



THE ACADEMY OF
ST FRANCIS
OF ASSISI

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Aims and Objectives of the Academy Attendance Policy

The aim of this policy is to:

- emphasise the importance to all students of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement;
- make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and students) the Academy's expectations on attendance levels;
- promote a consistent approach across the Academy towards all matters relating to attendance;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

2. The Importance of Attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school.

Irregular attendance leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

The Trust's Sixth Form, prospective employers and colleges of Further Education view attendance and punctuality as important indicators of motivation/attitude and our records and references are very valuable evidence of reliability.

Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

3. Acceptable Attendance

Attendance is a national priority. All schools must submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by Ofsted. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance.

We expect our students to achieve **over 95% attendance as a minimum**. We aim for our students to achieve over 97% attendance.

Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks.

Students should not have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the Academy.

If your child has 3 or more periods of absence you may be required to submit medical evidence to support any further absence. Medical evidence acceptable to The Academy may be a doctor's note, proof of prescribed medication, proof of attendance with a medical professional (e.g.) Care at the Chemist, Dentist, Doctor or hospital appointment letter.

4. Authorised Absences

The Academy cannot legally authorise **any leave of absence** unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) day of religious observance, notified in advance and duration agreed by the Academy;
- (iii) absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments must be arranged out of school hours wherever possible**. If a medical appointment is made during the morning session your child must attend school for the afternoon session. If your child is deemed unfit to return following the medical appointment you must offer medical evidence to support the following absence(s). If no medical evidence is provided the Academy may record the absence as unauthorised.

5. Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above.

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- (i) minding the house;
- (ii) caring for relatives;
- (iii) awaiting repair people;
- (iv) shopping;
- (v) a birthday or family celebration

This is not an exhaustive list and the final decision concerning authorised or unauthorised absences remains with The Academy.

The DFE guidelines look at the area of **Special Occasions** and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised.

6. Holidays

Holidays should not be taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

In common with the other secondary schools in the city, we ask parents/carers who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term

time to notify and prove with copies of tickets to the Academy, in writing, at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date, explaining the circumstances.

The Academy will not authorise any holidays taken during term time and the time missing will be recorded as an unauthorised. It is highly probable that the family will be officially prosecuted. The notification and proof from home simply means that the child will not be reported to the council as missing.

7. Home/Academy Agreement

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents/carers to:

- do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school sessions; morning registration begins at 8:40am and afternoon registration. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken; parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late;
- Notify the Academy if their child is ill **on the first day** with a likely date of return;
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school. This should be taken to the Attendance Officer. 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 attitude towards school.

8. Punctuality

Registration starts at **8:40am**. Students are late if they arrive after **8.40am**, if students arrive after **9.30am** they will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless a valid reason is provided such as proof of a medical or dental appointment.

9. Academy Actions

The Academy will:

- contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- contact home over any unexplained absences;
- follow up promptly any concerns parents/carers pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- involve the Head of Year to help students re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

10. Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the Academy offers the following rewards:

- Termly, students in Years 7-11 with 100% attendance **and** punctuality receive a group reward and a letter of recognition; this achievement is also recognised in assemblies.

- Termly, there is also an opportunity for students in Years 7-11 to enter a draw in which students can win a prize.

The letters of recognition are sent home directly, become part of the student's records and make a meaningful contribution to their reference for further education or the world of work.

11. Roles and responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. The respective roles of the Attendance Officer, Form Tutors, Directors of Progress, Heads of Year and the Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour and Attendance. All relevant members of staff are aware of the responsibilities regarding school attendance and that they know what is expected of them and the students. A robust system is dependent upon everyone playing his/her part.

12. The Education Welfare Service

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the Academy every week. The Academy works very closely with The Education Welfare Service regarding students who are giving cause for concern; the EWO visits homes, sees and supports students in school and is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance. The EWO is available to assist parents/carers where difficulties arise.

In extreme cases, the Education Welfare Service also initiates legal proceedings against parents/carers who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, parents/carers will be contacted, targets will be set for attendance, there will also be interviews which could lead to legal action being taken against you. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a safeguarding aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning.

We take attendance seriously across the Academy and urge you to give this matter the attention and support it warrants.