



Top Valley Academy

# **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Approved by Governing Body 11 November 2015



# Top Valley Academy Attendance Policy

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This policy was written to comply with:

- The Education Act 1996
- DfE guidance – School Attendance 2014

### Rationale

Top Valley Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all students. Regular attendance is essential to ensure that each individual gains the maximum benefit from the education on offer. The Academy will strive to ensure high levels of attendance to allow students to achieve their potential and the Academy to raise levels of achievement.

This policy seeks to identify best practice when dealing with attendance and punctuality and to ensure that any barriers to full and high attendance are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.

This attendance and punctuality policy serves as a reference point for the day to day management of attendance matters and makes clear the responsibilities of parents, staff and students. To be effective, it is essential that all play their part.

### **Attendance and the law**

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the 'parent' is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient, full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude.

Section 444(1). If a child of compulsory age who is a registered student at a school fails to attend regularly at the school; the parent is guilty of an offence and maybe liable on a summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale: A MAXIMUM FINE OF £1000.

Section 444(1A). If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that their child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to do so, they are guilty of an offence and maybe liable on a summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard: A MAXIMUM FINE OF £2500 or IMPRISONMENT FOR A TERM NOT EXCEEDING THREE MONTHS or both.

A parent means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a young child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child

The Academy will liaise directly with the Local Authority to decide if an individual comes within the definition of a parent in respect of a particular student when using legal measures, but generally parents include those with day to day responsibility for a child.

### **Aims**

#### **This policy aims to**

- promote equal access to all that our Academy can offer for all students
- support the Academy's inclusion agenda by developing policies and practices that enable all students to achieve attendance levels that will secure their success
- ensure that a clear message is given to parents and students that truancy and unauthorised absence will be monitored and challenged

- ensure that IT systems collect and analyse data to target individuals/groups
- make clear where the responsibility for attendance and punctuality and levels of accountability for attendance resides
- ensure procedures are easy to manage, robust and trigger early intervention
- ensure students are recognised and, where appropriate, rewarded for good or improved attendance
- have in place effective systems for monitoring, evaluation and review of the Academy's procedures
- support the Academy's high ambition to secure attendance levels above national averages, despite the significant deprivation issues that exist in the catchment area
- make explicit the relationship between attendance and achievement.
- make explicit the relationship between attendance and safeguarding.

## **Objectives**

1. To improve and achieve levels of attendance and punctuality significantly above national averages and norms
2. To promote a culture of high attendance in order to raise attainment and outcomes
3. To create an environment in which students look forward to attending the Academy and lessons
4. To generate regular and accurate data for attendance and punctuality so that:
  - colleagues are able to readily access information
  - students can be praised / rewarded for their progress and achievements
  - parents and guardians can be quickly informed of issues; monitoring of individual students and groups is made easy
  - causes of absence and lateness and issues of equal opportunity can be identified

## **Principles**

Top Valley Academy is committed to setting suitable learning challenges; promoting effective engagement with learning through excellent teaching; responding to students' diverse learning needs; and removing potential barriers to learning for individuals or groups. By applying these principles the Academy aims to prevent early disaffection and consequent attendance problems. We will uphold the Academy core values of pride, opportunity respect

and belief; actively promote British Values and operate within the objectives as set out in SMSC.

The Academy believes:

- regular, punctual attendance is the key to every student achieving his or her potential.
- the pattern of attendance and punctuality reflects many complex factors which need to be taken into account when planning effective work to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- it is parents' responsibility to ensure regular attendance. Where necessary, parents/carers will be supported and encouraged in continually seeking ways to improve attendance and punctuality.
- that promoting and improving attendance is the responsibility of all staff working in a co-ordinated way.
- that working in partnership with parents/carers and liaising closely with other services and outside agencies will produce a systematic and co-ordinated response to attendance/punctuality issues.
- in the use of secure data, effective communication, supportive intervention and challenge.
- poor attendance can be an indication of safeguarding concerns and we will ensure that any concerns are fully explored and addressed where necessary.
- that early intervention is vital to avoid the build-up of poor habits and patterns of unauthorised absence and authorised absence.

### **Basic Expectations**

Parents/carers are required by law to ensure that their child attends lessons punctually and regularly. The Academy expects parents/carers to limit absence to that which is unavoidable and within the guidelines outlined in the Academy's Attendance Leaflet, which is issued annually in September and includes a section on taking holidays in term time.

Parents and students are expected to know that the Academy's individual student attendance target for all students is 100% with the majority of students exceeding 97%. Individual attendance will be tracked against this through the updates posted home every half term; and meetings (involving parents/carers where appropriate) for any student whose attendance falls below 97%, which is the Academy expectation.

In the event of a student's absence parents/carers should contact the Attendance Officer to advise of the reasons for absence and the likely date of return.

In order for this policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority. Failure to record attendance and lateness to lessons accurately could lead to serious challenge and ultimately, disciplinary action

Good attendance is the responsibility of all staff; patterns of absence and warning signals that all is not well for a particular student should be identified.

The Academy expects every student to:

- attend lessons every day and arrive punctually for morning registration.
- arrive on time for lessons with the necessary equipment to take part fully in their learning.
- inform a member of staff of any problem that may prevent them attending (or through their parent/carer)

The Academy expects parents/carers to:

- ensure their children attend lessons every day and on time.
- contact the Academy whenever their child is unable to attend.
- contact the Academy whenever any problems arise that may have an effect on their child's attendance.
- when contacting the Academy regarding a child's absence the parents must state the nature of the illness and when the child is expected back. Contact can be made by telephone call, letter or in person.

Parents and students can expect the following from the Academy:

- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance – lesson by lesson.
- early contact with parents/carers when a student fails to attend without providing good reason.
- prompt, caring action on any problem notified to the Academy.
- the encouragement and rewarding of good attendance.
- the provision of a quality education for all students.

## **Procedures**

There are a number of staff involved in the processing and evaluation of attendance data. We work in partnership with parents to support students with their school attendance, helping to overcome any barriers to ensure students attain a high attendance record.

Various measures are used to encourage students to attend school including rewards and assistance with timetabling and lessons. Parent and student meetings are held with the aim

of demonstrating a united goal for the student to achieve their full potential through good attendance.

### **Effective registration**

All staff are expected to take roll calls and class registers promptly and accurately using the electronic registration system (SIMS). Codes used in the system are listed in the appendices. Morning registers must be completed within 15 minutes of the lessons start time in order to register on the system and highlight any absences to assist with the text messaging system.

In circumstances where this is not possible e.g. trips, supply staff, examinations, staff should follow written guidelines about submitting paper registers or information to the Attendance Officer to ensure the accurate recording of attendance data.

For students who are accommodated in the Student Support Centre, information is provided directly to the Attendance Officer to ensure accurate registration.

Only Top Valley Academy can authorise absence; parents' explanations do not have to be accepted as valid reasons for absence.

The following types of absence are recognised as lawful:-

- illness, medical and dental appointments
- religious observance
- interviews for post 16 placements
- work experience approved by the Academy
- exclusions
- attendance at student referral units
- Sporting activities supported by recognised legal documentation
- other absences approved by the Academy under special circumstances e.g. bereavement of close relative / friend.

Parents are reminded that leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday is not granted as a right (please refer to the Holiday section of this document).

The Academy is legally required to keep an accurate attendance register. This will be done by means of the computerised attendance system and associated printouts, and can be inspected by those authorised to do so (Inclusion Officers, Chair of Governors, teaching staff, auditor, Ofsted Inspectors). Parents/carers will be provided with a record of their child's attendance on request.

## **Punctuality**

Students who are late are processed through the Attendance Officer and a consequence is issued through the Student Support Centre. This includes detention set in line with the schools Behaviour Policy.

Students who are persistently late are subject to individual measures, which may include penalty notices.

Students who arrive at lesson after the late bell without a valid reason are not normally admitted to lessons. Work is completed in the Student Support Centre and appropriate consequences set.

Parents are kept fully informed throughout via telephone calls or text messages on the day.

## **Absence**

The Academy uses a text message system to contact parents if their child is absent without explanation. This is done by the Attendance Officer by 10:00am on the morning of the child's absence.

Additional procedures are in place for more vulnerable students, which includes contacting parents via phone call and home visits where appropriate.

If absence remains unexplained, the Attendance Officer or relevant staff member will investigate further. Absences for which the explanation is satisfactory will be authorised. Continuing concerns about absence will be referred to the Education Welfare Service, where appropriate.

Where a student's attendance is longer than 3 days (including illness) home visits may be required.

Where students are found to be truanting from the Academy, parents/carers are informed and a consequence will be put in place. This will usually involve 'paying back time' through detentions and a Saturday school detention applied.

## **Absences for Religious Observance**

In accordance with the DfE Guidelines the Academy will authorise one day of absence for any Religious Observance on any one occasion, and only 3 days maximum in any academic year. Parents/Carers will be advised in advance of the agreed dates. All other absences will be unauthorised.

## **Absence of students with disabilities, learning difficulties or other support needs**

If a student has a disability or medical difficulty that directly affects their attendance or ability to arrive on time this should be identified with the student and with Student Support. The Academy will work with the student to ensure that reasonable adjustments and support are in place and levels of expectation set accordingly. Any reviews or disciplinary actions will take into account and be responsive to the needs of students with disabilities, learning difficulties or other emotional, social or behavioural needs. Support will be offered and provided where appropriate.

## Persistent absentees

Recognising the link between attendance and achievement, Top Valley Academy will work closely and positively with students and parents to improve school attendance.

The Department for Education definition of “persistent absence” from September 2015 is when a student’s attendance falls below 90% (previously 85%). This includes all forms of absence, including that which is authorised such as holidays and illness.

The table below shows the number of sessions and days which indicate that a student is a ‘persistent absentee’. Any student who is in danger of falling below 90% will receive support from the school however should their attendance continue to fall actions may be taken to refer the student to the Education Welfare Service.

Term	Term dates	Number of sessions of unauthorised absence	Number of days of unauthorised absence
1	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept to 23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	8	4
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov to 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	15	7.5
3	5 <sup>th</sup> Jan to 12 <sup>th</sup> Feb	21	10.5
4	22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb to 1 <sup>st</sup> Apr	26	13
5	18 <sup>th</sup> Apr to 27 <sup>th</sup> May	32	16
6	6 <sup>th</sup> Jun to 25 <sup>th</sup> Jul	39	19.5

A session is half an Academy day.

All such students are subject to close scrutiny and special conditions including a suspension of all authorised holiday absence and, if deemed necessary, evidence to substantiate medical and illness authorisation.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for students. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these students at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance and low levels of achievement:

- Of students who miss more than 50 per cent of school, only three per cent manage to achieve five A\* to Cs including English and maths.
- Of students who miss between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of school, only 35 per cent manage to achieve five A\* to C GCSEs including English and maths.
- Of students who miss less than five per cent of school, 73 per cent achieve five A\* to Cs including English and maths.

## **Holidays**

No leave of absence for any year group will be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.

Under the 2013 amendment, Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Term time family holidays are not considered to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Exceptional leave must be applied for in writing to the Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for the particular year group.

The request should be sent to the Assistant Headteacher before the leave of absence is booked.

When considering granting the leave of absence the Assistant Headteacher will consider:

- The amount of time requested
- Circumstances of the request
- Distance and whether the trip is a rare event
- Frequency of the request
- Previous leave of absences taken within the students Academy career
- When the request was made
- Proximity of external and internal examinations (including controlled assessments)
- The students current attendance record, including previous years
- The impact that the absence will have on a students attendance record
- The impact on the students education and their ability to catch up on the work that would be missed

Should an absence coincide with the examinations period (both internal and external) permission will not be given.

Students taken out of the academy for a family holiday during term time will have their absence recorded as an unauthorised holiday (code G) on their attendance record.

## **Children Missing in Education**

We recognise that a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. We will inform the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register in line with the requirements laid out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015. Students who transfer to another school are not deleted from the admission register until we have received confirmation of their new school placement. We will also inform the local authority of any student who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

Students will be removed from roll when the Academy is informed:-

- that the child has been admitted to another Academy/school with a start date and this has been confirmed by the Attendance Officer
- that they have moved out of area and the Academy has their new address. The student's new school should be contacted to confirm that they have started.

- a letter is received from the parent/carer proposing education elsewhere. The Local Authority will then be informed.

or

- when a child has four weeks continuous non-attendance and every effort has been made to trace the student the Children Missing in Education Department (CME) will be contacted. The CME will confirm that they are investigating the case. The student will only be removed from roll once the CME has confirmed this or
- when a student is permanently excluded following the governors' ratification.

A central register will be kept by the Academy of students who have left and their known destination.

### **Students Returning to Academy after a Prolonged Absence**

This can be an uncomfortable time for the child and for the rest of the class. Friendship groups may have altered and changes may have taken place for which both parties must be prepared.

A number of strategies may be adopted to help a child return to Academy after a long absence:-

- the active involvement of the Academy in the planning process which may involve home visits by Academy staff
- a visit to the Academy by the student prior to return to overcome initial fears
- part-time attendance or a reduced timetable to ease the student back into the routine
- special teaching provision and help catching up on work
- the provision of a mentor, with whom the student has a special relationship and time to report to him or her during the day
- a welcoming attitude from the staff and peers
- visits to home from fellow students
- preparation of the class for the student's return
- rewards for achievement in academy- work
- current work completed at home so that lessons are familiar on return
- contact parent/carer and say the Academy is pleased that their child is returning

## **Analysis of attendance data**

- Data is used to plan strategically, set targets for improvement and help guide specific Academy interventions
- The Academy maintains a Student at Risk (PAR) Register for attendance that is updated every half term. Students whose attendance is below 97% are placed into a category of concern based on their actual attendance level.
- Attendance data is used to inform strategies to improve attendance of the whole Academy, year group, identified cohorts and individual students
- Patterns of absence and unauthorised absence are monitored by Heads of Year in the first instance and through regular attendance meetings. Actions are then taken at the appropriate level by relevant staff.

## **Rewards**

Rewards play a vital part in encouraging students to achieve. Rewards will be given to students for excellent attendance and punctuality. Rewards are also given to students who improve their attendance over a set period of time.

Examples of current practice (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Gift certificates
- Dining room queue jumping
- Free break time treats
- Certificates awarded for attendance and punctuality on a half termly/termly and end of year basis through rewards assemblies
- Positive behaviour points awarded each half term for attendance
- Positive behaviour points awarded each half term for punctuality
- Consideration for trips
- Family experience vouchers

## **Interventions to improve attendance**

- Parents and students receive written notification about current levels of attendance on a half termly basis. Congratulations and concerns are communicated as appropriate.
- Attendance certificates are given to students for attendance.
- Attendance tombola is drawn weekly for students who have 100% attendance in a week.
- Where an individual's attendance becomes a concern a student may be placed on an attendance report to a member of staff for monitoring.
- Meetings with the student and, where necessary, parents where there are concerns around attendance.

- Individual attendance strategies are used to address students who do not respond to the usual measures, including home visits where necessary.
- Students may be allocated to Safeguarding and Child Protection workers for further assessment and individual intervention.
- Parenting Contract may be used where appropriate.
- Using the Common Assessment Framework to work with a range of appropriate outside agencies.
- Use of personalised/reduced timetables where appropriate.
- In the most extreme cases of unauthorised absence and persistent lateness, legal action may be taken through the Education Welfare Service.

### **Penalty Notices**

The Academy will only consider Penalty Notices as a last resort and when all other intervention has been exhausted. When students become persistent non-attenders and all other intervention has been exhausted, parents/carers will be required to attend a meeting at the Academy where a period of up to four weeks will be given for attendance to be improved. At the end of the specified time period, there will either be the consideration to extend the period further or the case is referred to the Education Welfare Service to initiate the process of a Penalty Notice. Individual cases will be considered by the Deputy Headteacher for the relevant key stage before referral to the Education Welfare Service.

A Penalty Notice incurs a fine of £60 per parent per child up to 28 days, increased to £120 if paid between the 28<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> day. If the parent/carer does not pay the Penalty Notice fine, legal proceedings will be initiated in accordance with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The above process will also be considered in the case of persistent lateness.

### **Success Criteria**

In line with the Academy Improvement Plan, success criteria for this policy will be:-

- overall levels of attendance meets and exceed ambitious Academy targets relative to national data.
- a continued reduction in the number of students who are late for morning and afternoon sessions.
- a decrease in the rates of unauthorised absence and persistent absentees to national norms.
- an increase in the number of successful returns to full or part-time education by those excluded or truanting.
- Improved attendance leads to improved student outcomes.