

Attendance Policy

Good attendance is vital if students are to achieve their full potential

AIMS - our policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to all students of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement;
- Make explicit to all relevant parties (Teachers, Parents/Carers and Students) the Trust's expectations on attendance levels;
- Promote a consistent approach across the Trust towards all matters relating to attendance;
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- Communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- Stress the need for home and school to work in close trust to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, absence means missed learning; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore, we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

Attendance is a national priority. All schools must submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance.

Whilst the vast majority of our students achieve over 96% attendance, the Department for Education (DFE) states that the expectation is that students should have 100%. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); students should not have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the Academy.

Authorised Absences

The Education Regulations (2006, updated in 2013) state that Head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The DFE has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) A child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. Bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as approved sporting activities that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

A student's overall attendance record will be taken into account whenever a request for absence is made. We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- No contact or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- Minding the house;
- Caring for relatives;
- Awaiting repair people;
- Shopping;
- A birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DFE guidelines look at the area of Special Occasions and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would not.

Holidays

We are no longer able to authorise family holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child (this message is conveyed in our information leaflet to parents and in letters home).

In common with the other 11-18 secondary schools in the county, we ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the Academy, in writing, **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances. The DFE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised.

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for **6 consecutive sessions (3 days). not authorised by the school (under the exceptional circumstances rule), will receive a Penalty Notice.** Therefore, Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with a 'G' code in the attendance register.

The Academy **will not authorise** holidays retrospectively.

Persistent Absence (PA)

With effect from September 2015 the DFE reduced the PA threshold from 15% to 10%. This means that if a student has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil. At this stage the school will work in partnership with relevant Student Support staff to investigate the context surrounding the absence(s) and instigate Local Authority procedures as appropriate (see Attendance Booklet).

Legal Action to Enforce Attendance

Formal legal proceedings may be implemented if actions taken by either Academy fail to result in the required improvement in attendance or if a student is removed from school when leave of absence has been denied. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up, setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. Issuing of a penalty notice results in:

- A fine of £60 per parent/carer per child if payment is made to the Local Authority within 21 days.
- A fine of £120 per parent/carer per child if payment is made within 28 days.
- Parents/carers who fail to pay the fine within this time will be liable to prosecution in a
- Magistrates Court where a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison.

The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis. Decisions regarding whether to follow legal proceedings will be made in partnership with key Academy staff, our Welfare and Attendance Officer, the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and, where applicable, outside agencies involved with the family. Penalty Notices will only be served in accordance with Local Authority's Code of Conduct.

Home/Academy Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- Do all they can to ensure their child arrives on time for morning and afternoon school sessions; morning registration begins at 8:50am and afternoon registration is at 12:30pm.
- We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken; parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late;
- Registers officially close at 9:30am and 1:00pm; after this time, latecomers will be recorded as unauthorised absent for that particular session;
- If their child is ill, notify the school on the first day and all subsequent days of the absence;
- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

In return, the Academy will:

- Contact home on each day of the absence, if no message has been received from home;
- Contact home over any unexplained absences;
- Follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- Involve the school support services to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Our expectations are outlined in our New Parents Booklet within the attendance section. This is posted home in June of each academic year before Year 6 students attend our Transition Week.

Parents can also monitor their child's attendance through the 'Astrea App'. (See Appendix 4)

Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the Academy offers the following rewards:

- Half-termly, students with 100% attendance and punctuality receive a reward; this achievement is also recognised in school assemblies.

Entry into Sixth Form, prospective employers and Colleges of Further Education view attendance and punctuality as important indicators of motivation/attitude and our records and references are very valuable evidence of reliability.

Roles and responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. The respective roles of the Form Tutor, Progress Leaders and Year Coordinators are explained in Appendix 1, however the administrative support provided by the Attendance Assistant is key. It is important that all members of staff are aware of the responsibilities of Form Tutors so that when they take on the role temporarily they know what is expected of them: a robust system is dependent upon everyone playing his/her part.

The Education Welfare Service

Our EWO visits the Academy termly and we work very closely regarding students who are at the point of referral only. The EWO is available to assist parents where difficulties arise and can be contacted via the Attendance team. In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service also initiates legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. In these circumstances, our Welfare and Attendance Officer will work in partnership with the EWO.

A Final Word

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential prerequisite for effective learning. Where appropriate, Student Support staff and/or a member of our Attendance team will initiate an Early Help Assessment to engage the support of relevant Locality services. We take attendance seriously and have put a lot of time and energy into making our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Appendices

- [Appendix 1](#) Absence Codes – Recorded on registers
- [Appendix 2](#) Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures
- [Appendix 3](#) Cottenham Village College- Attendance - Roles & Responsibilities
- [Appendix 4](#) Astrea App leaflet

Appendix 1

Absence Codes – Recorded on registers¹

/\	Present at registration
B	Educated off site (not dual registered)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)
H	Agreed holiday
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not based working)
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to pupils

¹ DFE, 2019. *School Attendance*. [Online] Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818204/School_attendance_July_2019.pdf

Appendix 2

Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures: Updated November 2019

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Registers

Period 1 and period 4 subject teachers will take the statutory registration twice daily.

Reading the registers

The registers information is read every morning after registration (period 1). It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for EVERY student (everyone must fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late!). Staff must enter either 'present', 'absent' or 'late' (+ how many minutes late). Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible. We operate a policy of first day response regarding absence across the school. The Attendance team contact parents of any child not registered during Lesson 1.

Communication with/from parents

The DFE guidance strongly recommends a policy of same-day contact as this has been shown to be the single most effective strategy in improving rates of attendance; it is also important from a Safeguarding perspective. We stress to parents, via information on the website, the newsletter and in the student planner, the importance of their contacting the school as early as possible on the first day of absence to notify us of their child's absence; there is a dedicated line on which parents can leave messages about absence.

Lates

- Statutory Registration starts at 8:50am and 12:30pm and closes at 9:30am and 1:00pm. Thereafter students' absence will be recorded as unauthorised (U, Late after registration closes) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment.
- A student should only be marked as late when the teacher has completed the whole register and a pupil arrives after the register has been "sent" (electronically). Tutors must therefore ensure that registers are taken in a timely manner. It is important that we are consistent in our procedures across the school: parents with siblings in the school do sometimes cross-check to see that the same standards are being applied and we are consistent in our approach to latecomers. So please record lates and the number of minutes late then re-send registers.
- Students who are late for an assembly should register at Reception stating the reasons for their lateness. If the reason given is not satisfactory then students will receive a lunchtime detention when reasons for their lateness can be discussed further.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected; however, parents have been successfully prosecuted for failing to get their child to school consistently on time. Therefore, we will take a robust response to those who are regularly arriving late.

N.B. If for any reason you are unable to take an electronic register, a paper register must be taken and given to the Attendance Assistant as soon as the register is taken. Remember to record details of the group, time, etc.

Attendance Data provided to Form Tutors

Form Tutors have access to any student's attendance data via SIMS. In addition, summary data is provided on each set of assessments which go home termly. There is also a spreadsheet available to view on the school system which details the pattern of attendance for each student and any intervention currently taking place.

Use of Form Time for 'Attendance Matters'

Housekeeping procedures:

- Monitor attendance of individuals.
- Raise issues of attendance and punctuality with student, parents and Year Co-ordinators/Progress Leaders, as necessary.

Appendix 3

Cottenham Village College – Attendance: roles and responsibilities

Form Tutor and Classroom Teacher

- Mark registers accurately in tutor time and subject lessons;
- Practise good housekeeping - chase up absence letters for coding, pass on letters for filing;
- In the weekly student support meeting, or earlier if needed, inform the Year Coordinator of any students giving cause for concern;
- Assist students in recording attendance targets in their planners, where necessary;
- Report attendance data to students and parents/carers during mentoring and parents' evenings.

Student Support Staff - Overview of whole Key Stage

Liaise with:

- Daily – Welfare and Attendance Officer to investigate any immediate causes for concern;
Weekly – Progress Leaders
- To discuss cause for concern cases and general attendance issues;
- To analyse weekly and termly attendance data;
- Year Coordinators to ensure appropriate level of response to attendance concerns;
- Year Coordinators, to ensure all meetings, take place in an efficient manner.

Year Coordinator

- Liaise with Form Tutors over students who are late (years 7-11);
- Liaise with Welfare and Attendance Officer and Student Support over targeted pupils on 94.9% attendance or below;
- Monitor students and raise any concerns with Welfare and Attendance Officer;
- Assist the Welfare and Attendance Officer in arranging meetings with students and/or parents/carers;

Attendance Assistant – CVC

- Liaise with Form Tutors regarding students who are late (Years 7-11);
- Ensure all registers are complete and follow-up where necessary;
- Ensure codes are recorded accurately (see Appendix 2);
- Input all missing marks after returns from Form Tutors and Teaching Staff;
- First day contact students checked, and parents contacted where necessary;
- Ensure all attendance related messages are recorded on registers;
- Liaise with Key Stage teams on daily absence and take any action if necessary;
- Liaise with other schools / outside agencies about attendance information;
- Provide weekly tutor group reports and half termly 100% attendance data;
- Issue letters to parents to chase up unauthorised absence;
- Liaise with Welfare and Attendance Officer weekly and monitor those students giving cause for concern.

Welfare and Attendance Officer – CVC

- Liaise with parents, organise and hold letter 2 meetings;
- In conjunction with key stage teams, agree letters to be sent along with organising appropriate levels of intervention and keep records of these;
- Liaise with EWO termly and provide any attendance evidence required for court proceedings;
- Complete early help assessment forms to initiate support for a family and/or child;
- Organise fixed penalty notice fines where appropriate;
- Manage the spreadsheets;
- Provide attendance figures when required;
- Undertake home visits when appropriate;
- Work with the Local Authority, Police and other outside agencies;
- Apply for Penalty Notices, regarding unauthorised holidays
- Work with the Local Authority and the Police on any attendance related initiatives.

Local Authority – Education Welfare Officer

- Follow escalation process with students and families giving cause for concern (see procedures and practice policy);
- Set targets for those students whose attendance is regarded as being a cause for concern;
- Support at prosecution stage; lead the pace meeting.

Appendix 4

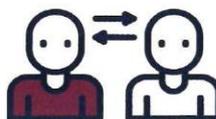


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Calendar, Reports,
Attendance



Communications

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Permissions,
Absences



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