



# Attendance & Punctuality Policy

## PURPOSE

The aims of the Attendance Policy are to raise the importance of good attendance in line with Ofsted requirements, ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently, to improve punctuality, promote opportunities to celebrate and reward children for attendance and punctuality achievements.

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## POSITIONING WITHIN ARK OPERATIONAL MODEL

Component	Element
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Leadership & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring, Reporting & Data <input type="checkbox"/> Governance & Accountabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching & Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum & Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture, Ethos & Wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Pathways & Enrichment <input type="checkbox"/> Parents & Community <input type="checkbox"/> Finance, IT & Estates <input type="checkbox"/> Our People	Behaviour Model

## **1. Introduction**

All children of school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability or any special need they may have. Regular academy attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Ark Evelyn Grace Academy takes the responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils very seriously. It acknowledges that irregular attendance can disrupt continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement/low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within the academy. It places children at risk and, in some cases, can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

We feel the whole academy community should take responsibility for attendance. Therefore, this policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of academy attendance are aware and informed.

## **2. Aims**

The aims of the Attendance Policy are:

- a) To raise the importance of good attendance in line with Ofsted requirements.
- b) Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- c) To improve punctuality.
- d) To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance.
- e) To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.
- f) To communicate to all relevant parties (staff, governors, parents, pupil) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised".
- g) To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.
- h) Promote opportunities to celebrate and reward children for attendance and punctuality achievements.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential.

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

### **2.1 What is an acceptable attendance rate?**

We aim to ensure that all students have over 97% attendance and we actively encourage students to aim for 100% attendance. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period, what we look at are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is not marked present on all 10 sessions). Pupils should not have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of the academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

### **2.2 'Back to school' interview – less than 95% attendance**

We aim to ensure that all students have over 97% attendance and we actively encourage students to aim for 100% attendance.

If a student's attendance drops below 95% than a 'Back to School' interview will take place with their tutor upon their return to. Students will be expected to collect work from lessons missed and complete within 3 days of the meeting. Failure to complete this may result in a sanction. If a student fails to complete this on 3 occasions, then they will be placed into Internal Exclusion so that they can catch up. We do not want students to fall behind on class work due to absence.

### 2.3 Back to school' interview – less than 90% attendance

If a student's attendance drops below 95% than a 'Back to School' interview will take place with a member of the Pastoral team. Students will be expected to collect work from lessons missed and complete within 3 days of the meeting. Failure to complete this may result in a sanction. If a student fails to complete this on 3 occasions, then they will be placed into Internal Exclusion so that they can catch up. We do not want students to fall behind on class work due to absence.

## 3. Guidelines

### 3.1 Reasons for absence

Parents and carers are asked to contact the academy office by phone or in person if their child needs to be absent from the academy.

### 3.2 Authorised absences

Acceptable reasons include sickness, hospital appointments, dentist appointments, recognised religious holidays (1 day per holiday only) and funerals. Medical appointments should be arranged outside of the academy day, if possible. Where this is not possible, we would expect pupils to miss only part of the day.

Valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is significantly ill or receiving medical attention.
- Days of religious observance notified in advance.
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised. This will be at the discretion of the Principal.

Parents are expected to call and notify the school on each day of absence, otherwise, this may result in the absence being unauthorised.

### 3.3 Medical Evidence

This will be required to authorise an absence for any student with attendance under 95%

Example of evidence

1. Appointment card detailing the date of absence
2. Prescription detailing the date of absence
3. Medication detailing the date of absence
4. Hospital or specialist letter or appointment card

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours where possible. In avoidable circumstances, students are expected to attend school before or after their appointment time. For

example, if the appointment is at 11:00am the student will be expected to attend school at the normal starting time and leave in time to travel for their appointment or if the appointment is at 9:00am the student is expected to attend school after the appointment.

### 3.4 Unauthorised absences

Unacceptable reasons include shopping, going to an appointment, visiting relatives, buying shoes, going for a haircut, parent/carer unwell and taking holiday, for example by acquiring cheaper flights outside of academy holidays.

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carer(s).
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The DfE guidelines state that the following activities would classify as **unauthorised**:

- Minding the house.
- Caring for relatives.
- Awaiting repair people.
- Shopping.
- A birthday or family celebration.
- Unauthorised holiday.
- Parental illness.
- Excessive illness without a medical reason.

The DfE's guidelines look at the area of "Special Occasions" and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised. This will be decided at the discretion of the Principal. We ask parents to **notify the school well in advance** (preferably 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. The DfE's guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. **A note from home therefore does not automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.**

Example of 'exceptional circumstances' include:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – Principals use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled.
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence.
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Principal is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. Teenage parents responsible for the care of their own child – at the Principal's discretion.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high

- standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate.
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service.
  - Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states “on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”. This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Principals may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time.
  - Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however, we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Principal is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Principal may use his/her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulty if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering the overall welfare of the child.

### Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional:

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents (e.g. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitment.
- To care for other family members.
- Birthdays.
- To interpret for other family members.
- No school uniform/shoes.
- Bullying.
- Friendship problems.
- Head lice.
- Learning difficulties.
- Family holiday.
- Family Anniversaries.
- Death of a pet.
- Travel problems.
- School refusal.

### 3.5 Holidays/Trips

The academy supports the view that every lesson counts and discourages parents/carers from taking holidays during term time.

The Law states that requests for leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and family holidays do not fall into this category. Any requests for leave must also be made to the Academy in advance, as the guidance from Department for Education (DfE) is schools cannot authorise any absences after they have been taken.

Learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child (this message is conveyed in our information booklet to parents and in letters home). The saving you will make by taking a holiday in term time is offset by the cost to

your child's education.

The Academy, in conjunction with all other 11-18 secondary schools in the country, asks parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable to take their annual holiday in term time to write explaining the circumstances to the Principal **at least 4 weeks in advance**. Only the Principal can authorise absence.

However, the Academy does not authorise absence during term time as per Government Legislation explained above. Any requests for term time holidays will not be authorised, and you may be made subject to a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child payable within 21 days, then £120 per parent per child if paid after this date. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in a court summons. Exceptional circumstances may be authorised if provided in writing to the Principal and Education Welfare Officer, but please note this should not be assumed that the exceptional circumstance will be granted.

#### **4. Action taken when pupils are absent**

4.1 There are occasions when absence is unavoidable. These include:

- a) Illness.
- b) Medical or education appointments.

4.2 If a parent knows in advance of absence due to an appointment, the academy office should be informed and the appointment card shown.

4.3 If a child is ill, the parent or carer should ring the academy to inform us and on return present a written note explaining the absence. If your child is absent and has been prescribed medicine by the doctor please can you bring the medicine or prescription into the academy so we can photocopy it.

4.4 The parent or carer will be phoned and if there is no answer or no information has been received, and reasons noted, a text message will be sent on the first day of absence.

4.5 Letters will be sent to the parent or carers requesting an explanation of the absence. If no reply is received; the absence is counted as unauthorised. Two academy weeks are allowed for responses after the letter is sent.

#### **5. What happens if Attendance is unacceptable**

5.1 The Principal/Attendance Officer reviews the attendance of all pupils monthly. If the attendance of a pupil falls below 95% the reasons for the absence are investigated.

5.2 The reasons for absence are discussed. If there are no extenuating circumstances the following procedure is instigated:

- a) The Principal will write to the parent or carer. The situation is reviewed at the next month's check.
- b) If no improvement is seen the Principal will request an appointment with the parent or carer. The situation is reviewed at the next month's check.
- c) If no improvement is seen the Principal will write again requesting an appointment and ask for medical certificates to be provided for each subsequent absence to be authorised.
- d) If the attendance does not significantly improve, a referral to the Educational Welfare Service will be made. In non-improving situations a penalty notice may be served

*Ø See Appendix 1*

5.3 If your child's attendance is unsatisfactory (below 95%) you are at risk of a referral to the Education Welfare Officer and may be liable for fast track court prosecution, prosecution and/or a fixed penalty notice under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

5.4 If the child is below 5 years of age, the Education Welfare Officer will not accept a referral. In this instance the Principal will pursue the situation. In extreme cases a nursery place could be withdrawn.

## **6. Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Vital information is given out during tutor time and your child will be at a disadvantage because of this. The school day starts at 8.20am and we expect your child to be in school at that time. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons during the day.

6.1 The academy day starts at 8.20 and all academy doors are closed at 5.30

6.2 Pupils who arrive after this time must enter the academy through the main entrance. They must then be signed into the late book.

6.3 Registers will close at 8.35 Children who arrive after this time will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence). Any child receiving 5 U's in any half term may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

6.4 The procedure for consistent lateness is the same as for absence – i.e. at 10% lateness the Principal is informed by the Attendance Officer.

- a) Appointment made to see Education Welfare Officer – one month is given for improvement.
- b) If no improvement is seen the Education Welfare Officer will request another appointment.
- c) If there are unacceptable improvements after a month, a referral to the Education Welfare Officer is made.

6.5 'Cause for Concern' registers for absence and punctuality are kept.

### **Lateness to Lessons**

6.6 Any student who arrives late to a lesson (after 4 minutes) will be issued with a late registration mark and a 15-minute detention which comes with 1 behaviour point.

6.7 Any student with 3 or more late marks in a day will be placed in Internal Exclusion for 1 day. Parents/Carers may be contacted to attend the school to discuss if the lateness persists.

6.8 Any student with a genuine reason for lateness **MUST** have a note in their planner and signed by member of staff or a late mark and detention will still be issued.

## **7. Punctuality Inspection**

We also do sporadic punctuality inspections at the academy gate. Our Education Welfare Officer is sometimes involved in these.

## **8. How will this information be collated?**

A register of absence and punctuality referral is kept. The Attendance Officer and the Principal manage this register and meet regularly to decide necessary action.

## **9. Pupil absence and extenuating family circumstance**

If parents or carers need to remove their child from the academy for any reason, they must complete a Term Time Absence Request form. No absences for holidays should be authorised, unless in extreme or exceptional circumstances. Permission for absence will only be given if

there are extenuating circumstances. If the absence is not authorised, the parent or carer may be liable to a Fixed Penalty Notice.

### **Home/School 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 that their child arrives at 8.20am in good time for line-up at 8.25am.
- If their child is ill, notify the school **on each day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence and a full explanation of the illness.
- Send in a written note and medical evidence with their child on the first day he/she is back at school. This should be handed into the Attendance Office. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message.
- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attendance and attitude to school.

In return the school will:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home. An automated truancy call is sent out to any absent students, with a manual phone call made if no response by 10:00am. Any student on the Child Protection register will be contacted by manual phone call by 9.15am and the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of outcome. – set up group/report in Bromcom for Safeguarding Students
- Follow up with welfare checks at home will happen on day 3 of an absence if no contact from home (then every 3 days after). A visit will happen on day 6 even if contact is made from home with reason for a welfare check. A visit may be made on first day of absence for any student on the Child Protection register. We will also do home visits for regular non-attendeers.
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parent's pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in school.
- Contact home over any unexplained absences.
- If necessary, involve the School Support Services to help pupils reintegrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances.
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.
- Ensure that tracking systems are in place to identify and monitor student attendance across the year.

- Have regular attendance meetings in school to identify, monitor and support key students.

## 10. Attendance Reports and Contracts and Referrals

Level 1: Any students with attendance under 95% will be placed on an attendance report by their form tutor and parents/carers will be contacted to attend a meeting to discuss possible issues and support required.

Level 2: If attendance does not improve or is below 92% parents/carers will be required to attend an attendance meeting with the Director of Learning and an Attendance Contract will be agreed and issued and monitored for 5 weeks.

Level 3: If attendance does not improve or is below 89% parents/carers will be required to attend an Attendance Panel with the Attendance Officer and a member of the Senior Leadership Team. An Early Help assessment (EHA) may be offered at this point. A target of 97% over the next 10 weeks is set (there is a review at week 5). If the target is met then attendance continues to be reviewed closely for 4 weeks. If the attendance does not show signs of hitting the 97% target, then the case is referred to the local authority.

Level 4: If attendance does not improve or is below 85%, the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and parents/carers will be expected to attend a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer. Targets will be set accordingly.

Level 5: If attendance does not improve or is below 80%, the Education Welfare Service will start legal proceedings against the parent/carer.

The Education Welfare Officer and the Attendance Lead liaises with the LA Education Officer Inclusion Officer (IO) and Senior Inclusion Officer (SIO) regarding irregular attendance, children missing from education, wishing to home educate and unauthorised holidays. The Academy works very closely with the local authority regarding pupils who are giving a cause for concern.

In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service can also initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their legal responsibility of getting their child consistently to school. Parents may be made subject to a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child payable within 21 days, then £120 per parent per child if paid after this date. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in a court summons. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec.444(1) and 444(1A).

‘If any child of compulsory school age is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence’

## 11. Roles and Responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. It is important that **all** members of staff are aware of: **a robust system is dependent upon everyone playing his/her part.**

Staff responsible for attendance at EGA are:

- Form Tutors
- Education Welfare Officer
- Directors of Learning

- Attendance Lead
- Vice Principal
- Principal

## **12. Registers**

These are important legal documents which must be completed carefully and promptly at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

Children entering the classroom via the academy office are late and should be marked as such, even if the register has not been taken yet.

## **13. Rewards and Sanctions**

The class with the best attendance for the previous week is recognised and rewarded and presented with a cup in the whole academy assembly.

Children with 100% attendance are presented with a certificate at the end of each term/half term. Further prizes and awards may be presented for attendance.

Sanctions in the form of detentions may be applied for persistent lateness.

## **APPENDIX 1: PROCEDURE FOR THE ISSUE OF PENALTY NOTICES:**

1. Academies will notify the EWS of all cases where attendance has fallen below 90% in the preceding 6-week period and no valid reason for the absence has been provided by the parent/carer, along with evidence of what measures they have taken to bring this matter to the parent's/carer's attention.
2. The LA will produce an information letter for distribution to all parents/carers whose children have been identified as falling below 95% attendance at their respective academies. This will set out clearly the circumstances whereby a Penalty Notice can be issued and the consequences for failure to pay within the required time scale.
3. Each pupil's attendance will be monitored for 15 academy days following the issue of the letter to see if the desired improvement has taken place. An acceptable improvement is an increase in attendance above 90% for the 15-day period.
4. Should the required improvement not take place and no valid reason for the absence is provided, the Court Officer will decide whether to issue the Penalty Notice or to proceed with a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
5. Where a Penalty Notice is issued, it will be sent by the Court Officer through the post using First Class post to the parent's last known address.
6. Following a change to advice issued by the DfES in recent months, Penalty Notices may now be issued to the parents/carers of all pupils registered at Ealing schools, irrespective of their actual home address. This also means that follow-up prosecutions where parents/carers fail to pay the Notice or to improve their children's attendance will extend to families resident outside the area.

### **Withdrawal of Penalty Notices:**

7. The LA will withdraw any Notices issued if:
  - a) It can be established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person.
  - b) The use of the Penalty Notice does not conform to the terms of the Protocol.
8. Where either of the above occurs, written notice of the withdrawal shall be given to the recipient and any monies paid over shall be fully refunded.
9. Also, no proceedings under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 shall be instituted against the recipient in respect of the period covered by the withdrawn Notice.

### **Payment:**

10. Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.
11. A Penalty Notice shall be for the sum of £50 if paid within 28 days rising to £100 thereafter until the final deadline of 42 days.
12. Payment in full of the Penalty Notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted under any other enforcement powers for the period.
13. Any revenue arising from the issue of Penalty Notices will be retained by the LA to defray the costs involved in their issue or any subsequent prosecutions arising from non-payment.

### **Non Payment:**

14. Non payment of Penalty Notices within the prescribed time limits will result in a prosecution under Section (1) or (1A) of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence of failing to ensure the regular attendance of the child/ren at school.