



The Sutton Academy

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Status	Statutory
Responsible Trustees' Committee	ALT
Date last approved by TB	Not Applicable
Responsible Person	Miss G Medare
To Review Date	February 2023
Last Amended Date	February 2021

AIMS AND PURPOSE

Regular attendance to the Academy is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. The Sutton Academy believes that regular attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. The Sutton Academy values all students and we will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEN.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
2. To recognise the external factors which influence student attendance and work with parents and the school to address these.
3. To encourage students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be registered twice a day for attendance (as well as during each lesson). The two attendance registers happen in the morning during ready to learn and again during period 4. Students are expected to maintain a minimum 96% attendance throughout the academy year. Students who drop to or below 90% will be regarded as a persistent absentee.

Role of the Parent

Within the home school agreement it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the student attends the academy each day and arrives on time. Students should only be absent for genuine reasons such as sickness, medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (e.g. funerals) etc.

Parents must notify the Academy immediately if a student is absent.

Although the Academy appreciates difficulties many parents have in arranging holiday leave during school holiday time, they are asked not to make arrangements for holidays during term time as it will not be authorised. The Principal can only authorise holidays in term time in exceptional circumstances and each request is taken on its merit. An extended absence for holidays will inevitably have an adverse effect on student progress and achievement. Teachers will not set work for students on holiday in school time.

ROLE OF THE ACADEMY

Within the home school agreement it is the responsibility of the Academy to work with parents in ensuring the maximum attendance possible. The Academy will work with parents by ensuring communication and detailed procedures which will identify problems early on. The Academy will support parents who may be experiencing difficulty in ensuring good attendance for the student. This support will be given in consultation with the Year Team, Internal Education Welfare officer, ALT and the External Education Welfare Service.

Student attendance is monitored by the:

- Form tutor during ready to learn
- Subject teacher in each lesson
- Year Team (Head of Year and Achievement Leader)
- Internal Educational Welfare Officer (IEWO)
- Academy Leadership Team member in charge of attendance and punctuality
- External Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised Absence

This is when the Principal authorises a genuine reason for absence that has been supported by a note from the parent.

Examples are:

- Illness, medical and dental appointments
- Interviews with prospective employers and colleges
- Dual registration
- Approved educational off-site activities

- Representation in sport or other areas
- Special situations and occasions (e.g. funerals)

The Internal Educational Welfare Officer must bring any concerns regarding the above to the Assistant Principal with responsibility for attendance (e.g. too much time off for performances or a pattern to illness). The AP will discuss these with the Principal.

Unauthorised Absences

This is when the Principal does not authorise the reason for absence even if it has been supported by a note from the parent. If an absence has been supported by a note from the parent and the absence is recorded as unauthorised the parent must be informed immediately.

Examples of unauthorised absence could be:

- Known truancy
- Absent with no information from parent (regardless of reason)
- Working (this must be reported to the Principal)
- Time off for birthdays, family celebrations
- Holidays
- Looking after siblings (this must be reported to the Principal)
- Errands for parents (e.g. shopping).
- Persistent absenteeism without documentary medical proof.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

Any student whose attendance falls to or below 90% is defined as a Persistent Absentee. Every absence must be supported by official documentation proving appointments, on-going illness/ medical conditions. Without such documentation, absences are recorded as unauthorised and will continue to be unauthorised until documentation has been received by the Internal Educational Welfare Officer.

Such students will be brought to the attention of ALT and the Internal Education Welfare Officer in the regular register checks. The Internal Education Welfare Officer will monitor the attendance over a six week period or longer with letters, home visits and parental meetings. The Academy will only accept up to two medical appointment cards when a student is being monitored for their attendance. If there is no improvement and/or documentary proof is still not forthcoming, the Internal Education Welfare Officer and ALT will consult the External Education Welfare Officer on the next step. This is likely to involve a further meeting at The Academy and either a parenting contract put in place with an additional six week monitoring period or a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) will be served by Education Welfare Service (EWS). If the student's unauthorised absence continues over this monitoring period the IEWO and ALT will involve intervention and support from EWS for the stages of court proceedings

How PA looks per term

Half term 1 - 7 or more sessions

Half term 1-2 - 14 or more sessions

Half term 1-3 - 20 or more sessions

Half term 1-4 - 25 or more sessions

Half term 1-5 - 31 or more sessions

Half term 1-6 - 38 or more sessions

Holidays

From the 1st September 2013, the law gives **no entitlement** to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances and the Principal must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave. The Principal would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional. Parents can be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from school.

The Government and Ofsted consider that children of secondary school age should have at least 95% average attendance each year. This would mean no more than 9 days absence in a year.

The Sutton Academy upholds the legal directions provided by the government and acts to only grant term time holidays in exceptional circumstances.

The law stipulates that all requests for holidays during term time be refused, unless they meet the following criteria:

- * A parent in the armed forces-who has set leave periods.
- * Written proof from your employer that this is the ONLY time you can take a holiday - however the student's attendance over the last 12 months will be checked to see if it is at least 95% before it is authorised, unless extraordinary reasons apply.
- * Religious festivals i.e. attending a wedding for a day but this does not include associated activities such as a honeymoon.
- * A family that needs time together due to an unexpected crisis like a terminal illness.

Even when the above criterion is met, holidays will not be authorised during GCSE (including Mock Exams) or A Level exam periods.

The Academy will NOT authorise absence for any term time holidays, unless the above exceptional circumstances have been met. Parents are also required to complete a Request **for a Holiday during Term Time form** *before* the holiday commences

Holiday leave being authorised is legally at the discretion of the Principal (or a delegated senior Member of the Academy Leadership Team) and cannot exceed 10 school days in any school year September - July.

What happens if the holiday is unauthorised?

In instances where requests for holidays during term time are refused, but the student is absent from school, this is likely to result in the issuance of a fine and the student's absence will be deemed to be unauthorised.

A family with a child (children) with more than 10 days of unauthorised leave of absence in a term can be issued with a fixed penalty notice of a £60 fine per parent. This increases to £120 if unpaid and legal proceedings can follow. Repeated unauthorised holidays could result in the family being prosecuted.

This Policy underpins the statutory guidance, further details of which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absenc>

Reporting an Absence

For a planned appointment

1. Send in a copy of the paperwork for the appointment as soon as possible (such as letter or appointment card) marked for the attention of the attendance officer, or bring the original to either reception, who will take a copy for you.
2. On the day of the appointment write a letter, including the time you wish the student to leave The Academy in your letter on the date or week of the appointment so the form tutor is also aware and the teacher can release a student to sign out.
3. Student should report to student reception to be signed out.

Except for very rare occasions there is no need for any student to take a whole day off school for an appointment.

For unexpected illness or exceptional event

1. The Academy must be notified EVERY DAY the student is absent unless the Doctor has set a period of absence. You can do this by:
 - a. phoning the Academy on 01744 678 859 and recording a message on the absence line
 - b. replying back with the reasons your child is absent to the absence text message sent on the day of the absence

2. For an absence of 5 or more days parents/carers must supply the Academy with a doctor's note or medical evidence.

To request Exceptional leave of absence

If you wish to request exceptional leave then please collect an authorised absence request form from either reception, or the bottom of this policy to be submitted to the Principal.

Please note:

As of October 2013 the Principal will be unable to grant any leave during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There has been an amendment in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

These amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Sutton Academy will adhere to the new amendments. If parents' apply for exceptional leave of absence and the request is refused, a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued if parents' persist in taking the child out of school.

LEGAL SANCTIONS

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A student is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A student has accrued unauthorised absence following written warning to improve.

A Penalty Notice gives each parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days. (£60 per parent)

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with St Helens Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

PROSECUTION

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The Academy will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered student at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

PUNCTUALITY

Students are expected to attend the academy for the appropriate start time to their year each day (see covid documents for any amendments). On occasions when students do arrive late, they should sign in at Late Gate or after 9am at Student Reception. They will receive a late mark. This will ensure that we are able to record the student's attendance into the SIMS system, together with the time of their arrival. Students who are persistently late and miss learning time will have their details forwarded onto the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) for consideration of the issuance of a Penalty Notice and will receive detentions from the Academy in accordance to the behaviour policy.

If a student is late to lessons again they will receive detentions in accordance to the behaviour policy.

CELEBRATING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

It is important that good attendance is acknowledged, celebrated and rewarded. Achievement in attendance is as important as achievement in subjects and this should be embedded within the ethos of the Academy. Awards will be given each term to students who achieve throughout the academic year

- i) Students who have 100% attendance will have their names entered for chances to win a prizes
- ii) Each term, letters are sent home to all students' parents and carers informing them of their child's attendance and offering congratulations or advice as necessary.
- iii) Awards will be given each term to tutor groups who achieve 100% attendance.
- iv) All awards will be presented in assembly.

For the policy and procedures to be effective, it is important that all concerned play an active role and contribute to the partnership, i.e. parents, students and teachers. Hence there must be consistency in teacher approach and Year Teams must take the responsibility for making enquiries and initiating action on attendance. In addition attendance matters must be included in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers.

Appendix to support Parental Decisions:

My child should come to the academy if....

- Parent is ill/sick with Cold Symptoms
- Diseases
- Head Lice
- Menstrual Issues
- Breaks, Strains, Sprains and Pains
- Child doesn't want to attend
- Conjunctivitis
- Chronic disease. A copy of your child's care plan should be given into the academy, along with the required medication. Academy staff are trained to assist your child with their needs

Keep your child at home if they have....

- Tonsillitis
- Vomiting and/or Diarrhoea, or a Rash with a fever
- Vaccine preventable diseases
- Strep Throat Impetigo
- Fever