

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Applies to:	Foundation and Senior Academies
Staff member responsible	Assistant Headteacher Foundation Academy (Primary Liaison, Transition and Attendance)
Approval by:	Academy Council
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## 1. Introduction

**At Fortis Academy** we recognise that regular school attendance is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the academy seeking to work actively with parents and carers to ensure a regular pattern of attendance is maintained. We expect every student on roll to attend every day when the academy is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to offer support when barriers to learning have been identified and aim to safeguard your child in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our students and we use a variety of rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality. We encourage children to attend and put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of a positive attitude towards school and learning. Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and to work alongside others

The Academy Council and Campus Principal, in partnership with parents and carers have a duty to promote full attendance at school under **legislation** and '**safeguarding**'.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives are:

- To emphasise the importance of and encourage students maximum attendance and promote punctuality to enable them to take full advantage of their education opportunities.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- To stress the need for home and the academy to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance and punctuality.
- Record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism;
- Promote effective partnership with external agencies, such as the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) and follow their standard approaches in managing attendance issues.

## 3. Statutory Duty

Schools are responsible for recording students' attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll. The schools utilises a central administrative system – Go4Schools for this purpose.

#### **4. Parental Responsibility and/or day to day care.**

##### **Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time.**

The Education Act 1996 section 7 defines the Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

*(7) The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

*(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*

The Education Act 1996 section 576 defines the meaning of "parent".

*(1) In this Act, unless the context of otherwise requires, "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person-*

*(a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or*

*(b) who has care of him,*

*except that in section 499(8) it only includes such a person if he is an individual.*

#### **Definition of a parent**

A parent means:

All natural parents, whether they are married or not;

Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and

Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

The local authority and Academy will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular student when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

#### **5. Local Authority Responsibility**

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at schools, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend can be prosecuted under Education Act 1996, section 444 1A (as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers in relation to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. Penalty notices must be issued in a manner which conforms to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all relevant Equal Opportunities Legislation. To this aim each Local Authority has a Code of Conduct in relation to issuing Penalty Notices.

Fortis Academy recognises Birmingham City Council's 'Fast track Intervention Process' and will implement prosecution where it is fair and equitable to do so.

## 6. Academy Interventions for Managing Persistent Absenteeism

A student is deemed as persistent absent (PA) if they miss 10% of their own individual sessions; meaning all students below 90% will be PA regardless of the time of year. Any pupil absent for 19 days or more within a year will be identified as PA. All students whose attendance has fallen to this level or are at risk of reaching this level will be closely monitored through the Academy's tracking procedure, and regular contact made with their parents/carers. Parents/carers will be given opportunities to work with the academy in improving their child's attendance.

There are a number of sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. In order to try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to you first to identify the reason for absence. Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) will be considered when:

- A student is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A student has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Birmingham City Council Code of Conduct.

Where intervention through the 'Fast track' process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The academy will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents/guardians realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

*\*Please note that the Academy will follow guidance from the local authority at all times with regards to support, intervention and legal processes and that these processes may differ during the academic year 2020-2021 due to COVID-19.*

## 7. Academy day and Punctuality

Students in Foundation Academy are expected to arrive at the academy by 8.40am, ready to attend Edge at 8.45am and students in Senior Academy are expected to arrive at the academy by 8.50am, ready to attend EDGE at 8.55am.

Our morning register is taken during our Edge session which starts at 8.45am for Foundation Academy students and 8.55am for Senior Academy students and ends at 9.15am for all Students. Students arriving any time after the close of registration may be coded as unauthorised late.

Afternoon Registers are taken at the start of afternoon sessions which occur after students' longest break in the day.

The Academy day ends at 3.30pm for Foundation Academy students and 3.40pm for Senior Academy students.

*\*Please note that the timings above may vary during the academic year 2020-2021 due to staggered start and finish times that the Academy have put in place to meet COVID-19 guidelines.*

## 8. Reporting absences/First day absence

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the Academy by **9.00am** on the first day of their child's absence. If by **9.00am** on the first day of a child's absence the Academy has not been notified, an Academy secretary will send a text message. If there is no response, the Academy will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If no reason has been provided by the parent/carer by the end of the second day, the Academy may send a letter of concern to the parent/carer and/or invite them into the Academy and/or may undertake a home visit. Parents/carers are expected to contact the Academy every day the student is absent.

## 9. Authorising Absences

There are two categories of absence:-

- (i) Authorised (approved)
- (ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

Only the Campus Principal, Headteacher of relevant Academy or Designated member of staff can approve absence. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

(i) Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from the Academy for a legitimate reason and the Academy has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if the child has been unwell and the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

(ii) Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from the Academy without the permission of the Academy. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from the Academy without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

## 10. Medical Evidence and Supporting Evidence

We ask that parents/carers making medical appointments for their child, book them early or late in the day, so students can be in school for the maximum amount of time possible for that day.

The Academy fully supports students' welfare and medical conditions and if your child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue, we can arrange for a meeting with parents/carers to discuss what additional support can be offered to help your child to access school however we cannot simply accept parental information without the appropriate medical evidence. Students with medical conditions should attend the academy as per normal unless the absence is supported by medical opinion.

- An appointment card or verification by the Doctor/Dentist/Hospital is required
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for any of these reasons, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment or register prior to the appointment.
- Medical certificates are required for absence greater than 5 days
- Parents/carers must obtain a 'student pass' for their child if leaving school early to attend a planned appointment. This will provide parents/carers with evidence that the Academy are aware of the absence in the event of being challenged.

There are of course, good reasons (especially illness), which make attendance at the Academy sometimes difficult. Nevertheless lessons missed cannot be repeated and "catching up" is never as good as the original learning experience.

The Academy recognises the need to support students during and after long term absence of any kind and will:

- i. Endeavour to provide work for students to be completed off-site where appropriate and medical evidence has been received.
- ii. Consider all strategies including liaising with other agencies to encourage the return of students to the Academy. This may include negotiated timetables and/or gradual reintegration.
- iii. Ensure that there is a positive atmosphere within the Academy in which students are welcomed back.
- iv. Liaise with the local authority to maintain extra support and guidance for our students.
- v. Encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in re-entry programmes.

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities in managing attendance and punctuality**

We expect that all students will:

- Attend the Academy regularly
- Attend the Academy punctually
- Attend the Academy appropriately prepared for the day.

We expect that all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Ensure regular attendance.
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at the Academy punctually prepared for the school day.
- Contact the Academy on the first day of the child's absence and keep in regular contact with the Academy.
- Contact the Academy promptly whenever a problem occurs that may keep the child away from the Academy.

We expect that our school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all students, twice daily, including recording students who are late.
- Monitor every student's attendance through Edge Tutors, on a weekly basis using an Attendance Tracker.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a student fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes which provide a reason for the absence.
- Contact those families whose child's attendance has become a concern and offer support.
- Encourage good attendance.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment; provide a sympathetic response to any student's concerns.
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of students who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the Academy's and the LEA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of absence to the relevant year group teams or attendance co-ordinator.
- Invite parents/carers to meet in the Academy to discuss attendance and/or punctuality with parents/carers.
- Involve outside agencies where and when appropriate (WAS, Early Help).
- Rewards students for consistently high attendance and for improved attendance

## **12. Monitoring attendance**

Student's attendance will be monitored weekly by their Edge Tutor using our Attendance Tracker and Attendance Diamond. During one Edge session every week (Tracker Tuesday) students will be informed of their current attendance figure and will know where they are on the attendance diamond. Students will have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with their Edge tutor. The Edge tutor will then relay these concerns back to year group teams and any necessary support will be put in place.

Students whose attendance becomes a concern will be reviewed by Academy staff and parents/carers will be notified by letter or over the phone. In certain cases we will write a letter to parents/carers and ask that

evidence is provided to justify absences. We may also arrange to meet with parents/carers to discuss attendance.

Failure to make an acceptable improvement or where there is an immediate concern further intervention's will be considered.

If difficulties relating to absenteeism cannot be resolved through intervention at Academy level, then we may refer the student to WAS for casework intervention or through the 'Fast track Process', inviting parents/carers to discuss their attendance issues. We will notify parents/carers if we feel this intervention is needed.

Edge tutors and students will refer to the Attendance Diamond in order to monitor and improve attendance for all students. This tool will be displayed in Edge rooms, across the academy and in student knowledge organisers/planners in order to support students in understanding how attendance impacts on learning and progress.

The Attendance Tracker will be used weekly with all students in order to monitor attendance. The tracker is colour coded with the diamond in order for students and staff to set targets based on improving attendance where appropriate (i.e. less than 100%).

### 13. Attendance Rewards

Fortis Academy actively promotes and rewards students who achieve good attendance and punctuality.

There are a variety of rewards for excellent and improved attendance. For example, a fortnightly year group raffle for all students with 100% attendance and a year group trophy which is handed to the form with the best attendance each week.

Additional rewards are awarded at the end of each term for improved, excellent and 100% attendance. This is celebrated at a year group assemblies at the end of each term.

### 14. Requests for Leave In Term Time

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents/carers do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Headteacher Foundation Academy/Headteacher Senior Academy must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Headteachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from the Academy if the leave is granted.
- The Academy can only consider applications for Leave in term time which are made by the resident parent/carer. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent/carer, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

- Applications for Leave in term time which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent/carer, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued in accordance Birmingham City Councils Code of Conduct. Each application for a Leave in term time will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

## **15. Deletion from Register**

Students will only be deleted from the register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended in the 2016 Pupil registration regulations.

Fortis Academy will follow Birmingham City Council’s Children Missing Education Protocol when a student’s whereabouts is unknown.

It is important that if families decide to send their child/children to a different school that they inform our Academy staff as soon as possible. A student will not be removed from our Academy roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the student will be leaving our Academy and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address, if it is known

The student’s Academy records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. Failing to notify Fortis Academy will result in a referral to Birmingham City Council’s Children Missing Education Service.

If a family decides to move abroad we also need specific information before we can take a child off our school roll. This information is as follows:

- Evidence of travel, for example a flight ticket
- The new home overseas address
- The name, contact and address of the new school

The student’s Academy records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. Failing to notify Fortis Academy will result in a referral to Birmingham City Council’s Children Missing Education Service.

## **16. Academy Attendance Focused Target**

Fortis Academy’s attendance target is **95%**.

## **17. Monitoring and Review**

Achievement against Fortis Academy’s attendance targets will be reported upon to the Academy Council. The Headteacher Foundation Academy/Headteacher Senior Academy together with the Strategic Lead will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedures and where necessary make recommendations to the Academy Council for improvement.

The Academy will keep accurate records on file for a minimum period of three years.

## **18. Relationship to other Policies**

The Attendance policy should be read in conjunction with:

- i. Guidance on admissions (section on website)
- ii. Equality Objectives Policy
- iii. The Safeguarding Policy
- iv. The Behaviour Policy

At Fortis Academy we welcome the support from parents/carers and families. We provide a safe and nurturing environment for your child to learn and make friends and parents/carers are welcomed in the Academy for a variety of events including celebration evenings. In order for our children to feel safe and secure it is important that when visiting the Academy, parents/carers and family members remain calm when speaking to staff and refrain from confrontational or aggressive behaviour as this can be unsettling. Appointments can be made with the Leadership team to discuss any concerns, any adults displaying behaviour which is deemed to be unacceptable will be asked to leave the Academy site.