



Southfields Academy: Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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Review: Two Years

Reviewed by: Board of Trustees Committee / Delegated to
Principal/Headteacher

Equalities Statement:

We have considered and analysed the impact of these policies on equality and the possible implications for people with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.



Aims

At Southfields Academy excellent attendance and punctuality is essential to ensure success for every student.

We are committed to:

- encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring that their child achieves excellent attendance
- identifying any problems or issues promptly and providing suitable support

Further information for students and parents is provided in the school planner and is also available on the website to help maintain high levels of school attendance.

Information for parents and students

Students should attend all of their lessons on time, be equipped and ready to learn.

Students and parents are responsible for making sure individual attendance and punctuality is maintained at the highest level, to ensure all students can fulfil their potential. Students need to attend the Academy regularly to benefit from their education. Poor attendance, punctuality, or missing out on lessons could result in students falling behind in their education.

The government expects all schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence. It also expects patterns of absence to be monitored and addressed by schools and for parent(s)/carer(s) to perform their legal duty by ensuring that children of compulsory school age attend regularly.

The Attendance Register

Southfield Academy will take a *register before the start of each day and a further registration in the afternoon to record students as either:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to 'Exceptional Circumstances'
- Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) or other contagious infections

The Academy will follow up all absences to ascertain the reason whether the absence is approved or not and to ensure safeguarding the absent student.

*Registers may also be taken biometrically on entry into the Academy



Absences

The government has produced national codes to enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. They also use this information for collecting statistics through the School Census System.

If a student is unable to attend the Academy through illness or for another acceptable reason, the student's parents must notify the Academy of the reason for absence by telephone on the first day of absence. A note from the parent explaining the reason for the absence must then be placed in the student's planner on the day of their return to the Academy.

If the Academy is not satisfied with the reason given for an absence, then it will be recorded as unauthorised until the appropriate evidence is seen.

Acceptable reasons for absence could include:

- Illness, with medical evidence (if requested by the Academy)
- Emergency medical or dental appointments*
- Employment or educational related interviews, approved in advance by the Academy
- Days exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a parent of the student belongs.
- Exceptional circumstances outlined in writing to the Principal.

*Parents should avoid making non-emergency medical or dental appointments for their child during Academy hours. Where this is unavoidable but essential, parents should notify the Academy in advance of these appointments wherever possible.

Attendance Codes

Students are marked (/) Present, if they are at the Academy during registration and (L) Late for arrivals after registration but before registration has closed.

Registration / \: Present at the Academy

/ = am and \ = pm

L = Arrival during registration but after registration has ended

Other codes may be used to indicate an approved off site educational activity, such as attending an Interview, Work Experience, Sporting events, Educational Trips or students who are Dual Registers

Absences for the above reasons will be marked as authorised.

Unacceptable reasons for absence would include:

Excessive illness without medical evidence, looking after brothers, sisters or other children, carrying out chores in the family home, birthdays or anniversaries, festivals (including religious festivals, unless they are religious observance days as outlined above), general trips, such as shopping, trips to the seaside or other days out, any form of employment during academy hours,



including working in a family business, whether or not the student is paid and holidays taken without the written permission of the Headteacher/Principal.

Absences for the above reasons, or any other reason which is not acceptable, will be coded as unauthorised absence.

Truancy

Truancy at the Academy rarely occurs. However, dealing with truancy is a high priority for the Academy, and all instances of suspected truancy will be followed up immediately. Where truancy has taken place parents will be invited to the Academy to discuss this with their child and agree support, sanctions and any further follow up actions. This might include a referral to the Academy Welfare Officer.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling for authorised or unauthorised absence. Therefore students with an attendance of 90% or lower are considered to be persistent absentee students (PA students).

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully via BromCom and through the Academy's pastoral system. This is also combined with staff that are skilled in supporting students and their families overcome barriers to attendance; reducing low levels of attainment.

Where a student begins to develop a pattern of poor attendance, the academy will try to resolve the problem with the parents by contacting home and arranging a meeting as soon as possible. Clear targets will be set and support will be offered to the parents and student.

Persistent Absence is defined as when a student's overall absence equates to 10% or more of the possible sessions.

Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive at the Academy before 8.15 a.m.

If a student arrives at the Academy after 8.20 a.m. they will be registered as late and will have to make up the difference on the same day or the next suitable day.

Attendance Panel

Where a student is a cause for concern for either attendance or punctuality, they will be required to attend an Attendance Panel with their parent/carer. At the Panel, the emphasis will be made



on the importance of good attendance/punctuality and its impact on attainment. An action plan will be discussed, set up and agreed, in order to support the student to quickly improve.

Academy Attendance Measures

Part 1, Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents (any person who has parental responsibility for a young person or who has care for a child or young person) has a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and for any special educational needs they may have. The Academy may use one or more of the following measures against a parent/carer where they are failing in their duty of ensuring regular attendance or punctuality:

- Phone calls
- Letters
- Home School Agreements
- Parent Champion
- Attendance Panel
- Reviews
- Penalty Notices
- Engagement with external agencies
- Parenting Contracts
- Fines administered by the Local Authority
- Prosecutions by the Local Authority
- Education Supervision Orders

The Law

Southfields Academy and the Local Authority have the legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address attendance and behavior at the Academy. In addition to using these powers, the local authority can develop other practices to improve attendance.

The above are interventions made available to all staff to promote better attendance which are essential to every child's educational prospects. The above applies only to students who are registered at the Academy.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, it is a **criminal offence** for a parent of a child of compulsory school age to:

- Fail to ensure that their child attends school regularly; or
- Know that their child is failing to attend school regularly and fail to do anything to ensure their attendance, with no reasonable justification for their failure.



Attendance Orders

If it appears that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance or otherwise, then steps will be taken for issuing a School Attendance Order (under section 437 of the Education Act 1996) The order will require the parent to register their child.

Parent Contracts

A parent contract is a formal written and signed agreement between parents and either the Academy or Local Authority and can be used for irregular attendance for the purpose of providing support for the student and holding them accountable.

Parenting Orders

Parenting Orders are imposed by the court and the parent's agreement is not required before an order is made. Parenting orders may follow after a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or a breach of an attendance order.

Any breach by parents without a reasonable excuse could lead to a fine of up to £1,000 pounds. Equally the police may enforce any breach of an order by a parent.

Under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the parent of a child of compulsory school age who:

- has been excluded from school; and
- is found in a public place (including their school) during the first five days of the period of their exclusion

commits a **criminal offence**, having been given notice confirming their duty to ensure that their child is not found in a public place during this period in accordance with Section 104 of that Act.

Attendance Register

Under Section 434 of the Education Act 1996, the school must keep an attendance register. The attendance register must be updated at the commencement of the morning session and once during the afternoon session, and must indicate whether the student is:

- Present
- Absent (including a statement as to whether or not the absence is authorised)
- Attending an approved educational activity (including the nature of the activity) or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (including the nature of those circumstances).



Absent Students

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, absence will only be deemed to be authorised in one of the following circumstances:

- The student has been granted leave of absence (for exceptional circumstances)
- The student is unable to attend due to sickness or unavoidable cause
- It is a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belongs

Where the reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the time that the register is taken, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and only subsequently amended in accordance with the statutory procedure.

Approved Educational Activity

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, an approved educational activity is:

- An activity taking place outside of the school's premises, which has been approved by the school, is of an educational nature (including field trips, educational visits, alternative provision or work experience) and is supervised by a person approved by the Headteacher or Governing Body of the school
- Attendance at another school where the student is also registered

Exceptional Circumstances

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, a student will only be marked as being unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances for the following reasons:

- The Academy (or part of the site) are closed due to an unavoidable cause when students are due to attend
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the student from attending the Academy.

Prosecution

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has the power to prosecute any parent of a student for failing to ensure that they attend the Academy regularly, or for knowing that they are not attending the Academy regularly and failing to ensure that they attend. These two offences are triable in the Magistrates' Court and are punishable with a fine and, in the case of the second of the offences, imprisonment for up to three months.



Penalty Notices

As an alternative to prosecution as outlined above, the Academy may impose a penalty notice on both parent(s) of a student for failing to ensure that they attend the Academy regularly, or for knowing that they are not attending school regularly and failing to ensure that they attend, as outlined in this policy.

The penalty is £60.00 if the parent pays within twenty-one days, rising to £120.00 if paid after twenty-one days but before twenty-eight days, and is paid directly to the Local Authority. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.



Addendum – coronavirus (COVID-19)

This section is an addendum to the Academy's Attendance and Punctuality policy in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although attendance to the Academy is mandatory as from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where students cannot attend due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

From the beginning of the new academic year 2020-2021 the Academy will return to the using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak and in addition to the new category of not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19) will ensure that students not attending a session who meet the criteria** for 'not attending' in circumstances related to coronavirus COVID-19 should be recorded using the code 'X'.

**That they are required to self-isolate due to the NHS 'test and trace' as they or a member of their household has symptoms or are confirmed positive in a coronavirus COVID-19 test).

Students who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test. If someone in the student's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test. If the household member tests positive, the student should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. The Academy holds a small number of test kits to be used in exceptional circumstances.

If a student tests negative and if they no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19) they can return to the Academy. If the student test positive they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to the Academy if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of taste or smell (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

In all cases of self-isolation, parents/carers should inform the Academy immediately about the outcome of any test in order to reduce the spread of the infection.

Only in rare circumstances will authority be given to take students out during term time for overseas trips/visits. If approved, parents/carers will need to follow any periods of quarantine required on return and a student may not return until this has been completed. We may require proof of return travel, such as a boarding card, to verify quarantine.

Finally, the Academy is aware of several students who are clinically extremely vulnerable. Those students would have in their possession a NHS letter that sets out the expectation of when they can return to the Academy. Code 'X' will be used for students who are asked not to attend due to coronavirus (Covid-19). These students, including those identified as positive or informed by the NHS including where attending is related to coronavirus (COVID-19), or identified via the test and trace app, or tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).