

Attendance Policy



1. Rationale and Aim

It is vital to the academic progress of all students that they attend school regularly in order that they can participate in the educational opportunities available to them. Research shows that high absence rates go hand in hand with poor examination results. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process, since not only does a student miss out on valuable teaching but they are less prepared for lessons when they return. Poor attendance also places children at risk and in some cases it can result in students being drawn into anti-social behaviour. A student arriving late may disrupt his/her continuity of learning and also that of others. Samuel Whitbread Academy (SWA) believe that the life chances of all students can be improved by ensuring that all staff, students and parent/carers are aware of the importance of, and take responsibility for, regular attendance.

Samuel Whitbread Academy (SWA) will encourage and assist all students to achieve the highest levels of attendance and punctuality in order to maximise their achievement and attainment at school. SWA aim to:

- Ensure all students are supported in reaching their full potential in order that they can attain at the highest possible level.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Academy including students, parents, staff and governors.
- Maintain a high attendance record and low unauthorised absence rate.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
- Promote effective partnership with the Access and Inclusion Service and other agencies.
- Encourage students to catch up on any missed work in a positive and supportive environment.
- Encourage students to maintain high attendance levels by use of a reward system.
- Publish attendance figures to parents and governors.
- Analyse attendance rates (%) and at various times throughout the year, certain attendance rates will trigger letters that will be sent to the student's parent(s)/carer(s).
- Analyse and report on sub groups which will be defined by the responsible leader at the beginning of each academic year (by e/o September each year).

2. Policy

Working in Partnership with the Law

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at that school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2001, there has been a further offence introduced where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend school regularly, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend. (Education Act 1996, section 444 (1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). It is clear from the law that parents risk prosecution if their child does not attend school regularly. It is important, therefore, for parents and the school to work closely together to overcome any problems which may affect a student's attendance. The DfE recommends that no term-time holidays are

granted and therefore requests for term-time leave will not normally be approved. The Principal will only consider exceptional applications for any leave of absence. If holiday leave is taken without the school's prior approval, this will be viewed as an unauthorised absence.

The school will work closely with the Access and Inclusion Service where attendance or punctuality does not meet the school's expectations. Our attached Local Authority School Attendance Officer visits our Academy to support regular attendance and to help remove any barriers that may be preventing a student from accessing the education to which he/she is entitled.

Absences authorised by the school

There will be occasions when students will miss lessons for authorised periods of time such as to attend school trips and visits, attend music exams etc. (see list below). These absences are agreed by parents and will be marked accordingly on the registers. In the case of School Visits, parents will be asked to sign consent forms.

Examples:

- Attendance on a school trip or visit
- Agreed Home Study (Sixth Form only)
- Agreed Exam Study Leave (Years 11 – 13 only)
- Representing the School in a sporting fixture, musical, public speaking or drama event

Authorised unforeseen absence

The Academy should be notified on the day of the absence by 9:30am where possible, and then a letter should be sent to the school explaining the absence.

Examples:

- Illness
- Bereavement or other emergency family situation
- Severe disruption to transport with no possible means of getting a student to the Academy (e.g. very heavy snow)

Planned absences which may be authorised

These may require the Leave of Absence Form to be completed and should be submitted to the school 6 weeks in advance of the absence.

Examples of planned absences that may be authorised:

- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside of Academy hours
- Occasional care for a member of the family if a pupil/student has a known caring responsibility (this will be judged on a case by case basis)
- Religious holiday (guidelines are 3 days maximum)
- Visit to another school/academy, a career-related interview, authorised university open day or interview, or audition
- Occasional extra-curricular activity which gives the pupil/student significant opportunity for personal achievement or improvement
- Attendance at a family funeral
- A Driving Test (Year 13 only)
- Probation meeting or court hearing
- University Open Days (Sixth Form only, 3 days in academy time over Years 12/13)

Planned absences which are unlikely to be authorised

Examples:

- Holidays (unless holiday is requested under exceptional circumstances in which case the Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the Academy, should be submitted as soon as possible)
- Part or full-time work which is not part of a student's programme of study
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Babysitting younger siblings
- Shopping
- Driving lessons
- Persistent and regular lateness
- Moving house

Term-time holiday

Amendments to the 2006 regulations (The Education regulations 2013) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principals should determine the number of academy days a child can be away from Academy if the leave is granted. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued where a student takes a holiday during term time and the absence has not been authorised by the academy.

Appointments during school hours

We do ask parents/carers to avoid taking students out of school for medical appointments, however when this is unavoidable and the student will miss registration, parents/carers should telephone on the day. If students are signing out during the day, a note should be provided and shown at Reception when signing out. Where possible a copy of the appointment letter should be provided. If a series of regular appointments are necessary (e.g. for dental work) then we ask parents/carers to try to make these during school holidays or after normal school hours.

Persistent absence

Persistent Absence (PA) is a term used by the Department for Education (DfE) to denote absence of more than 10% for an individual student, whether authorised or unauthorised. There are clear links between poor attendance and poor attainment. Any child whose attendance falls to unacceptable levels will be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service.

Medical evidence

Parents/Carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to explain why their child is/has been absent.

Missing Children Procedure (September 18)

A Child Missing Education School Referral Form will be used when a child 'disappears' e.g. when parents move without providing a forwarding address; when it is suspected that the family has gone on an extended holiday without school agreement; when a student does not return two weeks after the expected return date of a family holiday. If the school has child protection concerns, Social Services will be contacted and if the Academy suspects that a crime may have been committed the Police will be contacted. A CME tracking sheet and referral will be completed and sent to the Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education Officer - Access and Inclusion Service in such situations once the student has been absent for 10 days. He/she (who) will take referrals from a variety of outside agencies for any student who has been out of school for more than 20 days. Such students are recorded on the DfE S2S (school to school) website and may be removed from academy roll in accordance with the guidance in the Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance for local authorities September 2018.

Contents of Admission Register

The admission register must contain the personal details of every student in the Academy, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the Academy, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended.

Expected First Day of Attendance

SWA will enter students onto the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the Academy has agreed, or been notified, that the student will attend the Academy. For most students the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. If a student fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the Academy must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

SWA will notify the local authority within five days of adding a student's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the student.

Students Moving to a New Address and/or School

Where the parent of a student notifies the Academy that the student will live at another address, SWA must record in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the student will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the student will live at this address.

Where a parent notifies SWA that the student is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, SWA will record in the admission register: (a) the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the student first attended, or is due to start attending, the new school.

Deletions from the Admission Register

A pupil will lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

3. Procedure

- A formal electronic register must be taken daily at the start of the morning session (8.20 - 8.45 am) and at the start of period 4 in the afternoon. It is a legal requirement to register students twice a day and teachers must ensure that it is taken accurately. A class register must also be taken every lesson, preferably electronically.
- If a student arrives late but the register is still open they will get a late mark. If a student arrives after the register is closed he/she will be marked as late after registers have closed, this is a statistical absent mark and will require a reason for this absence from their parents/carers or other agreed person (e.g. Head of Year)
- A student who arrives after 8:20am must report to Reception and sign in promptly. Lateness will be monitored and will be followed up.
- Students should not leave SWA without permission. Students who need to leave during the day (e.g. for an unavoidable medical appointment) should sign out, with prior written agreement, at Reception. If the student then returns to school within the same day, they must sign back into school at reception.

- If any student, including a Sixth Form student, becomes unwell during the school day, they must see a School First Aider who will decide whether it is appropriate to contact their parent/carer and ask for them to be collected. Students should never phone home and ask to be taken home without agreement from a First Aider. A First Aider may decide, in conjunction with Sixth Form Pastoral staff, that a Sixth Form student may be sent home even if it has not been possible to contact parents.
- Parents/carers should contact the school by phone, on the first morning of a student's absence (preferably before 9.30 am) and each subsequent day of absence. Parents should inform SWA if the absence is likely to be for longer than three consecutive days. When the student returns to school, a letter should be provided to explain the absence unless a parent has phoned the school for each day of absence. The letter should be handed into the Attendance Office.
- Students whose attendance in Years 9-11 falls below 95% will be monitored by their Tutor in conjunction with the Head of Year and Pastoral Support Officer (PSO). For Sixth Form the percentage attendance will exclude Home Study.
- Students whose attendance in Years 9-11 falls below 92% will be monitored by the Attendance Officer, the Head of Year, Assistant Head of Year, PSO, associate principal for behaviour & attitudes and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer. Discussions may also take place with the parents/carers. The possible actions that may be taken can be found in Appendix B Unauthorised absences may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued and/or a referral to the Access and Inclusion Service.

Electronic Registration

All students are expected to attend morning and afternoon registration sessions where a computerised register is taken. Parents / carers of any student who is marked absent, where there has not been prior notification of the absence or a telephone call to advise of illness, will be contacted requesting a reason for absence. The absence codes used for registers can be found in Appendix A. It is essential that any student arriving late for school sign in at Reception before proceeding to lessons, as they will otherwise be coded as absent and parents will be contacted. In addition, the majority of lesson registers are electronic. This allows a member of staff to detect whether or not a student is missing from their lesson who should be expected to be there. Student Services is alerted re any missing students and if they are not located, parents will be contacted.

Lateness

Students are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room, on time, every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Students who sign in to school after close of registers will be marked as late. This is a statistical absent mark. A student who is persistently absent through lateness may be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service.

Unauthorised absence

In cases of unauthorised absence (including internal truancy) the Pastoral Team and staff will arrange for the student to make up the time and work missed in accordance with the SWA Behaviour Policy. This may involve a series of lunch and after-school detentions or, in more serious cases, attendance on a non-school day, such as a staff training day. In such circumstances, agreement of parents will be sought and the student will be expected to attend school in uniform, to make up the time and work missed.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance rates are available on the Ofsted School Data Dashboard.

Consultation will take place with tutors, Heads of Year, and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer to develop and maintain the Attendance Policy. Certain attendance rates at various times throughout the year will trigger standard letters that will be sent to the student's parent(s)/carer(s).

Attendance procedures will be evaluated by senior managers, governors and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer.

5. Implementation and Review

This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers and governors, and published on the SWA website. Copies are also available upon request from the Academy Office. This policy will be reviewed twice yearly or as required.

6. Author and Date

Associate Principal, Children & Families, SWA (MJG) – May 2014

Updated MJG – January 2016

Updated MJG – June 2016

Updated MJG – Dec 2018

Updated VYA - Feb 2021

Updated CEK- November 2023

Date ratified by Governors – December 2022

Next review date – December 2024

Appendix A

ABSENCE CODES USED

CODE DESCRIPTION

/ Present (Morning and Afternoon) In school, in front of teacher (Present)
B Educated off-site Approved Education Activity
C Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code)
D Dual Registration (student attending another establishment, agreed)
E Excluded
F Extended family holiday (agreed)
G Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
H Family Holiday (agreed)
I Illness (not Medical or Dental Appointments)
J Interview (e.g. University, Job)
L Late (before registers close) Present
M Medical/Dental Appointments
N No reason yet provided for absence
O Unauthorised Absence (not covered by any other code)
P Approved Sporting Activity Approved Education Activity (Present)
R Religious Observance
S Study Leave
T Traveller Absence
U Late (after registers close)
V Educational Visit or Trip Approved Education Activity (Present)
W Work Experience or Shadowing Approved Education Activity (Present)
X Non compulsory School Age absence or DCFS code
Y Enforced closure of school (e.g. snow) Not counted in possible attendances
A and Z Not given (spare codes)
School closed to students (e.g. INSET Day) Not counted in possible attendances

CODE EXPLANATIONS

L = LATE
S = STUDY LEAVE/HOME STUDY (AUTHORISED)
P = OFF-SITE GAMES, SCHOOL MATCH ETC (AUTHORISED)
R = RELIGIOUS REASONS (AUTHORISED)
I = ILLNESS (AUTHORISED)
Y = EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE, EG CLOSURE DUE TO WEATHER
C = OTHER AUTHORISED REASONS
O = UNAUTHORISED
M = MEDICAL/DENTAL (AUTHORISED)
V = SCHOOL VISIT/TRIP (AUTHORISED)
/ = PRESENT
N – NO REASON YET PROVIDED FOR ABSENCE
W = WORK SHADOWING (AUTHORISED)



ATTENDANCE MONITORING

Attendance % is monitored every 2 weeks and will be used as a guide. Frequency of absence or reasons for absence will also be considered to justify an action. We monitor and review the impact of each action fortnightly and decide the next action.

Wave 1

- If student attendance drops below 95%, the form tutor will have a conversation with the student to identify and remove any barriers.

Wave 2

- The year team and attendance officer meet fortnightly and discuss each student who's attendance has fallen below 92%. Each student's absence is discussed and actions agreed case by case. Actions could include:
 - Continued monitoring
 - Letter of concern
 - Late / Serious Late Letter
 - Tutor phone call home

Wave 3

- The year team and attendance officer meet fortnightly and discuss each student who's attendance has fallen below 92% and those students who have previously been discussed in wave 2. Each student's absence is discussed and actions agreed case by case. Actions could include:
 - Continued monitoring (where student attendance is improving)
 - Attendance support plan
 - Med1/Pre-ref

Wave 4

- The year team and attendance officer meet fortnightly and discuss each student who's attendance has fallen below 92% and those students who have previously been discussed in wave 3. Each student's absence is discussed and actions agreed case by case. Actions could include:
 - Continued monitoring (where student attendance is improving)
 - Med1/Pre-ref
 - Referral to EWO
 - PNR

Wave 5

- The year team and attendance officer meet fortnightly and discuss each student who's attendance has fallen below 92% and those students who have previously been discussed in wave 4. Each student's absence is discussed and actions agreed case by case. Actions could include:
 - Continued monitoring (where student attendance is improving)
 - Fixed penalty notice