

## September 2017

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all academies and schools which are part of the Focus-Trust.
- 1.2 All pupils benefit from regular attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.
- 1.3 Academies must follow the most recent government guidance and advice on attendance.

### 2 Expectations

We expect that all pupils will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend every day they are well enough to attend</li> <li>• Attend punctually</li> <li>• Attend appropriately prepared for the day</li> <li>• Tell someone if there is anything that is stopping the above</li> </ul>
We expect that all parents/ carers who have day to day responsibility for children will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure their child attends every day they are well enough to attend</li> <li>• Be aware of their legal responsibilities</li> <li>• Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning</li> <li>• Ensure that they contact the academy whenever the child is unable to attend school</li> <li>• Contact the academy on the first day of the child's absence</li> <li>• Contact the academy promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school</li> </ul>
We expect that academy staff will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep accurate records of attendance for all pupils, twice daily</li> <li>• Monitor every pupil's attendance</li> <li>• Contact parents/carers by 9.30 am on the day of absence if a child fails to attend school and where no message has been received</li> <li>• Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence</li> <li>• Encourage excellent attendance</li> <li>• Provide a safe learning environment</li> <li>• Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns</li> <li>• Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending well,, express their concern and clarify the school's and the Trust's expectations with regard to excellentschool attendance</li> <li>• Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service</li> <li>• Meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them</li> </ul>

### 3 Holiday schedule

- 3.1 Each academy holiday schedule is published at least one year in advance (both as a paper copy and on the academy website). Pupils should not take holiday in term time as it is detrimental to learning and progress.

#### **4 Holidays in term time**

4.1 Academies within the Focus-Trust adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to requests for holidays in term time. There is an expectation that pupils will attend every day that the academy is open. The Principal will not routinely authorise absence in term time. Any unauthorised absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' in the attendance register.

#### **5 Exceptional absence**

5.1 On very rare occasions, the Principal may grant authorised leave of absence where there are exceptional and extenuating circumstances. **Holidays in term time and extended leave are not classified as exceptional circumstances.**

5.2 The Principal will decide whether to authorise any application for absence. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for their child as a right. No person other than the Principal/Head of Academy can authorise term time absence.

5.3 Any request for absence will be judged on a case by case basis, and Principals will use their discretion sparingly. When deciding whether to authorise the absence, Principals may take the following into consideration:

- the reasons for the requested absence;
- the wishes of the parent(s);
- the age of the child and their educational stage;
- the time of year for the proposed absence (for example, if it is near to any assessment dates); and
- the child's overall attendance record (current academic year and past years);

5.4 Decisions to authorise/not authorise absence will be applied consistently and equitably.

5.5 Parents should apply for exceptional absence by writing to the Principal/Head of Academy. This application will usually be followed up by a meeting with the Principal/Head of Academy.

5.6 The decision as to whether to authorise absence in term time will be communicated in writing.

#### **6 Authorised absence due to religious observance**

6.1 Schools will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance, exclusively set apart by the religious body to which parents belong. Where necessary, schools will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

6.2 For religious observance, **one day's absence will be authorised**. This does not include time for preparation for festivals or days which may be used for family celebrations which are not the specified dates for the religious event.

6.3 Any pupil who fails to return after the one day's authorised absence will have their absence recorded as 'unauthorised'.

6.4 No more than two occasions (festivals) per academic year will be authorised. If the festival occurs at the weekend or during school holidays, pupils will not be granted a day off in lieu.

## **7 Absence without authorisation**

- 7.1 Any pupil who is absent from school without authorisation will have their absences recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- 7.2 Any absence longer than a period of authorised absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- 7.3 Pupils whose absence was unauthorised and fail to return within 20 days of the agreed date, may be deleted from the roll, unless there is a credible reason for their continued absence.

## **8 Encouraging attendance**

- 8.1 We encourage attendance in the following ways:
- By providing a welcoming and safe environment
  - By providing an interesting and engaging learning challenge curriculum
  - Involving pupils in attendance through attendance reward system
  - By responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
  - By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If a child arrives at school after the close of register without an explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill
  - By publishing and displaying attendance statistics and school attendance targets
  - By celebrating good and improved attendance
  - By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the EWS if the irregular attendance continues.

## **9 Attendance procedures**

- 9.1 Each academy publishes their attendance procedure on their website. This will include the following information:
- Start and end time for school day
  - Time that children can enter school
  - Reasons for needing good attendance
  - Consequences of poor attendance
  - Procedures if late
  - Procedures if absent from school, including methods of contact
  - Procedures for returning after absence
  - Academy procedures when pupil is absent
  - Punctuality awards
  - Attendance awards

## **10 Links with child protection and safeguarding**

- 10.1 Where any attendance or non-attendance issue triggers a cause for concern linked to a child protection or safeguarding issue, the Principal should be informed immediately. The Principal will then choose the most appropriate course of action taking advice, where necessary, from the Local Authority Safeguarding team/Children's Social Care.

## **11 Deletions from the admissions register**

- 11.1 Academies must inform their LA of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:
- Have been taken out of school by their parents and being educated outside the school system;
  - Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
  - Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school; or
  - Have been permanently excluded

## **12 Attendance and punctuality monitoring including Persistent Absence**

- 12.1 Each academy has a member of staff responsible for managing and monitoring attendance and punctuality on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that excellent attendance is a high priority and that attendance and punctuality monitoring is acted on swiftly.

The Principal will decide who liaises with parents and carers re attendance and punctuality issues. The Principal has a direct role in liaising with parents when there are on-going attendance and/or punctuality issues.

For the sake of clarity, Persistent Absence (PA) is taken to be any on-going attendance of 90% or under.

- 12.2 Where there are attendance concerns, the Principal/Head of Academy will write to parents and invite them to a meeting. This meeting may be attended by other professionals, e.g. School Nurse, Social Worker etc. There is an expectation that parents/carers will work with academy staff to improve the attendance of their child.

## **13 Penalty notices**

- 13.1 Academy Principals will use a range of methods to encourage excellent attendance and challenge poor attendance. Where internal systems and partnership working with parents are not effective they will use a Penalty Notice in accordance with the most recent regulations and local authority guidance. Failure to comply with the penalty notice could render the parent/carers liable to prosecution. This is not a decision that will be taken lightly as, of course, each academy wishes to maintain excellent links with parents/carers. However, our responsibility is to ensure that every child has access to the full provision that is on offer and this cannot take place if the child is away from school. Absence due to holidays in term time will result in a Penalty Notice.

- 13.2 Under the Code, Penalty Notices may be issued:
- If parents have not sought permission from the Principal before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term-time;
  - If the Principal has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway;
  - If a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date without a satisfactory explanation and the pupil remains on the admission register of the school. (Penalty Notices cannot be issued when a child has been deleted from the admission register) and
  - Where the absence has been recorded by the school as unauthorised in the attendance register on at least 10 sessions (5 school days).

- Penalty Notices cannot be issued if the parents are known to be out of the country
- Penalty Notices cannot be issued against the parents of children who are not of statutory school age

## **14 Deleting pupils from the admission register**

14.1 Academies can delete pupils from the admission register for various reasons, including unauthorised absence.

<b>Title</b>	Attendance Policy v10
<b>Aim</b>	To outline the agreed approach to managing attendance across the Focus-Trust
<b>Related documents</b>	Policies on safeguarding and child protection
<b>Date for implementation</b>	01.09.2015
<b>Approved by</b>	Trust board
<b>Date of next review</b>	As required
<b>Updated</b>	01.08.2017
<b>Distribution</b>	File share.