

Ascend Learning Trust

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Start Date: **September 2021**

Policy Review Date: **October 2024**

Ratified by the Academic Board

Please read this policy in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (2018)
- Behaviour for Learning Policy (2018)
- Medical Needs

Appendices A.

Absence from School during Term Time

B School Specific Attendance Flow Chart

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

- I. The mission of the Ascend Learning Trust is to have the highest possible aspirations, achieve the highest standards, provide the best possible teaching and learning, and to encourage the expectations of behaviour and personal conduct that are expressed within the Trust's contract. For the Trust to achieve this, it is vital that our students attend regularly and on time. Where the reason for absence is unavoidable, this must be communicated to the relevant Academy.

- II. The Ascend Learning Trust supports the principles enshrined in Articles 28 (right to education) and 29 (goals of education) of Unicef's Rights of the Child Charter. The Trust endorses the position that: **'Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment'**.

2. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

- I. The Education and Standards Committee has oversight of the effective operation of this policy in each academy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework.

- II. Teachers and the delegated members of staff have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy.

- III. Parents/carers and students have the responsibility to ensure they are aware of this policy and the procedures to be followed in cases of absence.

3. LATENESS

- I. Poor punctuality is unacceptable. A student who misses the start of the day, misses vital tutorial time and preparation for the day ahead and may not get their registration mark. Arriving late to lessons is also disruptive to learning and teaching and, again, the student may miss important explanations, instructions or tasks which prevent them from understanding the lesson objectives and making good progress in the lesson.
- II. The Academy day begins at (8.40am) and all students are expected to be in iLearn by that time
- III. The AM register is electronically taken by (8:40am) and students will be marked as Late if they are not in registration by this time. There are sanctions associated with this and Behaviour for Learning Policies should be referred to for further advice and guidance.
- IV. The AM register is closed at (9.10am). In accordance with the regulations on attendance, any student arriving after this time will receive a mark to indicate they are on the Academy site, but this mark may not count as a present mark and may be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Parents/carers face the possibility of a penalty notice if this becomes a persistent problem.
- V. If parents/carers are experiencing difficulty in getting their child to school, they should contact the Academy in order that a member of staff can assist and support them. The Academy's Pastoral Teams, Attendance Officer or Senior Leader will request to meet with the parent/carer if the Academy recognises that there is a problem with persistent lateness.

4. IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR ATTENDANCE

- I. A student's regular attendance is the legal responsibility of parents/carers and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.
- II. Any absence during term time affects the continuity of a child's schooling and more frequent absence seriously affects their learning. An attendance rate at school of 95% sounds good, but this equates to missing 10 school days during the academic year, or 50 lessons in total. If a child has 95% attendance over five years from Year 7 to 11, this means they will have missed 50 school days and 250 hours of teaching and learning time.

5. PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

- I. Encouraging and supporting good attendance is everyone's responsibility including parents, students and all Academy staff. The Trust and its Academies may do this by some or all of the following strategies:
 - a. Progress Check Reports throughout the year;
 - b. Display of iLearn Group attendance and termly prizes for the iLearn
 - c. Group with the best attendance and an end of year reward;
 - d. Termly certificates for students with 96%+ attendance;
 - e. Termly certificates for students with 100% attendance;
 - f. Presentation assemblies;
 - g. Texts home
 - h. Attendance Uniform pins for 100% Attendance
 - i. Reward trips and activities for good attendance.

6. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

- I. Each Academy is required by law to record each half-day of absence as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing.
- II. Reasons such as illness or medical/dental appointment are considered reasonable to warrant an authorised absence from the Academy, which fall unavoidably in school time.
- III. Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and no “leave” has been granted. This includes:
 - a. Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
 - b. Truancy from school
 - c. No reason yet provided for absence
 - d. Unauthorised absence
 - e. Students who arrive late (after registers are closed)
- IV. The Trust actively seeks to support parents/carers where a child’s ‘illness’ is becoming a mask for reluctance to attend school. If a child is becoming reluctant to attend school, parents/carers are encouraged to contact the relevant Head of Year/Pastoral Manager at their Academy for support. Rather than give in to pressure to excuse their child from attending school, parents/carers can discuss their concerns with the Pastoral Teams to find a way forward.
- V. Students with medical needs may require additional support with maintaining regular and punctual attendance. Parents/carers should contact the relevant Pastoral Team at their school for support.

7. PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

- I. Students who have an absence rate of 10% or more across the academic year, or who have an absence rate of 10% or more in any six-week period, regardless of the reason, are categorised as a 'persistent absentee' (PA). Each Academy monitors and tracks absenteeism meticulously. However, any student identified as having been absent for 10% of the school time or is at risk of moving towards that figure, will be treated as a priority and parents/carers will be notified of this immediately and the Attendance Officer informed.
- II. Identified PA students and parents are given an individual action plan to support and assist in meeting their needs in improving their attendance. The action plan may include a reduced or revised timetable, a mentor, individual incentives or the involvement of the Education Welfare Service. The devising of the action plan may involve a School Attendance Meeting.

8. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If a child is absent from school, their parent/carer must:

- a. Contact the Academy on the first day of absence, stating a reason for the absence;
- b. Contact the Academy on each subsequent day of absence; and
- c. Send in a written note detailing the reason for the absence on the child's first day of return to their Academy.

When a student is absent their Academy will:

- a. Telephone/Text parents/carers if they have not been in contact with the Academy;
- b. Request a written explanation of the child's absence. If the parent/carer has not contacted the Academy and/or the Academy has been unable to reach the child's parents/carers through first-day calling;
- c. Invite the parent/carer to discuss the situation with the Pastoral Manager, Attendance Officer or Senior Leader if the absence persists;
- d. Access the service and support of the Attendance Officer if attendance begins to fall below 90%; and, in such an eventuality, request that the parent/carer attend a formal School Attendance Meeting. The Academy may also seek the support of the Education Welfare Service.

9. PARENT/CARER CONTACT DETAILS

- I. To ensure each Academy can contact students' parents/carers quickly and efficiently, a data collection sheet is sent to parents/carers at the start of each academic year for completion and prompt return.
- II. If there are any changes to your contact details during the year, parents/carers must notify the Academy immediately in order to ensure that the Academy's records are up to date.

10. ROLE OF EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

- I. The Trust values working in close partnership with parents/carers and encourages them to get in contact at an early stage to resolve any attendance problems which are becoming apparent. Working in this way is very effective and ensures a high level of success. However, if an Academy feels a situation would benefit from more focused intervention, a student may be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- II. The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with the parent/carer/Academy. It should be noted that if unauthorised absence persists, and other methods of intervention have been unsuccessful, the Head Teacher or authorised senior member of staff may instruct the relevant authorities to:
 - a. Issue Penalty Notices; and/or
 - b. Progress a case to prosecution in the Magistrates Court as it is a legal obligation of the parent/carer to ensure regular attendance of the child at school.

11. HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

- I. There is no legal entitlement for parents/carers to take their children out of school for holidays during term time. The Trust and each Academy expect support from parents/carers by not taking their children out of school during term time.
- II. Academies will only consider holidays in term time in exceptional circumstances. With exceptional circumstances in mind, any such holiday requests must be made no less than one month prior to the holiday. Any requests should be marked for the attention of the Academy Head Teacher.
- III. If the circumstances are not considered to be exceptional and permission to take a term-time holiday is not granted by the Head Teacher, but the holiday is still taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the relevant Local Authority.

12. PENALTY NOTICES

- I. Following a period of unauthorised or persistent absence, any parent/carer may be considered for a penalty notice. This is issued through the courts to both parents/carers and any fine is paid to the relevant Local Authority.

13. KEY PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE

A list of the key people responsible for attendance at each Academy can be found in the Appendices attached to this Policy.

The Ascend Learning Trust Attendance Policy

This Policy has been approved by the Academic Board:

Signed: _____ Name

Date:

Trustee

Signed: _____ Name

Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed: _____ Name:

Date:

Designated Member of Staff:

*Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.