

Attendance Policy

Statement

The Academy intends to encourage and maintain a good level of attendance in all years.

George Spencer Academy Pupil Attendance Policy has the following further intentions: -

- to enhance achievement levels and external examination results;
- to carry out the Academy's legal responsibilities efficiently to report annually to parents;
- to clarify the responsibilities of different concerned parties;
- to identify tactics that will be effective in the achievement of the above.

These fit in with the Academy Ethos of Excellence.

Regular attendance at the Academy is a prerequisite for student achievement. Absence, whether it be long-term, frequent or occasional, leads to missed experiences, and may cause fractured social relationships, which encourage an increased pattern of non-attendance.

Fostering good attendance is the shared responsibility of the Academy, the parent, and the LA (Family Services). Parents have a responsibility to see that their children receive the appropriate education and are responsible for their child attending Academy.

In detailing the strategies, the Academy will undertake to ensure improved levels of attendance the importance of the following factors which encourage high levels of attendance must be kept in mind:

- delivering a curriculum, which is relevant, motivating and differentiated to the needs of the students.
- maintaining high expectations (communicated by staff in a variety of ways including punctuality, homework, marking, and extra curricular activities);
- employing the Academy's systems of reward for achievement, personal as well as academic;
- using sympathetic re-integration strategies for long-term absentees.

The policy will be addressed under a number of headings:

- Collection of data
- Use of data
- Attendance Monitoring Process:
 - First Day Contact;
 - SAM (Student Attendance Monitoring);
 - Monitoring and targeting students with less than 90% attendance;
 - Family Services.
- Authorised and unauthorised absence
- Follow up for absences
- Lateness and truancy
- Rewards
- Rights and responsibilities of parents
- Re-integration of long-term absentees

Collection of Data

Registration

The Academy have a legal responsibility for maintaining Academy registers and taking the registers twice a day. The Academy also has a responsibility for reporting absence to the Local authority. We also have safeguarding responsibility and duty of care to all our students. An accurate and consistent registration system to both Academy and lessons is essential. The following practice should be adopted:

Start of Sessions

AM registration is from 8.50 – 9.15 am (Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri)

AM registration is from 8.50am on Wednesday

PM registration is managed through p4 lesson registration at 1.15pm (12.55pm Wednesday)

- A student is late when he/she arrives on site after 8.45am. Gate staff are responsible for marking pupils late until 8.55am.
- Students arriving after 8.55am must sign in late at Reception.
- Absences (authorised or unauthorised) are to be indicated using the appropriate symbols.
- The Academy operates a tiered system to punctuality which resets at the start of each half term (1 x late break time detention, 2 x late lunchtime detention, 3 x late early morning detention, 4 x late SLT detention, 5 x late Parental meeting).
- In addition to the above Directors of Learning / PSAs will also issue suitable sanctions and interventions for students who have ongoing lateness over time, this may include Isolation.

During Lessons

For each lesson the class teacher is required to keep a record of attendance/lateness. It is important that the class teacher enters late arrivals and re-saves the register. A culture of challenging students missing from previous lessons enables students to see effectiveness of the lesson monitoring.

Use of Data

The efficient and speedy collation of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. Data is required to monitor:

- individual absence and lateness to both Academy and lessons
- patterns of absences and lateness, and the identification of trends by the Attendance Co-ordinator, Directors of Learning / PSAs, Attendance intervention worker and SLT.

Data can be made available for Progress Evenings on request from the relevant PSA.

ATTENDANCE MONITORING SYSTEM

1. First Day Contact

The PSA for each year group will contact home for students on SAM and students with a record of truancy on the first day they are absent from Academy should the absences be unexplained.

2. SAM (Student Attendance Monitoring)

SAM is the early intervention system for students who have trends in their attendance and fall between 95 - 90% attendance. SAM involves the Director of Learning / PSA working closely with the Attendance intervention

worker to track the identified student's attendance on a weekly basis to implement suitable interventions should their attendance decrease or trends be found.

The PSA will inform parents/carers via letter if their child is to be monitored on SAM. We welcome all contact from parents on how we can further support their child's attendance. The use of SAM may include conversations with individual students and parents to discuss absences from the Academy.

Attendance is reviewed at the end of each half term and decision made as to whether monitoring continues, or case passed to Family Services, or monitoring to stop due to sustained improvements in attendance.

3. Monitoring and targeting less than 90% attendance

To support and encourage attendance George Spencer Academy also targets students with 90% attendance and below, using the following procedure:.

On a weekly basis, attendance of pupils is checked. Students who have attendance below 90% are identified by the Academy's data systems. The Attendance intervention worker will eliminate any students who have legitimate reasons for poor attendance e.g. long term illness.

Concern is then raised with parents highlighting the links between attendance and achievement. The Attendance intervention worker may meet with the student individually to discuss absences. The Attendance intervention worker will lead on a number of interventions, including:

- Conversations and meetings with students,
- Meetings with parents/carers,
- Letters and phone calls home,
- Attendance Panel with parents/carers and SLT,
- Attendance Panel with parents/carers and Governor,
- Home visits.

Should there be little or no improvement without good reason, and attendance has dropped to below 90% (6 sessions/3 days of unauthorised absence) over a rolling six week period, a referral will be made to **The Family Service** – this is the first step towards Local Authority involvement and possible legal action against the parents. Individual cases are allocated to a Case Manager or Enforcement Officer who will work with parents in developing an Action Plan towards improving attendance to avoid legal action by the Local authority. Regular contact will be kept with the Case Manager allocated by The Family Service and documentation and evidence will be passed on towards the legal proceedings.

4. Family Services

Much of the Local Authority's responsibilities to the Academy in the area of attendance is currently vested in The Family Service.

Family Service Case Managers provide an important bridge between home and Academy, by working with families to try to establish any underlying reasons for poor attendance and punctuality.

For this partnership to be effective it is important that the Academy and its Attendance intervention worker share a common agenda. George Spencer Academy will look at students' attendance below 90%. It is appropriate that The Family Service is brought in at the stage where Director of Learning / Attendance intervention worker /Parent discussions at the Academy have not led to any significant improvement in

attendance or such discussions cannot be initiated. To facilitate this work it is essential that all action is clearly documented by the Attendance intervention worker.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

There are only two categories of absence from Academy:

Authorised – approved

Unauthorised – not approved

Only the Principal (or their delegate) can approve an absence from the Academy. That is the law.

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department for Education Guidance on Academy Attendance.

Requests for absence in term time must be submitted in advance (see appendix 1) to the Principal who will treat every request on an individual basis and respond accordingly. The rules about what type of absence is acceptable is set out below.

Authorised (approved) absence – types of authorised absence that may be approved:

- An absence caused by illness or other unavoidable causes. Supporting evidence may be requested before an absence is authorised;
- Medical absence for appointments – at hospital or orthodontic appointments (non-urgent routine check-up appointments should be made for after Academy hours or during the Academy holidays.) Students are expected to be absent for the minimal amount of time and not absent for the whole day;
- Days of religious observance (1 day per any religious observance, 3 days maximum per academic year).

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved:

- Truancy
- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members;
- Holiday in term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed to by the Principal – in line with changes to the law implemented in 2013;
- To do homework / coursework;
- Late arrival to the Academy after the register has closed has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence;
- Special occasions, where the Academy does not agree that the absence should be granted;
- Days out.

Unauthorised absence can lead to parents / carers being fined by the Local Authority

All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met.

Follow up to Absences

There is a range of situations to which the Academy needs to respond:

- unauthorised absence;
- unexplained absence;
- a pattern of absence, with parental notes, over a period of weeks;
- unexplained absence from lessons during a session;
- unexplained trends in 'odd days' absences over time.

It is important that parents/carers are aware of absences and lateness, and of their responsibility to account for all such events, and that all action taken is documented by the Attendance Co-ordinator.

Actions will consider the 'whole child' and may include:

- Request for absence note
- Telephone call home (written minute produced)
- Letter home
- Conversation with student
- Home visit
- Meeting with parent/carer and student
- Attendance Co-ordinator liaising with other member of the Pastoral Team (e.g. Head of Year) or liaising with outside agencies.

The Director of Learning has responsibility to co-ordinate a year team's attendance and punctuality programme. This should include:

- Monitoring year group attendance;
- Rewarding high attendance and improvements in attendance;
- Promoting high attendance;
- Liaising with the PSA and Learning Managers,
- Following up lateness using the Punctuality System,
- Following up truancy to the Academy with suitable sanction,
- Following up to internal assessment reporting points – letters of praise / concern.

This will be done on a half termly basis.

Lateness and Truancy

Persistent lateness and truancy are often a significant indicator of under-achievement.

Lateness to Academy, or lateness to lessons and truancy, must be acted upon and parents made fully aware of the Academy's expectations concerning punctuality.

Dealing with lateness and truancy to the Academy is a year team responsibility;
Dealing with lateness to particular lessons is a curriculum area's responsibility;

Persistent lateness and truancy should be identified by the Director of Learning/ Curriculum Leaders through their regular monitoring and acted upon by them.

The appropriateness of sanctions, including detentions or communication home, to encourage prompt attendance and reduce truancy needs to be applied consistently across the Academy. The triggers for particular forms of action also need to be understood.

The Director of Learning together with the PSA and Attendance intervention worker, can use the following strategy to help improve punctuality and reduce truancy.

- Identify a half termly monitoring programme.
- Inform pupils through assemblies.
- Set suitable sanctions (detentions and isolation).
- Have conversations with student, Form Tutor, teachers and PSU where needed and set suitable interventions.
- Contact home to discuss lates and truancy.

Rewards

The importance of high attendance should be regularly promoted by every member of staff.

In years 7-11 high attendance will be rewarded, including attendance awards at the half termly 'celebration' assemblies.

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered students of Academy age attend Academy regularly and punctually and that they receive an education suitable for the aptitude and ability.

Parents have a responsibility for ensuring their child attends Academy regularly and punctually. The Academy will work with parents to find opportunities to share information about attendance. Parents have a right to be provided in good time with the necessary information from the Academy which would enable them to meet these obligations. This includes:

- the times of the Academy day;
- Academy dates and holidays;
- Academy procedures relating to attendance and punctuality;
- Academy expectations regarding lateness;
- prompt communication of matters causing concern.

The Academy expects that all parents communicate with the Academy in writing giving a reason:

- (i) in advance of any planned absence;
- (ii) immediately following (the next session) any unplanned absence;
- (iii) during any absence expected to last more than 3 days. (See appendix 1 for leave of absence application form).

Parents who do not conform to the above will be contacted and requested to provide an explanation of their child's absence.

Further non-compliance on the part of the parents will be documented and acted upon by the Attendance Co-ordinator.

Following DfES Guidelines on Academy attendance, including what may be authorised/not authorised a summary has been produced (see appendix 2).

Re-integration

When long-term absentees return to the Academy it is important that they are sympathetically treated by all staff.

Re-integration often fails because it is unplanned; the student is sent back to his/her original timetable as if nothing has happened. Staff should be reminded to be sensitive, confine any remarks about the absence to 1:1 situations and bear in mind the context of the attendance issue.

For each student, the Director of Learning should liaise with others to draw up a re-integration action plan. This plan will acknowledge the reasons for the student's absence, and may involve a reduced timetable in the first instance and temporary additional support from the appropriate department.

All staff who teach the student need to be advised in advance of an anticipated return so that they can plan how to re-introduce the student to their scheme of work. Flexible achievement programmes need to be considered at KS4 to ensure the student achieves grades and progression post 16.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Dear Parent / Carer

You have requested a leave of absence form for your child. Would you please note that completion of the form does not automatically authorise an absence. Each request is considered individually. Please read the notes on the reverse of the form.

Every Academy's attendance figures are now carefully monitored by the Local Authority and DfE. We are required to demonstrate our efforts to ensure students attend Academy. We do this by working closely with the Local Authority's Early Help Service (Targeted Support).

A concern for us both as a Academy and the DfE is the number of days lost to family holidays in term time. We appreciate the reasons why families do this but also accept that detrimental effect this has on a child's attainment.

The Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006, Amendment 2013, Section 7, Leave of Absence, Section, states:

'A pupil may be granted leave of absence from the Academy to enable him/ her to go away on holiday where:

- *An application has been made in advance to the head teacher by a parents with whom the child normally resides; and The Head Teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to 'exceptional circumstances' relating to that application.*
- *Under section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority may issue Penalty Notices to parents of children with unauthorised absences from Academy.*

Nottinghamshire County Council has stated that from September 2015 Penalty Notices can be issued if the Academy has evidence that a parent has removed a child from Academy for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is above 6 sessions / 3 days over a rolling 6 week period.

There is no legal right for a parent to remove a child from Academy for family holidays and as Head teacher, I am not obliged to sanction any requests.

Yours sincerely

H Corbett
Principal

APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER FOR CHILD'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM ACADEMY DURING TERM TIME

Pupil's Name Tutor Group/Class

Home Address

I wish to apply for my child to be absent from the Academy during the following dates:

Date of Last day at the Academy Date of Return to the Academy

Total number of days missed

Could you please explain the circumstances that make it necessary to have a holiday in term time?

.....
.....

Do you expect to be taking any more term time holidays this academic year?

.....
.....

I make application for my child named above to have authorised absence from Academy for the reasons stated. I understand that if this is not agreed then any absence will be treated as unauthorised and may lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice or a Summons for irregular Academy attendance.

Name of Parent/Carer making application

Signed

Date

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S ACADEMY GIVING AT LEAST 4 WEEKS' NOTICE OF INTENDED ABSENCE

Please do not book your holiday until you know that the Academy will authorise your child's absence

APPENDIX 2

What Does The Law Say?

The government has made amendments to the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006*. This states that: Leave of absence shall not be granted unless;

- (a) An application has been made in advance to the proprietor (Academy/Head teacher) by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides; and
- (b) The Head Teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

Exceptional circumstances examples

- Forces Personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- Exceptional significant family events or circumstances – these will be considered on an individual basis with you.

Nottinghamshire County Council has stated that from September 2015 Penalty Notices can be issued if the Academy has evidence that a parent has removed a child from Academy for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the **level of absence is above 6 sessions / 3 days over a rolling 6 week period.**

The Head Teacher will consider every request individually but the following **will not meet** the criteria:

- Relatives coming to visit
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips
- Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holidays

The Head teacher does not have to give permission if you request a holiday. If the holiday is not approved, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

What is the effect on your child?

Two weeks absence in every Academy year would mean your child missed four terms of education during their Academy life. This could seriously affect your child's progress.

- **90%** attendance is the equivalent of 1/2 day absence per week.
- **80%** attendance is the equivalent of missing six extra weeks of schooling over a year.
- Your child will find it difficult to settle in if they miss time at the start of a new term or when they are moving to a new Academy or class.
- Your child may miss important educational experiences. It can be very difficult to catch up.
- Preparation and revision for exams and tests may be affected.
- Your child may think that you do not see Academy as important.

Parents and Carers

- You must always fill in a form to request pupil absence for exceptional circumstances. The Academy keeps a stock of these forms.
- You should do this before you consider arranging any time for the pupil to be away from Academy—there should be exceptional reasons.
- If the child's absence is 3 days (6 sessions) or more and unauthorised over a rolling 6 week period of unauthorised absences on your child's record, you may:

- (i) Receive a Fixed Penalty Notice (you will be prosecuted if you do not pay the fine), per parent per child.
- OR
- (ii) be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court for your child's nonattendance at the Academy. You can be fined up to £2500 or imprisoned.