care for all our students, should we deem your child as missing in education in line with local guidance - (The **national definition** of a child missing from education is: *"All children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time - usually agreed as 15 school days or more")* we will inform the Local Authority who will carry out checks with relevant agencies and make the ultimate decision as to whether the child remains on our roll.

For further information please refer to Tameside MBC's Children Missing from Education Guidance January 2021: https://www.tameside.gov.uk/ChildrenMissingEducation.

7. Formal proceedings

The Academy operates a staged approach to managing attendance concerns.

7.1. Tutors and Year Managers will normally speak with children if their attendance falls below 96% 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.

7.2. If a student's attendance drops below 96%, he/she will be added to the attendance spreadsheet and his/her attendance monitored formally on a weekly basis. It is likely that a letter will be issued if there are unauthorised absences or if there are concerns given about the reasons for absence. The letter is personalised to each student and will refer to attendance patterns over previous years and any patterns of absence where appropriate. The letter will also advises parents/carers that we may have to consider issuing a penalty fine or prosecution if there is no improvement in the child's attendance.

7.3. If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, then parents/carers may be invited to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting where they will meet with the 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.

7.4. Should a child have 10 unauthorised absences in a 12 week period, then the Academy will apply to the Authority for the issue of a Penalty Warning Notice. 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. Similarly if parents/carers fail to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting and refuse to engage with the Academy over attendance concerns, then the Academy will refer these concerns to the Authority.

7.5. If a child's attendance drops below 90% he/she will be classed as a Persistent Absentee (PA) as detailed in guidance from the DfE. If absences are unauthorised 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 further Attendance Panel Meeting. If attendance is significantly below the PA threshold of 90%, then we will initiate a case for prosecution.

7.6. The Attendance Leader will initiate a case for prosecution if, having attended the Attendance Panel Meeting, parents/carers fail to support the Attendance Agreement put in place and there is no improvement in the child's attendance.

7.7. If a persistent absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term time, then parents/carers will be issued with a Penalty Fine, as detailed below, rather than initiating a case for prosecution.

8. Leave of absence in term time

8.1. 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.

8.2. Requests for leave of absence in term time should be put in writing to the Headteacher by letter or email. The Headteacher'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.

8.3. 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 this is 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.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

9.1. The Governing Body will:

- Set targets for whole school attendance and persistent absence in agreement with the Headteacher;
- Support this policy; and
- Monitor attendance through the regular termly attendance updates.

9.2. The Headteacher will:

- Set targets for whole school attendance and persistent absence 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. Year Leaders 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. Year Managers will

● Promote excellent attendance within their year group;
● Make telephone calls where necessary and agreed with Attendance Team to parents of absent students and record any parental contact and the reasons for absence as detailed in section 3 of this policy ;
● Monitor and manage attendance of students effectively as detailed in section 4 of this policy;
● Attend Attendance Panel Meetings for students in their year group; and
● Offer support and signposting to other services for parents who request it.

9.5. 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 96% and encourage them to improve;
● Pass any medical evidence or letters relating to attendance to the school Attendance Leader; and
● Take the morning register promptly and accurately and update with details of any student who arrives late to form.

9.6. The Student Services Team will:

● Take incoming calls regarding absence and record reasons on SIMS;
● Ensure registers are completed accurately and on time and follow up, as appropriate, if there are concerns or issues;
● Assist the Attendance Team with making daily telephone calls to parents of absent students;
● Assist the Attendance Leader in sending out text message to parents of absent students; and
● Assist in sending out attendance letters as appropriate.

9.7. The Attendance Leader 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 carry out 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 for Year Leaders and Managers, the Student Services Manager and SLT.

9.8. The Student Support Manager will:

● Work with and support the Attendance Leader 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

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 Headteacher; 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 Leader.

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 SLT and 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.