



Attendance and 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

Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Aims of the policy
 3. Recording attendance and punctuality
 4. Guidelines for absence
 5. Action taken when pupils are absent
 6. What happens if Attendance is unacceptable
 7. Lateness
 8. Punctuality Checks
 9. How will this information be collated?
 10. Pupil absence and extenuating family circumstance
 11. Absence due to religious observance
 12. Registers
 13. Rewards and Sanctions
 14. Absence concerns (Ark Acton)
 15. Referrals to the Local Authority (LA)
 16. Children Missing Education (CME)
 17. Safeguarding
- APPENDIX 1: PROCEDURE FOR THE ISSUE OF PENALTY NOTICES

1. Introduction

All children of school age have the right to a high-quality full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability or any special need they may have. Excellent academy attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Irregular attendance leads to educational disadvantage and places children at risk. It can disrupt continuity of learning and undermine educational progress leading to underachievement or low attainment.

Ark Acton Academy takes the responsibility to monitor and promote the excellent attendance of all its pupils very seriously. It is the parents' or carers' responsibility by law to ensure their children attend and stay at school; we will work in close partnership with them to ensure high attendance and ultimately, success at school, for all pupils.

2. Aims of the policy

The aims of the Attendance Policy are:

- To ensure an academy attendance and punctuality level consistently above 97%
- To raise the importance of excellent attendance in line with Ofsted requirements and our ethos of forming habits of excellence
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- To develop good punctuality as a habit of excellence
- To promote opportunities to celebrate and reward children for excellent attendance and punctuality

3. Recording attendance and punctuality

Registers

We recognise that lesson and tutor registers are important legal documents which must be completed carefully and promptly at the beginning of each lesson, tutor time or enrichment session.

All registers will be taken electronically on Bromcom. Every period, including morning reading sessions, co-curricular sessions and tutor time, will have a register taken. Only then will we be able to keep a track of any possible truancy. Staff are held accountable for their compliance to completion of these registers within the first 5 minutes of a timetabled session.

Reporting pupils' attendance and punctuality

- Our heads of years will call parents to check on any absence that has not been reported already by a parent call or coded as pre-authorised event (e.g. hospital appointment) during period 1 of each morning
- In addition, we will use our parent MCAS application to ensure parents can view and keep track of daily attendance and punctuality details or issues.
- Tutors and Heads of Year will be in regular contact with parents where there is any concern about attendance
- We will report cumulative attendance and punctuality figures to parents each term
- We will also keep a register of absence and punctuality referral is kept

4. Guidelines

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 Holidays/Trips

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

4.5 Only the Principal can authorise absence.

5. Action taken when pupils are absent

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

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

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

5.3 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 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.

6. What happens if Attendance is unacceptable

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

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

- a) The Assistant 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 Assistant 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 Assistant 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

6.3 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.

7. Lateness

7.1 The academy day starts at 8.30am and all academy doors are closed at 8:32am

7.2 Pupils who arrive after this time must enter the academy through the main entrance. They must then be signed into the late book and a late detention will be allocated.

7.3 Registers will close at the end of P1. 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.

7.4 The procedure for consistent lateness is the same as for absence – i.e. at 10% lateness the Assistant 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.

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

8. Punctuality Inspection

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

9. How will this information be collated?

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

10. 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.

Families should notify their school as normal if your child is unable to attend on any given day and update the academy regularly regarding on-going absence.

Where a child is not regularly attending the academy, we will want to discuss this with you to understand what the difficulties are and agree with you some supportive measures to improve matters as early as possible. We will follow our normal absence procedures to establish the reasons for absence.

Where our efforts do not result in an improvement in attendance or time keeping, we will refer to the local authority School Attendance Service for additional support, advice, and ultimately parental enforcement.

11. Absence due to religious observance

Ark Acton Academy should treat a pupil's absence as authorised if it is on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. As set out in regulation 6(2)(b)(ii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006(link is external).

The DfE does not define which specific days schools should authorise for religious observance. As a general rule, we would interpret a 'day exclusively set apart for religious observance' as a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. We advise schools to seek advice from the relevant religious body if they are in doubt.

The DfE would not consider attending religious festivals to be a religious observance day and as such, parents are not entitled to take their children out of school for such festivals. Religious festivals would be an occasion which religious bodies mark without expecting families to take time off work or school.

Parents may apply to the school for a leave of absence that is linked to a religious day. However, unlike days that the religious body have set aside to be spent exclusively in religious observance, parents have no entitlement to leave linked to religious days.

Head teachers may grant requests for leave of absence if there are exceptional circumstances that warrant the leave but are not obliged to do so. Authorisation of such leave is completely at the head teacher's discretion.

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, this will result in a late detention being set. The only exception to this are the very small number on a part-time reintegration timetable.

13. Rewards and Sanctions

The class with the best attendance for the previous week is recognised and rewarded and presented with a reward in the whole year group assembly.

All attendance data is available in form room classrooms and on year leader displays around the academy building.

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.

House points are awarded by tutors and heads of years where attendance is positive or greatly improved.

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

14. Absence concerns (Ark Acton)

Any concerns regarding attendance or punctuality are notified to parents / carers when attendance falls below 96% inline with the Pastoral Playbook. When attendance patterns

continue to decline despite this initial letter parents are invited in to firstly meet with the HOY and subsequently with the AP for attendance. If no improvement is seen the case is referred to the EWO at Ealing, who will then follow their procedures as documented below in point 15.

15. Referrals to the Local Authority (LA)

All unauthorised absence, including significant lateness is reported to the LA School Attendance Service to seek additional advice and support for parents as necessary. Where unauthorised absence is frequent and or persistent, sanctions will be imposed and will include warnings, penalty notices (Fixed Penalty Fines), prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.

Where a child or family is away from home including abroad, and unable to return home due to the pandemic/travel restrictions, parents are expected to provide the school with detailed information as to the whereabouts, reasons for travel and estimated return dates and we will do our best to support you.

Where the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence will not be authorised, and this could result in Fixed Penalty Fine (please refer to our main Attendance Policy) Where such cases are not satisfactorily explained and evidenced, we cannot guarantee to hold a place open for your child.

Please be aware that leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. There is no entitlement to time off during term time for the purpose of a holiday.

16. Children Missing Education (CME)

Where the school is unable to contact a child/family over a 3-day period (1-day for students with an EHCP/social services plan), they will contact the School Attendance Service to carry out enquiries to try to locate them. A door-step home welfare visit will also be undertaken.

Where the school and the Attendance Service have failed to locate the child/family within 10 days, the child will be referred to the LA Children Missing Education Officer (CME officer) who will undertake additional checks with other agencies to locate them, including consultation with social care, the police, health and housing.

Where these enquiries do not lead to confirmation of the child's whereabouts, the matter will remain open to that service who will widen their enquiries. In these circumstances, the school cannot guarantee to keep a school place open for your child.

17. Safeguarding

If at any time the school are concerned for a child's safety or welfare from any year group, we will consult with Ealing Social Care in line with our Child Protection Procedures.

APPENDIX 1 : PROCEDURE FOR THE ISSUE OF PENALTY NOTICES:

1. Academies will notify the EWO 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 £60 if paid within 28 days rising to £120 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.