

*Shire Oak Academy*



**Attendance Policy**

**September 2020**

**Revised by: SH/BE**

**Mrs Jane Mole**

**Chair of Governors**

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**Date:**

**September 2020**

**Main reviewer: The Principal  
In liaison with: The Pastoral Manager**

**Version 2.2**

## **Introduction**

This is a successful academy and students play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly; every student should be at the academy, on time, every day the academy is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **Why regular attendance is so important:**

**Learning:** Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect a student's learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at the academy is a parental legal responsibility and permitting absence from the academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:** Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend the academy regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this academy, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for each student encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour management
- Health and safety
- Access to the curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this academy on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter.

## **Promoting regular attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of the academy staff.

## **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- give parents details on attendance in our regular newsletters and in each child's planner;
- report at least termly on how each student is performing in the academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

## **The law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

## **The law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from the academy has to be classified by the academy (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required either by phone, email or in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in academy time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Shire Oak Academy and Walsall Attendance Services using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/Carers keeping children off from the academy unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the academy day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at the academy too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend the academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the academy, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when he/she misses 10% or more schooling across the academy year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are automatically made known to our Walsall Attendance Officer. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% then any absence will need to be covered by medical evidence or it will be recorded as truancy.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If a child is absent, parents must:**

- contact the academy as soon as possible on **every day** of absence, either by phone or email.

#### **If a child is absent we:**

- will email the parents/carer on every day of absence by 10am. If we do not get a reply we will attempt to make telephone contact. If we have no contact from parents/carers, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- may invite the parent/carer in to the academy to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Principal if absences persist;
- will refer the matter to the Walsall Education Attendance Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

### **Contact details:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about many things, including absence, so we need to have your correct contact details at all times. Parents help us to help them and their child by ensuring we always have up to date information – if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on details throughout the year.

### **The Academy Education Welfare Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact the academy at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the academy may refer the child to the academy's Education Welfare Officer (Mr. Marcus Tomlin). He will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, he will use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at the academy are available from the academy. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the academy themselves to ask for help or information.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Pupils are expected to be on site by 8.40am.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The academy day starts at **8.40am** and we expect all students to be going into class at that time. Any student arriving to form after the register has been started is late and will be issued with an appropriate sanction.

At **9.05am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a student arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that the parent could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

If a student has a persistent late record, the parent/carer may receive a concern letter from Walsall Attendance Services or may be asked to meet with the Assistant Principal and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but parents can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to the academy on time.

The Academy day ends at 3pm.

### **Holidays in Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in academy time. It must be remembered that any savings parents think they may make by taking a holiday in academy time are offset by the cost to their child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in academy time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and, in making a decision, the Principal will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the Academy, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions.

All unauthorised holidays taken which are of 5 days or more will incur a fixed penalty.

**Academy targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The academy has targets to improve attendance and each child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the academy and for classes are displayed in the academy and time should be taken to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this academy is 96% attendance and we will keep parents updated regularly about progress towards this level and how their child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the borough.

Through the academy year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this academy are:**

- The Pastoral Team
- The Walsall Attendance Officer

**Summary:**

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All academy staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.