

## Attendance Policy for School & College

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| Responsible Person    | Assistant Principal of Education |
| Approved By           | Education Leadership Team        |
| Date of Last Approval | February 2022                    |
| Next Review Date      | February 2023                    |
| Policy Applicable to  | The Deaf Academy                 |

| Date     | Version | Person | Change / Action    |
|----------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| 07/02/22 | 1.0     | ELT    | Approval of policy |
|          |         |        |                    |

The Deaf Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all students. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. We do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all students. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. It is our policy to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. We will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our students.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

For students over 18 the Academy is obliged to record registration marks for funding authorities as well as to keep our students safe.

### Parents/Carers Responsibilities

- Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that students of compulsory school age attend at all required times unless there is a genuine reason preventing them from doing so. This extends to ensuring that students arrive at the Academy on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn.
- There should be a clear start to registration at 9.00am when all tutors take their registers; students will be encouraged to value the registration session each morning with their tutor and group; and staff will make students feel valued.

- Teachers will take a class register for every lesson they teach to safeguard all children and alert the school immediately to any missing children. If a student cannot be found staff will refer to the missing persons policy.
- Parents/carers are responsible for informing the Academy if a student is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, this should be done as soon as possible, by 9:00am, preferably on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, letter, email or in person. Parents should keep the Academy informed on any subsequent days, thereafter. If it is apparent from the outset of absence that it may be for an extended period of time (e.g. hospital admission) parents/carers are requested to update the Academy at reasonable intervals.
- If not already notified, on a student's return to the Academy, parents/carers must inform the school as to the reason for absence and the dates concerned. This is to enable the registers to be completed accurately.
- Parents should inform the school in advance of any medical or other appointments.
- Parents should inform Local Authority Transport Dept. if any alterations to normal travel arrangements need to be made.
- Parents/carers are required to complete an 'Absence Request Form' and obtain authorisation before taking any planned absence during term time. Authorisation of holidays will not be automatic with any request having to meet the criteria, as explained in the section of the policy entitled 'the legal position regarding holiday during term time'.

The following reasons can be considered for an authorised absence

- Unavoidable emergency medical/dental appointments (Non-essential appointments will be unauthorised)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations such as a musical instrument
- When traveller children go on the road with their parents
- Parents may not authorise their child's absence, only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. (Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised).
- Parents must ensure that all contact details are up to date.

### **The Academy's Responsibilities**

- The Academy will record and monitor attendance in accordance with statutory requirements and with the principle that regular uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.
- The Academy will encourage maximum or full attendance and will investigate absence.
- Registers will be marked promptly twice daily (at 9 am and at 1.30 pm) in accordance with Academy procedures, remembering that such registers are legal documents which will be used in the event of any attendance related matters going to court.
- If the parent/carer of an absent student fails to contact the Academy with the reason for the absence the Academy will contact home in order to fulfil our safeguarding obligations for our students. First day calling will be completed by office staff by 10.00am.

- If a student arrives late, after registers have closed at 9.30, they will be marked as U (Late after registration has closed). This will officially count as an unauthorised absence.
- The Academy will record and monitor the punctuality of all students and, where necessary, inform parents of persistent lateness and apply appropriate consequences. Where issues around lateness are associated with transport the Academy will discuss possible solutions with parents to share with the relevant school transport team.
- The Academy will use appropriate school systems whenever there is concern about attendance to assist parents who have primary responsibility for their child's attendance.
- The Academy will report attendance by exception to local authorities as required by the NASS contract. (National Association of Independent Schools & Non-Maintained Special Schools)
- If the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the Academy will endeavour to ensure the student's wellbeing by calling other named contacts. If no explanation can be provided for the student's absence, the Academy will contact the police who will be asked to ascertain the safety of the family. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) may also be contacted.
- Once a student has returned, if no reason has been given after 4 days, despite reminders, parents/carers will be contacted by the student's tutor requesting an explanation. Failure to respond to this will result in the student absence being marked as unauthorised with this information being forward to an Education Welfare Officer.
- The Academy will promote the importance of attendance through assemblies, newsletters and celebrating students who achieve excellent attendance.

### **Excessive Authorised Absence**

The Academy accepts that some students will be absent occasionally because of ill health, and that some are affected by chronic illness which may necessitate frequent, or prolonged absence. However, apart from such cases, the Academy will usually authorise a maximum of 20 sessions of absence for ill health in any academic year. If a student is absent for more than 20 sessions, parents/carers will be asked to provide written verification of illness. (20 sessions = 10 Academy days). Verification can include a letter from a GP or other health professional, an appointment card to show that a student has been taken to an appointment, or sight of dated, prescribed medication. In the absence of evidence, the student will be referred to the EWO.

### **Role of the Education Welfare Officer**

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) works closely with the Academy and is proactive in analysing/monitoring attendance data. Students with attendance problems are referred to the EWO for action. The EWO will employ a number of strategies, including contacting parents/carers, speaking to the students concerned and, where necessary, involving other external agencies.

A referral is made when the Academy has identified and investigated attendance problems to a reasonable level. This may include attempts to telephone parents/carers and/or send letters home and/or the setting up of meetings at the Academy. Teachers are not expected

or encouraged to make home visits. The EWO works closely with senior staff to discuss attendance issues.

### **The legal position regarding holiday during term time**

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of the Academy during term time. A request for absence in term time can only be made by an adult who has legal parental responsibility and by the parent with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance.

When deciding whether to allow term time leave, for any reason, the Academy will consider:

- Whether the reason/s for the request is exceptional
- Previous absence record

Exceptional circumstances would only be considered where a pupil's attendance was equal to, or above 95% for the previous rolling 12 months at the time of the absence request, excepting where an absence from the academy is recommended by a health professional as part of the parent, or child's rehabilitation.

No exceptional circumstances will be authorised during the following times:

1. The first half term of the academic year
2. Exam periods.

All absence requests must be applied for using the Academy absence request form.

If the Academy refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may lead to the County Council issuing a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence. Penalty Notices require the parent of a child of compulsory school age to pay a fine. These penalty notices, can be issued for unauthorised holidays in term time and unauthorised absence from school when circumstances appear to have been avoidable. If a parent fails to pay the Penalty Notice they will be prosecuted for non-school attendance under S444 (1) Education Act and will receive a criminal record.

**THE SCHOOL IS DUTY BOUND TO FOLLOW UP ATTENDANCE ISSUES WITH THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE**

### **Coronavirus (COVID 19)**

Although school attendance is mandatory, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

The school will follow the current guidance from Public Health England South West HPT in relation to attendance coding, which is communicated with parents / carers regularly, including when updates take place. This includes the attendance coding which will be applied when students are symptomatic or are in a household where there has been a positive case.

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

- Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC should be recorded as code X.