



Attendance Policy

Document control table	
Title	Attendance Policy
Approved by	OA central (Director of Academies)
Updated and approved	6 July 2021
Date of next review	By end September 2022
Updates/revisions included:	• Updated to highlight two week Oct half term and therefore 185 days in school • Added information to indicate that parents/carers can be issued a penalty notice in cases of excessive unauthorized absence • Added information about fixed penalty notices May 2022 – removed COVID-19 reference
Academies to note: This is an OA template, but it must be checked for local context/times/procedures etc. The updated academy version should be returned to OA central for uploading onto each website.	

Introduction

This policy is written in accordance with DfE guidance on school attendance (Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, July 2019). This states: 'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

Rationale

- To ensure that every student succeeds whilst at the academy
- To ensure that every student has access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave the academy
- To ensure that every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- To ensure that every student uses every day to gain knowledge and understanding
- To promote students' welfare and safeguarding

To achieve those goals, at Olive Academies, we believe it is essential that students are not absent from school.

Our aim is to foster a sense of responsibility, a joy of learning and to create, therefore, a community where learning is recognised as important and crucial to securing well-being and increased life chances. Attendance is a safeguarding issue - the health, safety and wellbeing of students is paramount.

Academy staff work closely with link agencies to ensure maximum attendance and therefore achievement for all students. Staff work with parents/carers to achieve good attendance and involve the Local Authority in the best interests of the child.

Students who attend regularly will succeed and secure economic wellbeing in the future. They will enjoy making a positive contribution.

In this academy, there are 185 days (taking into account a two week October half term which is covered by increased hours during the school year) when a student is expected to be in school and there are then up to 180 other days available for holidays which would not have a negative effect on a student's education.

Categorisation of absence

When a student is absent from school, the law categorises that as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

The law states that it is for the academy to determine into which category any absence fits, it is for the academy to decide whether any absence is 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

Authorised absence

Examples of the type of absence which may be authorised:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (although these should be made wherever possible out of school hours.)

- Exceptional family circumstances (at the discretion of the school)

Unauthorised absence

Examples of the type of absence which will not be authorised are:

- Lateness – but arriving late is better than not arriving at all
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Special treats
- Looking after family members
- Holidays in term time

The decision to unauthorise an absence is an important one because where there is excessive unauthorised absence a penalty notice or a prosecution can be brought against the parents in the Magistrate's Court. If parents are convicted, they will receive a criminal record, a fine of up to a maximum of £2,500 per parent per child and or 3 months imprisonment.

The need for parental explanation

All absences must be explained either by telephone call, text message, email or letter by a parent or carer. However, this in itself does not automatically authorise the absence.

It is for the academy to decide whether or not to accept the explanation offered. You may be asked to provide evidence of a doctor's visit (e.g. appointment card or prescription).

Long term absences must be discussed with academy staff to enable them to offer the student access to education to which they are entitled. Where a parent/carers anticipates in advance that his or her child will be absent then as much advance notice as possible should be given.

Holidays during term time

Parents/carers are reminded that they do **not** have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for holidays. Holidays will only be granted if the headteacher considers that there are special circumstances. The DfE guidance updated in July 2019, makes it clear that 'headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'. Examples of circumstances which by themselves are very **unlikely** to be considered as special and thus leading to a grant of permission include:

- To fit in with parental working patterns
- Economic reasons, such as cheap flights and/or accommodation
- To overlap with beginning or end of term.

Roles and responsibilities

Olive AP Academy – Thurrock

Attendance is a student welfare and safeguarding issue. The academy takes its safeguarding responsibilities in these areas very seriously.

- Students should arrive on site at 8:30am. Registration closes at 9.30 and should a student not have arrived by then and no explanatory telephone call received, a member of staff will make contact with the child's parent or carer via a telephone call or automated text message.
- Students who arrive after 9.30am will be marked as late and a reason will need to be given for the late arrival to school.

- Students who arrive after 10.30am will be marked as absent for the am session.
- We always notify parents/carers if students abscond from academy premises and if necessary, notify the police.
- If a student becomes unwell whilst at the academy, parents/carers are informed. Depending on the age of the student and the severity of the illness a decision will be made as to whether the student should be collected by a parent or carer or sent home on their own.
- In some instances, taxis are used as a means of transport to and from the academy for students. The taxi firm in use has been identified in agreement with the Local Authority and meet all relevant safeguarding requirements. Academy administrative staff are responsible for organising the transportation of students via taxis and a record is kept of all journeys. Parents are informed if a student is being taken home at a time other than the end of the school day.
- Students will be admitted as soon as possible after referral to the academy and no later than on the sixth day following an exclusion, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Attendance is recorded the day following a student's admission interview.
- When students join the academy they will attend an induction where their needs are assessed. The academy records attendance from the first day of induction.
- Where a student has not attended school for two or more days and the academy has not been able to contact the parent/carers a home visit will be arranged.
- Where a student has not attended the academy for one week, and the academy staff have not been able to make contact with a parent or carer, OA's Attendance and Welfare lead will automatically be informed.
- Where continued absences and sporadic attendance occurs, with no valid reason for absence, the trust Attendance and Welfare Lead may proceed to a Stage 3 meeting and/or refer to the Local Authority for legal interventions.
- Where students attend alternative provision off-site the providers are to contact the academy with the student's attendance on daily basis before 10am
- The academy provides a coach who closely monitors the attendance and progress of students in their care. The coach will maintain contact and provide information to parents/carers.
- The academy provides an administrator to ensure that the attendance of all students is closely monitored and absence effectively dealt with.
- Attendance of all students is reported to parents/carers on a termly basis through a school report. The report is presented at parent/carer consultation meetings each term where the impact of attendance on student progress is discussed with individual families.

Parents/carers

Strong links and effective communication with parents/carers is vital.

- Parents/carers must telephone the academy by 8:30am on the first day of any absence to explain the reason for absence and give an expected return date.
- Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance. Students must arrive on time, in school uniform and ready to learn.
- Parents/carers must provide an up to date contact number and an emergency number that may be used in exceptional circumstances. It is important, that should the need arise, we can contact parents /carers without delay.
- Where a student attends a college or alternative provision the parent /carer must inform that institution of the absence, in addition to informing the academy.
- On a student's return to school, following an absence, a written note or a doctor's note should be provided.

- The head teacher reserves the right to ask for medical evidence before making a decision as to whether to authorise the absence. This must be presented within one week of the last day of absence.
- Data on attendance will be shared with parents/ carers and students regularly and discussed at parent and carer consultation meetings.
- Parents/carers who do not give an acceptable reason for the absence of their child must understand that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If children have medical appointments parents/carers must supply appointment cards.
- Parents/carers should note the dates of both national (usually May and June) and internal examination periods. The national dates cannot be changed for any reason. Staff will publish examination dates as soon as they are known. If the national exams are missed they cannot be retaken during that exam period.
- The journey to school for some students may involve the use of one or more forms of public transport. Parent and carers must ensure that their child leaves in plenty of time to allow for possible delay. Some students may qualify for assistance with the cost of transport. The decision as to the route and type of transport rests with Thurrock council and an application should be made at the earliest opportunity in order that no education will be missed before the relevant pass is issued.
- Parents/carers must ensure that students attend on the first school day following initial interview. The interview is followed by a short induction period.
- Parents/carers must sign the Home/Academy Agreement. This states the responsibility of the parent/carers and student to ensuring that expectations relating to attendance are met.
- Parents/carers must commit to ensuring that students attend on a full time basis unless medical evidence proves that this is not possible.

Students

Students are expected to be responsible and independent. Except where there are exceptional circumstances they are personally responsible for maintaining good attendance.

This applies to attendance to lessons. Arriving in school and not attending lessons does not constitute good attendance. Good attendance also means good punctuality.

- All students will be provided with a timetable showing clearly their own lesson schedule.
- Students must attend all lessons on their timetables, including all lessons with alternative providers.
- Students are expected to attend punctually every day.
- Students will not leave the academy site without permission from staff.

Teachers:

- record attendance to each lesson.
- report absence from lessons to senior staff.
- report lesson attendance to parents/carers through the termly report.
- may arrange for students to attend additional lessons in a subject in order to ensure students catch up on lost learning.

Coaches:

- meet frequently with students to discuss progress and attendance.
- keep parents/carers informed of attendance where there is concern.
- set attendance targets for students.
- report absence patterns to senior staff.

Attendance Procedures

- Attendance registers are taken at 8:45am and at 12.00pm.
- A system of first day calling operates: as soon as a register is closed parents/carers are called or an automated text message is sent and notified that their child is absent. It is expected that these calls are responded to as soon as possible in order to ensure the safety of students.
- Records of phone calls to parents/carers are kept and reported to the trust's Attendance and Welfare Lead and Local Authority when appropriate.
- OA staff work closely with families and pupils in maintaining good attendance at school. To this end, home visit may be made.
- Where there is a repeated pattern of absence it will be considered appropriate for a Common Assessment Form (CAF) to be completed in order to obtain a clear picture of difficulties being experienced. This will enlist the help of other agencies.
- The attendance of individual students' is monitored regularly, with reference to the academy's absence escalation process. This process is outlined in Appendix 1.
- At an escalation meeting, the attendance percentage achieved, as well as numbers of authorised and unauthorised absences and the number of late marks, are discussed with parent/carers and targets set where necessary.

Fixed Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Attendance Service

The headteacher may refer to the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices where unauthorised absence occurs. This can include persistently being late for school. These are aimed at reducing the levels of unauthorised absences during a school term and can be issued by the Local Authority, schools or Police. The penalty is:

- £60 if paid within 21 days
- £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days

A penalty notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child.

These may be issued for:

- Unauthorised holidays in term time.
- Parentally condoned absence where the parent is deemed capable but unwilling to address attendance problems (e.g. a failure to engage with support measures).
- Where a student is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.
- A parent continually fails to provide an explanation for a student's absence in accordance with the school's procedures.
- The student has a record of unauthorised absences including persistently late after 10.30am when the school register has closed.

This is not an exhaustive list and each case will be considered individually. A formal warning letter will be sent to the parents/carers before a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued. Fixed Penalty Notices can be withdrawn in certain circumstances. If a parent/carer receives a Fixed Penalty Notice and believes that it should not have been issued, they should notify the school without delay.

Rewards

- Weekly certificates for "Good" and "Improved" attendance, each student will be awarded a Gold+ character point

- Excellent attendance maintained for a half-term are rewarded in academy postcards sent home along with a Lakeside INTU voucher.
- 100% attendance maintained for a term – student will receive a special certificate from the headteacher and be entered into a prize draw. The prize is selected from the student voice choices, at the end of the school year.

A copy of this policy is available to all staff, parents/carers and students on our website
<http://apthurrock.oliveacademies.org.uk/>

Attendance Procedure

