

# Attendance Policy

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved by	Date Approved	Implementation
September 2023	Headteacher	Executive Head	August 2023	1 September 2023
September 2024				



## REVISION HISTORY

Issue No	Date	Description
3	September 2020	Updated legislation. Added Links to other policies.
4	September 2021	No changes.
5	September 2023	Remove the date relating to the attendance target.

## Introduction

As part of the North East Learning Trust, Sacriston Academy seeks to ensure that all pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The Academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the Academy community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and, therefore, from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

All staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attends the Academy regularly and on time. A whole Academy attendance target of 97% has been set for this academic year and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The Academy has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DFE 'School attendance' departmental guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities (July 2019) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

## Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of pupils registered at the Academy.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust and the Academy including pupils, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and the Academy.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team and with other services and agencies.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence; and
- To reduce the number of pupils who have more than 3% overall absence.
- To reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90%.

## Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust and Academy policies:

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- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Children Missing in Education

## Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and attainment of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular attendance at the Academy is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the Academy is dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of the Academy's attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality on the Academy's website and the Parental Guides 'Fixed Penalty Notices' and 'Holidays in School Time'.
- Involve parents/carers from the earliest stage of poor attendance.
- Ensure parents/carers are contacted on the first day of absence if the Academy has not been informed of the absence.

To ensure that pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.
- Relate attendance issues directly to the Academy's values, ethos, and curriculum.
- Reward good attendance.

## The Law

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

The Academy will offer help and support if there is a problem with attendance. If attendance does not improve or the parent does not accept the help and support offered, the LA may issue the parent with a Penalty Notice or prosecute the parent in accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996.

If a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew

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about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

## **Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from the Academy must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents/carers to classify an absence, only the Headteacher is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis considering the specific facts and circumstances.

Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for reasons which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

## **School Ethos**

Sacriston Academy is committed to providing an effective and efficient education for all pupils.

We believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell. We will endeavour to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that impede full attendance are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.

Attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in our partnership with parents/carers.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Parents/Carers**

The school wishes to work with parents/carers to achieve good attendance. The minimum target attendance for all pupils is 97%.

Our Home-School Agreement emphasises the importance of attendance and punctuality and the expectations of parents and children in supporting the school's policy.

Regular attendance includes children being punctual.

Parents/carers should contact the school on the morning of the first day of a pupil's absence. They should state the reason for their child's absence and also the date they are expected to return to school. Information from parents/carers regarding absences are received in good faith. Only the Headteacher has the power to authorise the absence.

When an appointment has been made for medical reasons (these should be made outside of school time when possible), the appointment card should be shown in advance to the Class Teacher and a school leave of absence request form submitted.

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Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the School Prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

At the pre-school induction meeting held each year for children about to enter the Reception class the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which mean they become unhappy and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Headteacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance is always stated along with other school routines.

## **Pupils**

Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually and be appropriately prepared for lessons. The target attendance for all pupils is a minimum 97%.

## **Local Academy Council**

The Local Academy Council has responsibility for school attendance and will be familiar with current legislation.

They will be acquainted with the registration system in the school.

They will request the Headteacher to report on attendance at each termly governing body meeting in order to monitor attendance.

## **The Headteacher**

The Headteacher has the day to day responsibility for attendance and will ensure that the school meets the legal requirements for all aspects of school attendance, set required targets for attendance, reduce unauthorised absences, and will publish attendance figures.

The Headteacher will ensure that parents/carers and pupils are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission. This will be supported in the signing of the Home-School Agreement.

## **Deputy Headteacher**

The Deputy Headteacher has a specific attendance role and will take responsibility for overseeing registration procedures, monitoring overall attendance, collation and reporting of attendance information. They will be responsible for ensuring that class teachers keep registers in a correct manner, will meet regularly with the education welfare officer and will discuss attendance issues highlighted by the school's monitoring system. They will also be responsible for supporting class teachers in following up all attendance issues.

## **The Class Teacher**

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Class teachers have a vital role to play in raising the attendance and punctuality in school. They will notify senior leaders of any attendance concerns after their efforts have failed to achieve an improvement.

Class teachers will be responsible for welcoming pupils back to school following their return from absence. They will also notify other staff members if a pupil is experiencing difficulties, allowing for confidentiality.

### **Enforcement Action/Formal Attendance Procedures**

If, following the Academy's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents/carers have not co-operated with attempts to improve the situation the Academy are required to consider referring the matter to the LA.

The High Court has confirmed that the Headteacher authorises absences. If your child is absent from school a lot because of illness, or if the Academy do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school frequently, the Academy may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they receive the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of the Academy for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Academy will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in the Academy at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be submitted at least two weeks in advance via a form which is available from the Academy website or in person from the Academy reception. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion (or in the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher is the person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school). Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from the Academy. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances. Unauthorised leave of absence may lead to a referral to the LA who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if the criteria is met.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

### **Response to Absences**

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When a pupil is absent for no apparent reason it is the duty of all staff to consider possible causes. When considering reasons, they should bear in mind factors that could relate to Child Protection, Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying policies. The class teacher will have a role in identifying reasons for absence and addressing such issues, with the support of the whole school staff.

If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent, then the class teacher contacts the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this. If this persists then the teacher registers their concern with the deputy Headteacher who will then work out patterns of absence and lateness and if necessary, contact the school's educational welfare officer.

## **Attendance Review**

The school office manager will process attendance data and provide up-to-date information on class and individual returns. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will be informed of any subsequent findings.

The Head of Attendance for North East Learning Trust will meet with the Deputy Headteacher to discuss attendance issues and offer advice and support.

## **Rewards**

The school officer manager will provide the Headteacher and deputy Headteacher with weekly class attendance data and the Headteacher will reward the two classes (one in each key stage) with the best overall attendance each week.

Children who achieve good attendance will be rewarded at the end of every term at a special presentation assembly. The Headteacher and deputy Headteacher will analyse the attendance data provided by the school office manager and reward those children with attendance rates of 95% and above. Children who achieve attendance of 95%-97% will receive a bronze award, children with 97.1%-99.9% silver, and children with 100% gold.

## **Tuancy**

All staff are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare, and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, who then contacts the parent and the educational welfare officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Headteacher talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

## **Partnerships**

At Sacriston Academy we will discuss pupils and contact parents if there are concerns, likewise within the partnership that we have with parents and pupils, we expect to be contacted by parents if they have any concerns about their child's attendance, or any other matters. The

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school will arrange to meet with parents who have concerns as a matter of priority and work with them in the interest of their child.

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