

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

**Approved by Governor committee:
Student & Curriculum**

**Date to be reviewed:
February 2020**

**Responsibility of:
Vice Principal (Inclusion)**

**Date ratified by Governing Board:
14th July 2016**

1. Introduction

Chelsea Academy is an inspirational community of learning and achievement with high expectations and high aspirations, underpinned by a culture of “no excuses”. We seek to ensure that all students receive a full-time education that maximises opportunities for them to flourish and develop the personal qualities they need for future success.

Students play a vital part in ensuring the success of the Academy. We aim for an environment that enables and encourages all members of the community to aspire to excellence. For students to gain the greatest academic and social benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and on time, every day the Academy is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Academy staff will work with students and their families to ensure that each student attends regularly and punctually.

To meet these objectives, Chelsea Academy has an efficient and effective system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support.

2. Aims of this policy

- To maintain a high percentage of student attendance and punctuality at Chelsea Academy.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
- To provide a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data to promote timely and effective intervention at all levels within the Academy.
- To maintain positive and consistent communication between home and the Academy.
- To maintain effective partnerships with the Early Help Team and other appropriate support services and agencies. This will include regular meetings between appropriate pastoral staff and Early Help Support Workers.
- To update and share the SOL Attendance Tracker with students and staff to encourage progress in attendance and ensure attendance concerns or patterns of absence are picked up in the early stage.
- To recognise and take into account the needs of individual students when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

3. Why regular attendance is so important

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

Ensuring regular attendance at Chelsea Academy is the legal responsibility of parents / carers in the first instance and condoning absence on the part of parents/carers from the Academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in legal action.

4. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility – parents / carers, students and all members of Academy staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Register students’ attendance accurately for coaching time and every lesson.
- Use the SOL Attendance Tracker to communicate students’ attendance on a weekly basis and to monitor progress and absence.
- Report to parents / carers on how their child is performing at the Academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.
- Reward outstanding or significantly improving attendance.

5. Understanding types of absence

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness,

medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Tri Borough Attendance Team (ACE) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised leave includes:

- Parents/carers keeping students at home unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the Academy day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Students who arrive at school too late to be registered as present for the session in question
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays (exceptional leave) in term time which have not been agreed with the Academy;
- Excessive illness without medical evidence (If student's attendance falls below 95%) medical evidence may be requested by the Attendance Officer in order for absence to be authorised;
- Students acting as Young Carers for their parents or family members.

Whilst any student may be absent from the Academy because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the Academy, the parents / carers and the student. If a student is reluctant to attend, it is never appropriate 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 exacerbates the situation.

Parents / carers can support their child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- Supporting children in completing their independent learning
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with their child's school
- Being positive about school (even if their own experience was less than positive)

6. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% (This figure has decreased from the previous 15% of absence) or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and full parental support and co-operation is required to tackle this.

Chelsea Academy monitors all absence thoroughly. Regular absence is communicated to parents and students using the escalation process outlined in the SOL Attendance Tracker. Communication with parents includes letters, telephone calls and meetings with students' Learning Coaches or Heads of Year. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents / carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully and appropriate supportive interventions are put in place where absence affects attainment.

If a student falls into the PA category and a number of their absences are unauthorised, they will be referred for additional support from an external agency. This might be support from the School Nurse and will usually involve a referral to the Early Help Team.

7. Absence Procedures

If a student is absent, parents / carers must:

- Contact the Academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence, explaining the reason and likely

length of absence and expected date of return.

- Send a note or email, or visit the Academy reception, on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence, even if an initial explanation has been given by telephone.
- Parents should aim to provide medical evidence in the form of a medical letter or note from their child's GP where absence has fallen below 95% or where attendance concerns have been raised by the Academy.

If a student is absent, Academy staff will:

- Telephone or text parents / carers on the first day of absence and any consecutive days of absence if we have not heard from them so that they know that their child has not arrived at the Academy. Chelsea Academy operates a telephone messaging system to notify parents of absence to contribute to promoting the safeguarding of children.
- Invite parents / carers to a meeting to discuss the situation (in line with escalation processes on the SOL Attendance Tracker) with the relevant member(s) of staff if the situation persists.
- Refer the matter to the School Nurse and/or Early Help Team following discussion with parents.

Telephone numbers:

It is essential that the Academy has up-to-date telephone numbers, postal addresses and email addresses for parents / carers, in order to ensure that contact can be made without delay whenever necessary. It is the responsibility of parents / carers to ensure that any changes are notified to the Academy.

8. The Early Help Team and the ACE Team

Parents are expected to contact the Academy at an early stage and to work with 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 Early Help Team. The Early Help Team will also try to resolve the situation by working with parents/carers at home and in the Academy but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 441 and 441a: *"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered student at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."*

Alternatively, parents or students may wish to contact the Early Help Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the Academy and will give impartial advice. Their contact details can be obtained from the Local Authority's website or from the Academy office.

9. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they can miss work and important information. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons and can cause embarrassment. Ongoing poor punctuality can encourage absenteeism.

10. How Chelsea Academy manages lateness

The formal Academy day starts at 8.35am and we expect students to have arrived in good time for an 8.40am start.

After the gate has closed at 8.35am, students arriving will be recorded as late. If a student is late it is an expectation that they will sign in at 8.20am (early) the following morning. This is to encourage students to break the cycle of lateness. If students do not sign in at 8.20am the following morning they will face a detention at the end of that day. Parents will be updated by email/letter and a daily text message if their son / daughter is late to the Academy. Persistent and / or excessive cases of poor punctuality will be subject to more severe sanctions.

At 9.30am morning registration will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives persistently late 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 that they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents / carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a student has a persistent late record, parents / carers will be required to meet with the relevant Academy staff in an attempt to resolve the problem. However, parents / carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to the Academy on time.

11. Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays (exceptional leave) in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents / carers to help us by not taking children away during term time. If a parent wishes to take their son/ daughter away from the Academy during term time they should put a request in writing to the Principal one month in advance. It is at the discretion of the Principal whether this leave will be granted as authorised or unauthorised and a response will be given in writing.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time absent in term time to go on holiday (exceptional leave).

The following are worthy of note:

- It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employment.
- Graduates earn, on average, twice as much money as people who leave school with no qualifications.
- Chelsea Academy has a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave. Individual cases will be addressed by the Principal, with reference to national recommendations.
- The Principal will respond directly to every family applying for Exceptional Leave in order to stress the importance of good attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
- Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Year 11.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when a student's attendance is less than 97%.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when the student already has unauthorised absences on his / her record.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the student's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.
- The Academy can refer a parent to the ACE Team and recommend a Fixed Penalty Notice for any unauthorised leave of absence.

12. Responsible person

The person responsible for attendance at Chelsea Academy is the Vice Principal (Inclusion)

13. Summary

The Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its Attendance Policy to parents / carers and to promote attendance. Academy attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the DfE. Equally, parents / carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All Academy staff are committed to working with parents / carers and students to ensure the highest possible level of attendance.