

Hope Academy

A joint Catholic & Church of England Academy

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mission Statement:

“A community of learners of all ages from the local area committed to mutual service where all can flourish, be their best and work for the common good to the glory of God and his creation.”

APPROVED	30 th January 2014		
REVIEW DATE			
SIGNED PRINCIPAL		PRINT NAME	John Gannon
SIGNED CHAIR OF GOVERNORS		PRINT NAME	Bart McGettrick

ATTENDANCE

It is Academy Policy to monitor and maintain attendance to a high level. A computerised registration system assists us in doing this. Every student must be encouraged to attend every lesson of each Academy day. The Academy encourages a climate where high attendance is the 'norm'. Students must be made aware of the vital connection between attendance and achievement. All staff and particularly Tutors and Student Support Managers/Student Achievement Leaders, have a crucial role to play in this process.

It is Academy Policy to encourage parents to telephone Student Services on the first day of the student's absence. The reason and the anticipated length of absence should be given. However, only the Academy may authorise the absence. Student Services will contact parents where an absence is unauthorised to establish the reason and to eliminate the possibility of truancy. A telephone call can be regarded as a substitute for a note, but Student Services staff must be clearly satisfied that the caller is authentic. Student Services and Group Tutors will enter information regarding students' absence in the Information Log located in the register folder. Whenever possible the reason for a student's absence will be recorded on the first day. However, where this has not been possible, Group Tutors will follow this up and obtaining notes authorising these absences.

Similarly, if a student has been absent or subsequently returned but no explanation was received authorising that absence, a letter will be sent asking for a reason to cover the date(s) concerned.

Our Academy is at the heart of our community. Regular attendance helps students to achieve their potential. Irregular attendance causes children to fall behind and be at a disadvantage. It can place children at risk and, in some cases; it can result in students being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Where children of compulsory school age (5-16) are registered at school, the law says that they should attend regularly (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996). That is unless a child is engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or is absent with the school's authority.

Hope Academy acts in partnership with the Local Authority (LA), families and other agencies to enforce regular school attendance. The LA's responsibility is usually exercised through the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

Aims:

Hope Academy seeks to raise attendance to 95% over the academic year, September 2012 to July 2013. This will be by:-

- Encouraging excellent student attendance through recognising high and improved attendance. (Weekly attendance statistics are compiled and displayed within the School areas highlighting the top School/House and Tutor Groups of the preceding week). School attendance figures and other helpful information can also be found on Hope Academy website under 'Academy Information' then 'Attendance'
- Significant improvements and high levels of attendance are reinforced regularly in Assemblies, but in particular Celebration Assemblies
- Rewards specifically linked to high levels of attendance, for example, school cinema tickets, entries into prize draws and school reward trips are offered on a termly basis
- Working closely in partnership with students, parents and external agencies to promote good attendance.
- Encouraging all students to be punctual to school by recognising good and improved punctuality rates – please see punctuality section of the policy for further information

Registers

- The register is a legal requirement and should be taken at 8.40am and between 1.30-2.25pm during period 5.

- Students who are absent should be marked with no explanation received (N).
- Students arriving after 8.50am for registration should be recorded late (L) by the Form Tutor. Lateness after 9.00am will be recorded by the team of staff at reception. Students who arrive after 9.10am will be given an unauthorised late mark (U)
- Students should only be marked present (/) if they are actually in the presence of the teacher.
- Class registers must be taken every lesson.
- Students who arrive late for lessons should be marked late (L)
- If a student is absent from school, parents should telephone the school office to log the absence, and provide a note on the student's return to school in their planner or otherwise.
- Where a student of compulsory school age is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was subsequently authorised by the school or unauthorised.
- Any concerns about attendance and punctuality should be referred to the Student Support Manager

Medical/Dental Appointments

- Where possible, appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours. If students need to attend medical/dental appointments during school hours they must bring a signed and dated letter, note in the planner or an appointment card to their Form Tutor stating the time of departure. The Form Tutor should sign and date this to give permission for the student to leave school.
- The student must take the signed note/card to the School Office *before* leaving school and on their return to school. They will be issued with an authorised signing out slip.

Leave of absence applications

- Holidays in term time are NOT an entitlement and are not supported by the Academy (unless it is deemed there are exceptional circumstances). In this case a formal application must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the proposed date along with the evidence required to satisfy the 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents will be notified in writing of the decision. If the Principal decides to authorise the application then the number of days will be listed.
- Depending on the circumstances, the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice in respect of non-attendance

Using Codes

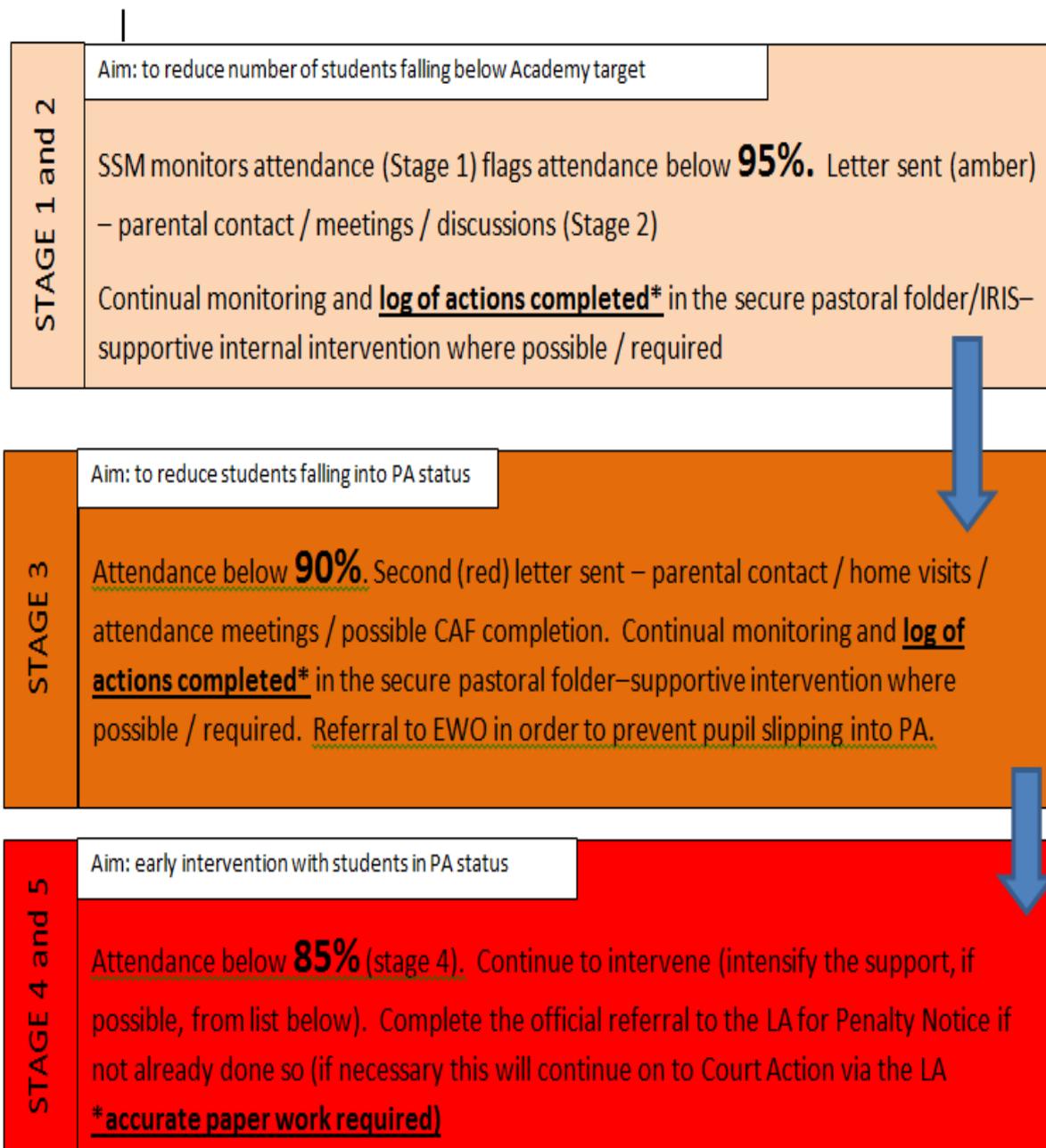
- Attendance codes:
 - / Present
 - L Late before the register has closed
 - U Late after registration closed after 9.10am (counted as an absence)
 - B Receiving education other than at school
 - C Authorised Absence (to be defined)
 - E Excluded for a fixed period
 - G Annual family holiday (not approved)
 - H Annual family holiday (approved)
 - I Illness
 - J Attending interview
 - M Medical /Dental
 - N No explanation received

O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity (representing regional/nation sport)
R	Day of religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
V	Educational visit
W	Work experience
X	Only staff should attend

Strategies to promote and maintain high attendance rates and good punctuality:

- Accurate maintenance of registers to allow support and pastoral staff to check and follow up any absence immediately.
- Careful monitoring of attendance as follows:
 - Parents to be contacted on first day of absence via truancy call
 - Form Tutors and Student Support Managers to access a student's attendance history
 - Attendance discussed at meetings– case studies of attendance cohort(s) to be created by pastoral teams where appropriate, including weekly reports to identify vulnerable students
 - Recent figures are on display on notice boards, published in the newsletter and on the website. Also the advisory booklet regarding attendance support is attached to the VLE in the allocated 'Attendance' section.
 - Honours lists produced showing 100% attendance and most improved attendance at the end of every term. This will also be celebrated with praise postcards and badges for 100% attendance and rewards, such as vouchers on a termly basis
 - Daytime telephone calls are made when a concern has been raised regarding the welfare/attendance patterns of students
- Parents receive information about attendance and punctuality with annual reports/monitoring. They are reminded regularly to inform school on the first day of absence. This is done through Parents Evenings, Attendance information in the termly Bulletins/Newsletter, through the website, the Prospectus, the Home/School Contract and by telephone from staff.
- Letters are posted home on occasions to address unauthorised absences and poor punctuality.
- Monitoring attendance during registration is done via Form Tutors. Any student missing from school without any form of contact from home will be flagged as per Hope Academy Safeguarding agenda, particularly from the third day onwards.
- Students are encouraged to take attendance and punctuality on as targets during Monitoring reviews.
- Close liaison with our feeder primary schools to put in place early intervention strategies to improve attendance. A cohort of vulnerable students will be identified from the information received by Y6/7 Transition team for early intervention and support.
- The involvement of external agencies and relevant school staff to encourage improved attendance and punctuality will be initiated as soon as it is felt necessary.
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly raised as issues in assemblies, PSHE/Citizenship and by Form Tutors and as part of the year 11 information evening with parents/carers.

Stages of Intervention



Interventions we as a school must adopt before prosecution is considered:

- Letters
- Home visits
- School Attendance Meetings – action points recorded and logged
- School Attendance Action Plans (Parenting Contracts – not obligatory for parents but advisable to offer)
- Offer of CAF completion (if a scale of concerns then HO/HOS to complete BUT if it is considered to be an attendance issue only then SBE to complete)
- Referral to EIT or other supportive agency
- Family Action Meetings

The Role of the Education Welfare Service:

The principal role of the EWS is to work with the school, parents and students in order to improve school attendance. The EWS has statutory powers to enforce attendance. The main areas dealt with by the Service in relation to giving advice and/or accepting referrals relate to:

- Poor attendance and punctuality,
- Breakdown of communication with families,
- Welfare concerns,
- Liaison with other agencies.

EWS will conduct half termly attendance audits to establish a caseload and will work with the Academy to establish new caseloads and re-evaluate the working caseload.

Non-attendance at the Academy for any reason is an important issue that must be treated promptly and seriously. Every case is different and there is no standard path that can be followed in applying intervention strategies. In some cases, prosecution may be used as the last resort when other intervention strategies have failed to bring about an improvement in attendance. In other cases prosecution may be the only appropriate response where acting early will prevent problems from worsening. In all cases of non-attendance it is essential that early action is taken.

RESOLVING ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

- While the parent is primarily responsible for ensuring their school-registered child attend regularly, where school attendance problems occur, the key to successfully resolving these problems is engaging the child through effective case management and collaborative working between the student, parent, Academy and local authority.
- The issues behind the non-attendance may be complex and the type of intervention required will depend on each individual case and an external agency assessment may be appropriate. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) provides an appropriate framework for identifying the issues. This should be the first assessment used unless there are concerns that suggest an urgent need for a specialist assessment. For more information go to: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/>

THE OFFENCE OF FAILING TO ENSURE REGULAR ATTENDANCE

There are two offences relating to parental responsibility for ensuring regular attendance at the Academy:

- if a registered student is absent without authorisation from the Academy or alternative provision then the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996;
- if the parent knows that the child is failing to attend regularly at the Academy and fails to cause him/her to do so, he/she is guilty of an offence under section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

No offence is committed if the parent proves any of the following statutory grounds:

- The student was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- The student's absence was authorised by the Academy or, in the case of alternative provision, by a person authorised to grant leave by the Academy;
- The absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.
- The local authority are under a duty to provide transport to the school and have failed to do so, or in certain circumstances, that the Academy is not within walking distance of the student's home and the local authority has made no suitable arrangements for the student's transport to and from the Academy;

- If the student has been excluded under section 52 of the Education Act 2002 (as they do not have to attend the Academy they are excluded from) providing that the student attends alternative provision as directed;
- If the student is receiving education otherwise than by regular attendance at the Academy (for example, by home education); or
- If the student has no fixed abode and the parent can show that their trade or business requires them to travel, and the student has attended the Academy regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits, and the student has attended the Academy for at least 200 sessions during the preceding twelve months from the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

PARENTING CONTRACTS

Parenting contracts were introduced by section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. Parenting contracts can be used in case of irregular attendance at the Academy. Parenting contracts are useful tools in identifying and focusing the problems behind non-attendance.

A parenting contract, in this case, is a voluntary agreement between a parent and the Academy and should contain:

- A statement by the parent that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are specified in the contract; and
- A statement by the local authority or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parent for the purpose of complying with the contract.
- Entry into a parenting contract is voluntary. The parent cannot be compelled to enter into a parenting contract and there is no obligation on the local authority or governing body to offer one.

It should be noted that a parenting contract can be used as evidence in prosecutions under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Detailed guidance on parenting contracts is in *Guidance on Education-related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices* available from DCSF publications on 0845 6022260 (quoting ref: 00530-207BKT-EN) and to download at www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance.

PENALTY NOTICES

What is a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice is an early intervention tool used by the Academy to address low level attendance issues.

Hope Academy adhere to the Local Authority Code of Conduct and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 with amendments in 2012 and 2013, when considering using Penalty Notices and The Penalty Notice England.

When will a Penalty Notice be Issued?

Where a pupil has recorded:-

- 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 school week period.

A parent/carer will be issued with a formal written warning of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice.

On receipt of this warning a parent will have 15 days to improve the student's attendance. In that time the student must have no unauthorised absences from the Academy. If the student's attendance improves and there are no further unauthorised absences, the parent will not receive a penalty notice but may be issued with another 15 day monitoring period.

Where a pupil has recorded:-

- 20 sessions of unauthorised holiday.
- 10 sessions of arriving late after the register has closed (after 9.10am).

A parent/carer will be issued with a formal written warning of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice. There will be no monitoring period in either of these cases.

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued. Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. The penalty must be paid in full. The penalty is £60 per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days of issue, the Local Authority may begin legal proceedings in the local Magistrates' Court for the original offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This may lead to a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record.

Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges parents' liability for the period to which the Notice relates. However, it may be the case that a prosecution is considered if the student has further periods of unauthorised absence from the Academy.

PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is important to Hope Academy.

- Pupils are expected to be in their form rooms at 8.40am.
- Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'L' (late)
- The registers close at 9.10am
- Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'U' (although this is a present mark it is recorded as an authorised absence).

Sanctions are used to address lateness by the Pastoral Team and may include:-

- Detentions after school
- Parental meetings / Parent contracts
- Penalty Notices

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular reviews will take place in Pastoral and Attendance meetings. There will be report to the Governors of the Academy as requested and strategies to maintain/improve attendance and punctuality will be regularly discussed.

Acknowledgments

LEA guidelines

OFSTED - Improving Attendance and Behaviour in Secondary School - Feb. 2001

Education Act 1996

H.C.C.S.

The Persistent Absence Agenda (DCFS)