

CHESLYN HAY ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

It is national policy that all children of school age should be at school and on time, every day their school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. As such, permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Over time, Cheslyn Hay Academy has developed a set of procedures that has proved successful in promoting the national expectation as regards regular attendance. This is because the academy shares the national and local authority view that regular attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to our community. Moreover, the school also recognises its responsibility to promote the importance of punctuality and to engender the habit of arriving on time.

The DfE has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on the chances of succeeding in tests and exams. (February 22nd 2015 DfE). The results are very clear – missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement. For example, at the end of 2012/13 academic year 94% of pupils who were present all the time achieved 5+ GCSE A* - C or equivalent. Where attendance dropped to between 85% - 90% only 75% of pupils achieved the same results. This equates to an absence of around one week per year during years 10 and 11 and clearly illustrates the impact of attendance on attainment.

The academy's special circumstances make the need for effective procedures all the more necessary. A large number of pupils attending Cheslyn Hay are transported to school by coaches provided by the LA. On occasions this can cause problems that can have a significant effect on attendance. These include pupils who have authorised reasons for missing a morning session, such as keeping a dental appointment, but fail to attend in the afternoon because they lack transport; or pupils who fail to attend because they claim to have missed the bus.

This policy should not be seen in isolation, but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the well-being of children including Inclusion, Safeguarding, Behaviour and Anti-bullying.

Overview

All children should be in school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. It is widely accepted that most children have a time when they are reluctant to attend school. Experience shows that any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, parents and the child.

The DfE has made changes to the **Education Regulations 2006**, which allowed head teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. These amendments, as described below, came into force on **1 September 2013**.

The amendments make clear that head teachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. All references to leave of up to 10 days for family holidays **have been removed**. As a result the school does not issue any holiday forms from the 1st September 2013, as we will not be able to authorise holidays in term time.

Request for absence due to exceptional circumstances **must be put in writing to the head teacher**. Any other absence should be reported in the usual way, by contacting reception.

School Responsibilities:

- We will promote positive behaviour and attendance through curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance throughout the year.

- We will work with parents to identify the early signs of difficulties. Parents are encouraged to contact school at an early stage so that significant problems can be resolved together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties continue the school refers the pupil to the Educational Welfare Workers with the Local Support Team whose informal involvement often brings the required improvement in attendance. We will use the Early Help process to support this.
- We will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern.
- However, if these interventions fail to improve attendance, the local authority can issue Penalty Notices of up to £120 or they can be prosecuted. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or three months' imprisonment.

Penalty Notices for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

Previously Penalty Notices were issued if overall attendance was below 87%. Also only one Penalty Notice was issued to a pupil each year. **These limits have now been removed.** Now a period of absence not authorised by the head teacher (eg. an unauthorised holiday in term time or an excess of a period authorised by the head teacher) may trigger a Penalty Notice. These days do not have to be consecutive. Instead of monitoring and totalling holiday absence taken across each academic year, they will now be monitored across the previous three terms regardless of the academic year.

(See appendix 2)

Penalty Notices for persistent absence

Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils missing 10% or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period.

Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive two warning letters to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again, then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider Penalty Notices and other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs.

These changes have been agreed with head teachers and have been implemented to support good attendance. Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>

Parent/Carer responsibilities:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory age attend school regularly.
- Inform school straight away if your child cannot attend and give a reason.
- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day.
- Encourage good routines at home that promote a healthy lifestyle including enough sleep.
- Talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with home learning or friendship problems.
- Do not book holidays in term time – this will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- Seek advice from your G.P. if you are not sure how long to keep your child off school with an illness.
- Ensure school has all your up to date contact details.
- Encourage your child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them.

Admissions Register

The academy keeps an admission register which records the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school. This record is kept for at least 3 years and the Local Authority is informed of any pupil removed from the register. A pupil can be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below).
- Have ceased to attend the school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they have registered.

- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school.
- Are in custody for a period of more than 4 months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe that they will be returning to school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

Elective Home Education

If the academy receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register at electivehomeeducation@staffs.gov.uk. Whilst the academy will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

Procedures

Partly because of the legal implications outlined above and partly because of the serious health and safety issues, all staff are reminded of the importance of following the procedures set out below. The expectation is that all pupils are present for registration at 8.40am. and 1.20pm. Staff will need to use their professional discretion to judge whether a pupil has good reason to be late or whether the pupil is exploiting personal circumstances. To encourage punctuality, it is vital that tutors identify early those at risk of developing the habit of being late and take appropriate steps.

Each half day session begins with the formal taking of the register using the agreed attendance codes (see appendix 1). The register should be taken in silence.

Morning session

In the morning the register is taken at 8.35am. Anyone arriving after 8.35am should report to reception to sign in. The register will close at 9.15am.

All teachers are expected to ask pupils arriving late to lesson one whether they have registered with the main office. If not, they must be sent to do so and the relevant tutor informed so that the pupil's failure to follow procedure can be taken up at a later date.

Afternoon session

Lesson 5 begins at 1.20pm and is when the afternoon register is taken.

Authorised and Unauthorised Definitions

Every half day absence is classified as either *Authorised* or *Unauthorised*. Total numbers of these absences are sent home to parents with the yearly report.

An absence is classified as *Authorised* if the school judges the reason for the absence as acceptable. The Government defines acceptable reasons to include: illness; medical appointments; and exceptional family circumstances.

The academy must be informed in advance for any absence other than illness for the absence to be judged as authorised. In the case of illness parents should call or email the school reception every morning.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for those which no leave of absence has been granted. These include: truancy; unexplained absences; and parents keeping pupils off school unnecessarily.

Strategies

The academy employs the following strategies to promote regular attendance:

- Each half day session begins with formal registration. These will close no more than 30 minutes after the start of the session.
- Class register taken every lesson
- Clear instructions to parents about notifying the school about absences
- Early intervention and parental contact via Head of House/Learning Mentor/tutor

- Heads of House to lead on 'closing the gaps' in the attendance of vulnerable groups. SLT/HOH to analyse KPIs to plan intervention.
- First day contact
- LST referral for pupils under 90% attendance
- Fixed Penalty Notices
- Termly Cluster Attendance letters
- EWW home visits
- Effective pastoral systems to resolve problems that may be causing poor attendance
- The use of the Learning Mentors, HOH and Alternative Provision Mentor to provide advice/alternative curriculum for pupils with attendance difficulties
- The use of Mini-CHIP meetings to monitor attendance and co-ordinate school intervention.
- Attendance reports
- Use of a range of rewards to celebrate good attendance and punctuality

Legal Framework

- The Education Act 1996;
- The Education (pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2010, 2011 & 2013);
- The Education (school day and school year) (England) 1999;
- The Education Act 2002; and The Changing of the School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011;
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998;
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003;
- The Education Act 2005
- The Education and Inspectors Act 2006
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and amendments;
- The Education and Skills Act 2008;
- The Equality Act 2010.

Lead SLT member: RKI

Date of review: 07/2021

Date of next review: 07/2022

Appendix 1

CHESLYN HAY ACADEMY

Attendance Codes

The following codes are to be used when completing absence sheets in registers

Code	Definition	Notes
/	Present	(AM)
\	Present	(PM)
B	Educated off site	HOH/SLM to confirm
C	Other authorised reason.	SLT to confirm exceptional circumstances.
D	Pupils attending other establishment	HOH to confirm
E	Excluded	SIMs to confirm
G	Unauthorised as pupil is on a family holiday, not agreed.	HOH Attendance officer to confirm
H	Authorised family holiday	Head Teacher to grant this in exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	Confirmed by letter, organiser or telephone

J	Interview	HOH/tutor to confirm
L	Late to registration	
M	Attended a medical appointment	Confirmed by letter, organiser or telephone
N	No reason given	The Year HOH must be notified of any pupil still with an N after 5 days
O	Unauthorised circumstances	Truancy, Inappropriate parental permission. HOH to confirm.
P	Sporting activity	PE/HOH to confirm
R	Religious observance	HOH to confirm
S	Study leave	HOH to confirm
T	Traveller absence	HOH to confirm
V	Educational Visit	SIMs to confirm
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Attendance officer to confirm
W	Work experience	SIMs to confirm
X	Only staff to attend/Covid-19 related absence	SIMs to confirm
Y	Enforced Closure	SIMs to confirm
Z	Pupil not on role	HOH to confirm
#	Planned whole or partial closure	SIMs to confirm

Shaded areas are codes which tutors may use. Other codes should be used only with the appropriate confirmation.

Appendix 2

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

- Parents who want the Academy to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully. **They should then put their request in writing to the Headteacher.** This letter should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the academy's decision regarding their request. Head teachers cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
- The Department for Education makes it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
- Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in school during term time.
- Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the academy will take account of:

- the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
- the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
- the overall attendance pattern of the child
- frequency of similar requests
- whether the parent made the request in advance
- students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.

6. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The head teacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However head teachers may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.

7. Should the academy decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to the academy at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

8. Should the academy decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 **per parent* per child**. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.

9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support head teachers in challenging parents who ignore the law.

* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.