



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

<b>Approved by:</b>	Board of Directors
<b>Date:</b>	July 2018
<b>Review Date:</b>	July 2020

## **CONTEXT**

Every student should maximize their potential opportunities to learn by maintaining the fullest possible attendance. The principles within this policy are shared across all Accord Multi Academy Trust (the Trust) Academies.

### **Policy Aims**

All staff across the Trust will work with young people and their families to ensure each pupil / student attends the Academy regularly and punctually, to minimise absence of all kinds. This will be done through:

- Raising awareness of the effects of absence and lateness;
- Ensuring effective systems to monitor absence and to address any underlying barriers that pupils / students face;
- Establishing effective systems for incentives and rewards that acknowledges the efforts of young people to improve their attendance and timekeeping;
- Securing appropriate levels of challenge where there a lack of priority is given by young people and parents / carers leading to poor levels of attendance and punctuality.

### **Quality Attendance and Punctuality**

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) regulate and inspect all schools and Academies in order to achieve excellence in the care of young people in education. They regularly collate and analyse data regarding attendance from all education establishments.

The Department for Education guidelines state that it is the responsibility of parents / carers to ensure their children attend school regularly. They have introduced statutory guidance to give Academies the power to enforce regular school attendance where this becomes problematic, through legal measures and interventions.

The Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) across the Trust place high importance on attendance and punctuality. Each pupil / student's attendance is regularly monitored and the Academy will pursue all interventions available to promote better attendance.

Effective education can only take place if the student attends the Academy regularly. Each Academy within the Trust aims to create an ethos of good attendance and punctuality and is committed to work in partnership with parents / carers to ensure that pupils / students present themselves on time and prepared for the day ahead.

## **The Attendance Team**

The Attendance Officer or a member of the pastoral team will contact parents / carers either by text or phone call where a child is absent and the Academy has not received any notification regarding the absence. Any late arrivals and punctuality issues will be discussed on the day with pupils / students with the appropriate notification given that may lead to a sanction in line with the Academy policy.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) works as a link between home, the Academy, other agencies and the Local Authority, in order to address attendance issues and ensure that all young people are receiving a full time education. This involves explaining to parents / carers their legal responsibilities referring to other agencies, encouraging families to build good relationships with the Academy and helping with Academy transfers and admissions. The EWO may conduct home visits, working with other agencies including the police.

## **Attendance and Punctuality Procedures**

### **Punctuality**

The Academy is committed to ensuring all pupils / students arrive on time, with correct uniform and equipment ready to start the day.

### **Letters Home**

Attendance and punctuality letters will be sent out to parents / carers when patterns of poor attendance or punctuality occur. This can include warning letters and notifications of action the Academy would be required to take if improvements are not made.

Each communication with home would escalate where poor punctuality and / or attendance persists.

### **Persistent Absence – Fast Track Meetings**

If a pupil / student's attendance falls below 90% this would trigger the classification of 'Persistently Absent'. A pattern of attendance approaching or below 90% would trigger an opportunity for parents / carers to meet with the EWO to discuss the matter and look at strategies, and any support that the Academy can provide to help improve attendance. Where concerns exist, parents / carers would also be made aware of possible actions if the pupil / student were to remain 'Persistently Absent'. It is important to note that the Academy does taken into consideration the fact that there are sometimes genuine reasons for absence such as ill health, family bereavement or other pastoral issues that may lead to attendance approaching or falling below 90%.

## **Persistent Absence – Penalty Notice**

The Academy may take the decision to follow a route of prosecution where there is prolonged 'Persistent Absence'. This process can involve an initial Penalty Notice arising from any of the following circumstances:

- No improvement following a Fast Track review meeting;
- Attendance falls below 90%;
- Inappropriate condoned parental absence;
- Unauthorised or excessive term time holidays;
- Persistent late arrivals to the Academy;
- Truancy or failure to attend lessons;
- Being out in a public place or being in sight of the Academy while excluded;
- A minimum of 10 Academy sessions lost due to unauthorised absence.

The cost of the Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the Local Authority do not receive payment they may then progress the matter to the Magistrates' Court. The Academy does not receive any monies attributed to the penalty notice.

## **Persistent Absence - Parental Prosecution**

Parents / carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child receives a full time education. Failure to do so may lead to a Parental Prosecution in the Magistrates Court and the possibility of receiving a Parenting Order or a fine up to £2,500 or a prison sentence for each parent / carer.

Prosecutions at this level would only be sought in exceptional circumstances, where the Academy felt that all strategies had been used in seeking to improve attendance and that parents / carers were failing to co-operate.

## **Persistent Absence – Education Supervision Order**

An Education Supervision Order can be used in order to work with families and schools, often with the support of external agencies, to secure a return to regular attendance. An application to secure an Education Supervision Order is heard by the Family Proceedings Court where Magistrates have the power to grant the order.

## **Holidays in Term Time**

Families who would like to take their child on holiday during term time should be aware that the law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

Whilst it may be considered that a holiday will be educational but pupils / students will still miss out on the teaching that they would normally have received during the holiday.

The Department for Education allows a Principal/Head Teacher the discretion to consider authorising a holiday in term time only in “exceptional circumstances”. If you consider that your request for a holiday is exceptional you will need to complete a request form that is available from the Academy. Following receipt of the form the circumstances would be given strong consideration with a response provided as soon as possible. If the holiday is not considered to meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, and the holiday is still taken in term time, the absence would be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

*Please note that such a Penalty is issued to each parent/carer for each child taken out of school. The cost of the Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the Local Authority do not receive payment they may then progress the matter to the Magistrates’ Court. The Academy does not receive any monies attributed to the Penalty Notice.*

All holiday requests must be completed by the parent/carer who resides with the pupil/student and submitted to the Academy at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the holiday.

In considering the decision whether to authorise, the following factors would be taken into account:

- Reasons given for the holiday;
- The time of the year/term;
- Whether the pupil / student would miss any preparation for tests / examinations;
- Whether the pupil / student would miss any tests / examinations;
- The previous attendance / punctuality record of the pupil / student.

As guidance for parents / carers it is important to note that holidays would not be authorised for the following reasons:

- Availability of cheap holidays;
- Availability of the desired accommodation;
- Holidays booked as surprises by family members;
- Poor weather experienced in Academy holiday periods; and
- Overlap with beginning or end of term;
- Only time available due to work (unless documentation is provided by employers which clearly states the restrictions);
- Holidays would not be authorised under any circumstances during formal examination periods.

Any exceptional request for holiday absence will be considered very carefully.

### Policy Review

This policy will be kept under review bi-annually and or at the time there are any relevant changes to legislation.

<b>Signature:</b>  <b>Chief Executive:</b>	  A Warboys
<b>Signature:</b>  <b>Chair of Board of Directors :</b>	  B Kelly
<b>Date:</b>	July 2018