



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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This policy has been produced to explain to all concerned the rights and responsibilities relating to the attendance of learners at ARA. If children do not arrive in school, they cannot be educated. Furthermore, good attendance promotes the best learning opportunities, punctuality and reliability: all valuable attributes for a successful working life after leaving ARA.

Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent(s) or carer(s).

The DfE states that:

Children, who do not regularly attend school, rarely achieve their full potential. Not only do they miss lessons but unsatisfactory attendance makes it more and more difficult to catch up.

Good attendance (above 96%) at ARA is one of the ways that we can ensure the safety of our pupils and is considered as a key part of the safeguarding duties of this Academy.

WHAT ARA DOES TO ENHANCE ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

The Academy is committed to full attendance by Learners' in order to maximise the quality of learning and achievement. To achieve this, we have a number of initiatives in place including;

- First day of absence – contact made by Attendance Officer with parent/carers via text and e-mail.
- Weekly absence check by the Attendance Officer and the SaFE Workers
- Regular analysis of attendance figures to identify any patterns of absences or lateness
- The SaFE Workers meet regularly with the EWO to discuss attendance and referrals are made as appropriate
- Regular truancy checks are conducted by teaching staff – as they are able to follow learner's attendance throughout the day as recorded on SIMS
- Class teachers, form tutors/SaFE Workers collect absence notes for authorisation
- Positive reinforcement and rewards are promoted in assemblies
- Spot checks by each year group are conducted

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

WHAT IS AN AUTHORISED ABSENCE?

Authorised absence is where the Academy has either given approval in advance for a learner to be out of school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. Acceptable reasons for absence may include:

- Illness
- Emergency medical/dental appointments supported by appointment card/letter
- Family bereavement
- Day of religious observance
- Exclusion – results from a decision taken by the Academy. ARA is responsible for setting work for an excluded learner
- If permission has been granted in advance by the Principal

Excessive amounts of authorised absence can seriously disrupt a learner's continuity of learning. Inappropriate use of authorised absences can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence.

WHAT IS AN UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE?

The DfE states that parents may not authorise absence, only the Academy can do this. Unauthorised absences are those which ARA do not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. Unacceptable reasons for absence may include:

- Visiting relatives
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Looking after siblings
- Arriving at school too late to receive an attendance mark
- Haircuts
- Slept late
- Minding the house
- Unapproved holidays

All of the above reasons are classed as truancy by Alec Reed Academy

It may be necessary for ARA through the Attendance Officer or the Education Welfare Officer to ask the parent/carer to provide the Academy with written evidence of a reason for absence. If there is an extensive period of absence due to medical reasons the school or the Education Welfare Officer may ask for the permission of the parent/carer to make a referral to the School Health Advisor who then contacts the child's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the child from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the child. Prior to this action parents/carers are requested to provide supporting medical evidence and this can include *a copy of the child's prescription, copy of medication container label or copy of appointment card/letter.*

Changes to registration regulations from September 2013;

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended **to prohibit** the Principal granting leave of absence to a pupil **except** where an application has been made in advance and the Principal considers that there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application. If a parent does not apply the leave of absence cannot be authorised. (*The main purpose of this is to dispel a parental presumption that they have an entitlement to leave or that they can just tell the Academy that they are on leave.*)

If leave is taken and is not authorised then the parent has committed an offence under S444 Ed Act 1996. This can be subject to prosecution in the magistrate's court under ss1 and ss1A of the Act.

Penalty notices (s444A and 444B) offer the opportunity to a parent as an alternative to prosecution under the act by enabling them to discharge their liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The DfE says that this brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

REGISTRATION, LATENESS AND FIRST DAY ABSENCE

The Academy operates a first day response to first day absence: we will contact parents if we have not heard from them. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure a learner's safety as well as his/her regular school attendance.

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the morning of the first day of absence, and any subsequent days thereafter and provide a reason for the absence. However, we may require supporting medical evidence to justify frequent or extensive absences. On a pupil's return to school, a letter must be submitted to the tutor or SaFE Worker. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, ARA may not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on the learner's report.

Primary Phase

The Primary day starts at 8.45am each morning, however the doors open from 8.30am to allow pupils to read with their teachers before the first lesson. This soft start provides teachers and pupils with additional time to focus on reading individually, answering questions and discussing books in class. The registers close at 9am. After this, any pupils who arrives late, should be signed in at the main Reception.

There is also a breakfast club facility from 7.45am for any children who need to arrive

earlier.

Secondary Phase

Pupils should be in by 08:40am for period 1. Learners who are late (after 08.40) will be subject to a lunch time detention set by the Leadership Team. Learners who are regularly late will be set an Academy Punctuality detention which takes place on a Friday at 3.00pm and lasts for one hour.

Learners that arrive to the Academy after 09.00am must sign themselves in at the attendance office behind staircase one in the secondary phase and at reception for the primary phase.

Officially, registers in the secondary phase close at **09.45am**. If learners arrive to their second lesson before 09.45am and have been marked absent in period 1, they should be given a late mark (L).

In circumstances such as bad weather or transport difficulties the Academy may keep the register open for a longer period.

- Registers are legal documents which record whether parents or carers have fulfilled their legal obligations
- A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance
- They are the best way to track pupils in cases of emergency (e.g. in the unlikely event of a fire)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Attendance and punctuality is monitored regularly by key staff with a weekly update to the Academy staff, learners and the Governing Body.

Annual figures from the DfE enable ARA to evaluate its own attendance in comparison with others and resulting action will inform the Academy's Attendance Action Plan.

ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

Attendance at Alec Reed Academy is a whole Academy responsibility: parents, learners and staff

The Education Act 1996 states that all learners should attend school regularly and punctually: This means that *learners must attend school by law* and parents and carers are legally responsible for making sure this happens

Parents who are found guilty of breaking the law on attendance may be taken to court and face fines of up to £2500, and in some cases imprisonment. EWO's can also use court proceedings to seek an Education Supervision Order or Attendance Order on the child. During these court

proceedings the magistrates may consider issuing a parenting order which would include parents attending parenting skills sessions

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of the Academy for a holiday.

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Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The DfE says that this brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

The Principal is prohibited from granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the Principal considers that there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application.

The Principal will look at each case individually and may refuse permission taking into account factors such as:

- The pupil's record of attendance
- Whether examinations or tests are taking place
- The pupil's stage of education and progress
- The reason for the application

THE LEGAL STATUS OF REGISTERS

The register is a legal document and must be marked accurately, recording pupils attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised.

A certified extract of the register may be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents

for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a learner.

Registers must be kept for a minimum of 3 years following completion at the end of the academic school year.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Days of Religious Observance

- Section 199 of the Education Act 1993 provides that an offence is not committed where the absence of a learner of compulsory school age results from participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Such absences are classified as *authorised* absence. It is helpful if parents can give the Academy advance notice of religious observance days.

Traveller Children

- The special position of Traveller families is recognised by section 199 of the Education Act 1993 which protects Traveller parents from conviction if the parent can demonstrate that:
 - they are engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as requires him to travel from place to place.
 - the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits.
- Where Traveller children are registered pupils at the Academy and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending ARA, the absence should be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

Outside Appointments (including interviews)

Where a learner attends an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place at an institution of further or higher education and misses morning or afternoon registration, the Academy has discretion to *authorise* the absence. The Academy normally expects, and asks for, advance notification and proof of the appointment, e.g. a letter of invitation.

Where leave of absence has been granted for a local appointment, the learner should be left in no doubt that he or she will be expected to attend ARA before the appointment if practicable and return promptly to ARA and resume studies on completion of the appointment if practicable. If a learner fails to return from a morning appointment and misses afternoon registration without adequate explanation, the afternoon absence should be treated as *unauthorised* and sanctions applied as necessary. Similar considerations apply where the interview is for a place at another school.

Work Experience and Public Performances

Regulation 11 of the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 provides that leave of absence from school may be granted to enable a learner to undertake work experience or to participate in approved public performances.

Where a pupil is engaged on work experience as part of an approved scheme, the absence may be *authorised*. It should however be impressed on the pupil that he or she will be required to attend work regularly according to the scheme agreed and to arrive on time.

Arrangements should be made for employers to report absences to the school. If a pupil is found to be absent from the work experience location without reasons, the absence should be treated as *unauthorised*. Similar considerations apply to performances.

Off-Site Activities

These may be divided into 2 categories; school-directed (e.g. educational visits, approved sporting activities) and activities peculiar to a particular individual (e.g. music examinations, special tuition).

In the case of a school-directed off-site activity these form part of the learner's educational experience and should not count as absence from school.

Where whole classes or groups are involved a register will be taken, prior to departure and passed to the Attendance Office. Where an individual pupil is involved the supervising member of staff must take appropriate measures to ensure accurate attendance is recorded.

For all off-site activities the Attendance Office must be given an accurate list of the pupils participating before departure so that this information is available in the case of an emergency.

Where the activity is of a more individual nature, the Academy may authorise absence at its discretion. In deciding how to treat a particular absence, ARA should have regard to the learner's attendance record as well as the nature of the request. In many cases, the application will arise from activity known to the school and it is unlikely that there will be difficulty in granting leave of absence.

Exclusions

Where a learner has been temporarily excluded (either for a fixed period or indefinitely) he or she should remain on the school roll. Since the absence results from specific action by the Principal, i.e. the decision to exclude, it should be treated as authorised absence.

Where a learner has been permanently excluded, his or her absence should be treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress but, on conclusion of that process, if the permanent exclusion is confirmed he or she should be removed from the Academy roll. This will normally happen on the school day immediately following confirmation by the appeal committee of permanent exclusion, or upon expiry of the time allowed for appeals to be made.

While the learner remains on the Academy roll, ARA should recognise their responsibilities towards learners out of school by setting work for the excluded learner. In the case of a permanent excluded learner such formal responsibilities cease once the decision is confirmed and the learner is removed from the Academy admission register.

School Leaving Date

Section 277 of the Education Act 1993 provides for the Secretary of State to make an order specifying a single school leaving date. This date is the last Friday in June. Pupils are required to remain at school until the relevant leaving date: any absence not agreed in advance (or for which no satisfactory explanation was subsequently forthcoming) must be treated as *unauthorised* absence.

During Official Examination Periods

Schools must record revision time and attendance at tests and examinations in accordance with the '2006 Pupil Registration Regulations'.

Present;

Present at approved, supervised, off-site educational activity;

Absent; and

Unable to attend, due to one of the exceptional circumstances outlined in the regulations.

The attendance codes are subsets of these four marks which enable the Academy to record whether or not they have authorised a learner's absence and the reason for the absence. The first and fourth marks do not apply to study leave. The second does not apply because the pupils are unsupervised and, in most cases, undertake no educational activity during the school day.

KEY PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Overview of attendance: Leadership team responsible for Pupil and Family Services and Head of Primary Phase
- In the Primary Phase, management of a caseload of specific pupils and oversight of a phase- Primary Leadership Team and EWO
- In the Secondary Phase, management of a caseload of specific pupils and oversight of a year group – Year group SaFE Worker and EWO.
- Class Teacher/Form Tutor: to fulfil the legal requirement for the completion and recording of morning registration and monitoring of punctuality.
- Attendance Officer/ Primary Office Team: day to day running of the registration and attendance systems.
- Classroom Teachers to register pupils in every lesson and register concern where a learner has attended previous lessons and is then registering as absent.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Expectations are made clear to parents with regard to attendance and punctuality in the Home

Academy Agreement.

Expectations are made clear to learners with regard to attendance and punctuality on a daily basis – through form time and assemblies and also through the 'Punctuality and Attendance' document in the Pupil Planners.

Opportunities to maintain awareness through newsletters, parents' evenings and pupil reports will be used. Parents, pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence

Learners with a known attendance problem upon admission to the Academy will be interviewed with the parents and will be set targets for improvement. Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality

Learners who have been absent for an extended period of time will be reintegrated back into school through a structured and individually tailored programme

All issues, which may cause a learner to experience attendance difficulties, will be promptly investigated by the school.

Leadership Team Pupil and Family Services will have regular meetings with the Attendance Team who in turn will meet with the Year teams, in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. Attendance statistics will be published weekly and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices.

Primary Phase Attendance is monitored by the Primary Leadership Team and the results of weekly Attendance Competitions are celebrated and rewarded in assemblies.