



# Grace Academy

## Attendance and Children Missing in Education Policy

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## 1. Preamble

Section 7, Education act 1996 states “It is the responsibility of every parent of every child of compulsory school age (5-16 years) to make sure that s/he receives efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to have any special needs s/he may have met either by regular attendance or otherwise”. Consideration is also given to sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6)&458(4)&(5).

Amendments to the 2006 pupil registration regulations now make clear that Principals may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in *The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013*.

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered student at an academy fails to attend regularly, his or her parent is guilty of an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months’ imprisonment.

*Keeping Children Safe in Education to commence 03/09/18. Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education regarding further information on a child missing from education should be read.*

## 2. Introduction

The Academy aims to ensure all students receive a full time education which maximises opportunities for each individual to realise their potential. The Academy provides a welcoming and caring learning environment where each member of the community feels safe, secure and valued. We strenuously encourage excellent attendance for all and promote an environment where students want to learn and work.

Regular and punctual attendance at the Academy is important for all students. All staff will work with their students and their families to make sure all students attend and are punctual to registration.

**Where it states Educational Welfare Officer (EWO or EWS service) in this policy, this may also mean the Academy Attendance Officer.**

## 3. Why Regular Attendance is Important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. A student’s absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child’s regular attendance at Academy is the legal responsibility of parents (throughout this policy ‘parent’ includes anyone with parental responsibility for an Academy student) and permitting absence from the Academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## 4. Promoting Good Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility – parents, students and all members of Academy staff. Academy staff, in line with their responsibilities may therefore carry out unannounced home visits.

Academy start and finish times are set out on the Grace Academy website.

## 5. Aims

Grace Academy aims to:

- (a) Improve the overall attendance percentage of students attending the Academy.
  - (b) Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all stakeholders associated with the Academy.
  - (c) Develop and maintain an agreed framework that underpins effective practice and promotes consistency of role.
  - (d) Provide high quality support, intervention, guidance and advice to individual students, their parents and to staff.
  - (e) Use attendance generated data in a systematic and analytic fashion to identify trends
  - (f) Maintain effective and positive communication between the Academy and home.
  - (g) Use attendance data to reward students for excellent attendance and punctuality.
  - (h) Work in partnership with the Academy Educational Welfare Officer (where applicable) and the LA Education Welfare Service and other outside agencies.
  - (i) SEN and pastoral staff (including Head of Year and Assistant Head of Year) to provide support to individual students in reintegration into the Academy after a prolonged period of absence.
- Students should be at the Academy, on time, every day that the Academy is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence without a good reason is an offence by the parents.
  - All students may sometimes be reluctant to attend the Academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the parents and the child.
  - If a student is reluctant to attend, it is never acceptable to cover up the absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them for attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.
  - Every half-day absence from 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 each absence is always required in writing.

### 6. Children at Risk of Missing Education

- Going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding risks, including abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation; child criminal exploitation; mental health problems; substance abuse and other issues. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of them going missing in future.
- Where reasonably possible, the academy should hold more than one emergency contact number for each student. This goes beyond the legal minimum and is good practice to give the academy additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a student missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

The Academy must inform the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of the Academy by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;

- Have ceased to attend the Academy and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by their GP that the student is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend the Academy (this is not limited to but may include children missing in education at the Academy but may be receiving education in another environment on a long term basis);
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the Academy at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

The Academy will inform the Local Authority of any student who fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the Academy's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more or if the student is on the child protection register for 2 days or more. This is particularly important to help prevent the risk of abuse and neglect and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. Local Authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving education otherwise than at a school.

On receipt of written notification to home educate, the Academy will inform the students local authority that the student is to be deleted from the admissions register.

Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full time education but this does not have to be at a school.

## **7. Role of Stakeholders in Maintaining Excellent Attendance**

### **7.1 Tutors**

- Be a positive role model.
- Take the register during registration.
- Take the register audibly and accurately.
- Reward good and improved attendance.
- Monitor for patterns of absence.

### **7.2 Subject Teachers**

- Be a positive role model.
- Take the register EVERY lesson.
- Leave register open so you can amend if a student arrives late.
- Take action when students are late to your lesson.
- When taking the register do not amend any pre-entered codes.
- Inform the Head of Department if attendance is impacting on learning.

### **7.3 Heads of Year/Assistant Heads of Year**

- Give attendance and punctuality a very high profile.
- Implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
- Support and monitor learning mentors.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)/Attendance Officer over unauthorised absence.

- Attend weekly meetings with the EWO/Attendance Officer to identify issues and causes.
- Authorise when a student goes home from the Academy with illness.
- Be aware of the overall Academy attendance target and take proactive steps for your year group to meet or exceed this target.
- Keep records of students taking part in department detentions.
- Support subject teachers in taking actions for lateness to lessons.
- Set up a department system for monitoring internal truancy from lessons.
- Ensure parents are informed where attendance is affecting progress in lessons.

#### **7.4 Academy Leadership Team (ALT) Member with Responsibility for Attendance**

- Coordinate the Academy strategy.
- Ensure that data is analysed and patterns of non-attendance are identified.
- Manage interventions to rectify patterns of non-attendance.
- Oversee the strategy for promoting good attendance with the assistance of the Attendance Officer
- Create and maintain the relevant sections of the Academy Improvement Plan.
- Report regularly to the ALT and the Governing Body on the effectiveness of the Academy strategy for improving attendance.

#### **7.5 Parents**

- Ensure that your child attends every day.
- Ensure that your child leaves for the Academy on time.
- Provide an explanation for any absence.
- Keep the Academy informed of any changes in personal data.
- Support the Academy policy on attendance and punctuality and work with the Academy in respect of the support offered.
- Recognise that a fine may be issued and will remain as a criminal offence on their record.

#### **7.6 Students**

- Arrive at the Academy each day.
- Be on time for registration.
- Be punctual for every lesson.
- Know your timetable and use your planner.
- Be prepared to catch up on work missed through absence as it will impact on academic progress.
- Expect to be sanctioned for lateness, truancy and unauthorised absence.

#### **7.7 Attendance Officer**

- As set out in paragraphs 12 and 13.

## 8. Authorised Absences

**The Principal will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If leave is granted this will not exceed 5 days in any academic year.**

### 8.1 Application for Permission for Leave of Absence in Term Time

- All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional. Leave of Absence requests should be made in writing to the Principal within one month prior to the date of the proposed leave and should include the following:
  - Name of child;
  - Year group;
  - Address;
  - Leave of absence dates;
  - Full explanation of exceptional circumstance.
- The Academy will respond to the request within two weeks. If the Academy is aware of any language difficulties having been notified by the family then appropriate support may be provided.
- There is a requirement that parent/carers provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and may be required to meet with the Principal.
- Where students are absent for a period of 5 consecutive days or more medical evidence will need to be provided.
- If the Principal deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a letter confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.
- If the Principal deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised. A letter informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence been taken will be sent to each parent.
- If notified in writing of the decision not to authorise the leave of absence the absence is taken it will be marked as an unauthorised absence on the pupils register. If the trigger of 10 unauthorised absences (sessions i.e. 5 school days) is met then the absences should be referred immediately to the Education Welfare Officer for consideration and could result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice. This will also apply where students have been taken on holiday.
- Each request shall be judged by the Principal on a case by case basis. The Principal must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.
- It is for the Principal to determine if the request for leave of absence is reasonable up to a maximum of 5 days, in total, per academic year.
- All requests for leave of absence must be in advance, in writing, setting out the days requested along with the expected date of return. The reasons for the request of leave during term time must be clearly stated.
- Until permission in writing is given any leave taken will be classed as unauthorised leave.

- The Academy cannot give retrospective approval.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 as amended are adhered to. Where a pupil has been granted extended leave of absence and subsequently fails to return to school after expiry of the agreed date it will be treated as an unauthorised absence and where the failure is not due to sickness or any other unavoidable cause, his/her name may, following consultation with the Local Authority, be deleted from the admission register.

### 9. Unauthorised Absences

These are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable due to exceptional circumstances and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping students off unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the Academy day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive at the Academy after closure of the register will be marked with a ‘U’ code signalling unauthorised absence.
- Holidays in term time.
- Medical information not provided as requested.

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 student to the EWO (where applicable) and other relevant outside agencies.

Where a request for leave of absence has been made and the school have sent written notification to parents that the absence will be unauthorised a penalty notice will be issued where the trigger of 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence is met. The local authority or the Academy may prepare the necessary paperwork.

If sufficient medical evidence is not provided when it has been requested due to a period of 5 consecutive days or more absence, it will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

In all other cases of unauthorised absence accrued overtime a Warning letter will be issued prior to a penalty notice. The trigger for a Warning letter will be at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence.

A penalty notice may be issued, subsequent to a Warning letter, if there are a further five sessions or more unauthorised absences.

The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student’s attendance have failed, this officer can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to obtain an order i.e. parenting order, community order, school attendance order or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the student. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. (Note this may be amended in line with National Changes).

Instead of being prosecuted each parent can be given a penalty notice. The penalty is £60.00 per parent, payable within 14 days, rising to £120.00 if paid after 14 days but within 28 days. If parents do not pay the fine they may be prosecuted.



Alternatively, parents or students may wish to contact the local authority EWO themselves to ask for help or information. The Local Authority EWO is independent of the Academy and will give impartial advice. The EWO's telephone number is available from the Academy office or website.

If students are taken out of the Academy without their parents first seeking permission or students are taken out of the Academy after permission has been declined or for more days than have been authorised are taken. Parents can be issued with a penalty notice for periods of unauthorised holidays. Should the fine go unpaid and the matter has to be taken before the Magistrates Court this will be within 6 months of the fixed penalty notice.

### 10. Persistent Absence (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 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 co-operation 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 and you will be informed of this immediately.

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

All our PA students and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through; a mentor or family support worker, individual incentive programmes, and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the EWO.

### 11. Procedures

The Academy applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

- (a) Parents are obliged to phone in their child's absence on the first day of illness.
- (b) The Academy will contact parents if no contact has been made.
- (c) Nominated member of staff will provide a list of students for admin staff to make daily phone calls.
- (d) The Academy also uses the parent/school text messaging service.
- (e) Absence notes are collated and checked by the Academy Attendance Officer.
- (f) If there is an EWO they will meet regularly (at least once a term but often weekly) with the Attendance Panel to discuss attendance issues within the Academy (Years 7 – 11).
- (g) Students whose attendance is below 100% will be monitored.
- (h) Students with a percentage attendance of less than 90% (93% at Grace Academy Darlaston) will be interviewed by either the EWO and/or the Attendance Panel to ascertain the reason(s) for absence. Attendance targets are set at this meeting and are monitored until attendance rate returns above 95%. Parents can also be invited to this meeting.
- (i) All student that have an unexplained absence will be called.

## 12. Responsibilities of the Attendance Officer

Some Academies may have an administrator to assist in some aspects.

- (a) To prepare attendance data for the weekly EWO Attendance Panel/Head of Year meeting in advance.
- (b) To collate attendance figures, via SIMs or Go 4 Schools weekly and use these for comparative analysis.
- (c) To prepare letters for chasing up absence or medical notes from students.
- (d) To issue, in liaison with the EWO and the Head of Year or Assistant Head of Year, the first, and where appropriate second medical warning letters to targeted students or where appropriate a meeting letter.
- (e) To highlight in advance students who attend college/work experience, trips, visits etc.
- (f) To provide the EWO with attendance data on targeted groups (LAC/EAL etc.).
- (g) To provide data for Heads of Year for those students with 100% attendance.
- (h) To provide data for Heads of Year on attendance performance of each tutor group.
- (i) To prepare an attendance report for the Principal on attendance for each term.
- (j) To highlight for the Attendance Panel those students whose attendance is causing concern.
- (k) To prepare with the relevant Assistant Principal (AP) annual absence returns.
- (l) To help the AP prepare analysis of attendance data.
- (m) To review and evaluate procedures to improve the best practice Academy attendance target.
- (n) To notify the missing in education team if a child on the child protection plan is not in attendance for a maximum of 2 days, or any other child in 10 days, to notify the local authority and the designated safeguarding officer immediately (Grace Academy Solihull and Grace Academy Coventry).
- (o) To notify the missing in education team if a child on the child protection plan is not in attendance for 1 day, or any other child in 5 days, to notify the local authority and the designated safeguarding officer immediately (Grace Academy Darlaston).

## 13. Responsibilities of the Academy EWO (where applicable)

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 EWO. He/she 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, the EWO can 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 EWO themselves to ask for help or information.

## 14. Review

This policy will be reviewed tri-annually.

APPENDIX 1

