



Attendance Policy

Abstract:

This policy aims for students to gain the greatest benefit from their education. It is, therefore, vital that they attend regularly and children should be at Academy, on time, every day the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents make sure that children attend regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

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This document acknowledges that both the Local Authority and Academy must apply their powers fairly and consistently.

A student's absence will have a serious impact on their attainment. They need to know that every absence is noticed and appropriate action is always taken. Absence can also be the first sign of a safeguarding issue.

This policy and procedure will enable the Academy to:

Boost attainment and achievement levels by increasing and maintaining high levels of attendance.

Report regularly on attendance to parents.

Work effectively to improve attendance with our various partners and parents/carers/students.

Student attainment and achievement depend on regular attendance. Any absence leads to missed learning opportunities and other experiences, and may cause difficulties with social relationships. It may also lead to a threat to the welfare of our students or to opportunities for anti-social behaviour. The attendance of a student at the academy is central to meeting the Every Child Matters agenda. Only when a student is in the academy can a true responsibility be taken for safeguarding all the interests of the student.

Attendance is seen as a 'whole Academy issue'.

Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the Academy, the parent/carer, the student, partners in the Local Authority and the Police. Parents/carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority, through its Education Welfare Service, to ensure that this happens.

Aims, understanding and principles of good attendance

- Understanding that non-Academy attendance is a safeguarding issue.
- To support the Academy and to maximise the achievement of all students.
- There is a clear link between good attendance and educational achievement.
- Regular and punctual attendance is vital if students are to benefit fully from academic, personal and social opportunities, which are offered to them within the Academy.
- Parents/carers play an important role in supporting the Academy and encouraging students to reach good attendance levels.
- A broad and balanced education is dependent on regular attendance at this Academy.
- Plympton Academy will take appropriate action to promote good attendance.

What the Academy expects of its students:

- To attend regularly.
- To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day and ensure they arrive promptly to each individual lesson.
- To hand any letters regarding absence from parents to the Tutor.

What the Academy expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their parental responsibility by ensuring their children attend the Academy regularly and on time. Parents/carers should be aware it is their responsibility in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full time education suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
- To ensure that they contact the Academy on the first day their child is unable to attend (within the first half hour of the start of the Academy day).
- To ensure their child arrives on time and is well prepared for the Academy day with equipment, completed homework etc.
- To avoid medical appointments during the Academy day unless absolutely necessary and to collect from and return students to the Academy whenever an appointment is unavoidable during the Academy day.

- To contact the Academy whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from the Academy.
- To inform the Tutor and seek authorisation from the appropriate person within the Academy for any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the Academy day.
- To ensure the continuity of their child's education by taking holidays during the Academy holiday period.
- Work in partnership with the Academy to take an active interest in their child's Academy career, to reinforce the Academy policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parent consultation evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work in partnership with the Academy and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.

What parents/carers and students can expect of Plympton Academy

- To maximise attendance rates as one of their key tasks, with clear procedures to identify and follow up absence and provide a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- Inform and involve Governors.
- To nominate a member of the senior management team to be the Attendance Lead for the Academy.
- Identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism and punctuality.
- Support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance.
- To respond promptly to any issue which may lead to none, or irregular Academy attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent/carer. This will be reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed, e.g. the Academy should recognise that some parents/carers have difficulty understanding written communications. (Plympton Academy will also recognise the reluctance of some parents/carers to come into the Academy).
- Be alert to critical times – e.g. return to the Academy after a period of long term sickness, a return after a traumatic event (either at home or the Academy) or during the period leading to a phased transfer.
- Produce whole Academy Attendance related Policies and Procedures which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents/carers.
- To provide a broad and balanced education which is motivational and relevant to all students, and is dependent on regular attendance at the Academy.
- The encouragement and promotion of good attendance.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and basic analysis of attendance data will be undertaken regularly.
- First day contact with parents when a student fails to attend the Academy without providing a valid reason.
- Prompt action on any problems identified.
- Close liaison with the Education Welfare Service and other services and agencies to assist and support parents/carers and students where needed.
- Notification to parents/carers of their child's attendance record through an annual report home and regular updates throughout the academic year.

- All staff will maintain high expectations in relation to attendance, all students will be made aware that their presence is compulsory and that their absence is noted.
- Systems of reward for attendance as well as achievement and sympathetic reintegration strategies for long-term absentees.
- Provide effective primary/secondary liaison.
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service where Academy intervention has failed to secure an improvement in attendance. Plympton Academy will always refer to the Education Welfare Service where a child is a Persistent Absentee student and there are no acknowledged reasons for absence by the Academy. Discussions with Education Welfare Service may start at 90 per cent, 10 unauthorised sessions or 5 days absence with no contact.

The role of the Academy's Governing Body

The Governing Body will set an attendance target for the Academy on an annual basis. It should be equal to or exceed the previous year's target. The Governing Body may appoint a governor with specific responsibilities for attendance. Attendance will be a regular item at Governor's meetings.

What the Academy, parents/carers and students can expect of the Education Welfare Service

- The Education Welfare Service has a key function in working closely with Academy families, teams within the LA and other services and agencies, both statutory and voluntary. The Education Welfare Service aims to promote excellent levels of attendance and punctuality at the Academy or otherwise, thereby contributing to raising student attainment.
- To work within a legal framework, through the DfE and discharge its duties with regard to ensuring that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving a suitable education by regular Academy attendance. In doing so it enables the Academy and parents/carers to meet their respective responsibilities.
- To support the Academy to fulfil its legal responsibilities with regard to student attendance.
- To provide a sample Attendance Policy to the Academy.
- To support and challenge the Academy in respect of data analysis, registering of students and marking of registers including authorising absence, persistent absence, early intervention and monitoring.
- To undertake register inspections on a termly basis as a minimum. The admission register and the attendance register must be available for inspection during Academy hours by:
 - Any of Her Majesty's Inspectors appointed under Section 1(2) and 5(2) the Education Act 2005(b);
 - Any Inspector registered under Section 2(1) Schedule 1 of that Act; and
 - In the case of Plympton Academy by any officer of the Local Authority authorised for that purpose (Education Welfare Officer).
- Promote partnership working between the Local Authority, the Academy, parents/carers and other services and agencies by offering guidance, support and assistance in this area.
- Assist the Academy in creating a framework which promotes consistent practices and procedures.

- The Local Authority will work to overcome any language/interpretation/understanding barriers and work with the Academy and other agencies/services/individuals to assist in overcoming any barriers that may be presented by the student or their family in order to ensure the student receives the education to which they are entitled.
- Provide training/information to staff/students/Governors on attendance issues as and when required.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a student is required to attend regularly at the Academy where they are a registered student. The Local Authority will use the 1996 Education Act and the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (penalty notices) in order to fulfil its duties in ensuring regular Academy attendance. Section 23 of the Anti-social behaviour Act gives powers to the Local authority to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of, but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's Academy attendance. These powers came into force on 27 February 2004.

The Academy is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the Academy is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised. A parent/carer may be required to provide evidence to support absences due to illness or other reason.

Authorised/unauthorised absence

It is vital that all staff within the Academy adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. Absences should be recorded in accordance with the Attendance Codes (**Held in Attendance File in Office**) issued by the DfE.

Examples of when absence may be **authorised**:

- The student was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belongs.
- The student is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions stated in the Education Act 1966 Section 444(6) are met.
- A holiday in term time where special/exceptional circumstances are given at the time of application (evidence may be required) and these are accepted.
- The student is excluded from the Academy and appropriate information and paperwork have been forwarded to the parent.

Note: The absence of students taking part in appropriately supervised educational activities outside the Academy is recorded as 'approved educational activities' as appropriate. This is equivalent to 'present' for performance table purposes.

The Academy will not record students who are off-site as present unless confirmation has been received of their attendance.

The following activities show when an approved education activity category can be used:

- Field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas.
- Participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities.
- Interviews with prospective employers or for a place at a further or higher education establishment (Year 11 only); or for a place in another school/academy.
- Link courses, whereby students attend college for part of the time.

- Students receiving part of their tuition off site at another location while remaining under overall supervision of the home school (i.e. a flexible arrangement short of formal dual registration). This can include tuition of sick children being taught at home but remaining on roll. Any student who does not attend a provision off-site and is not attending the Academy has to be marked as absent in the Academy register.

Examples of when absence should be unauthorised

- No explanation is forthcoming within an acceptable time limit (i.e. 2 weeks).
- The Academy is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The parent has been advised that absences will not be authorised without appropriate medical confirmation.
- The student stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings.
- The student is shopping during Academy hours.
- The student is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday).
- The student is absent from the Academy for the purpose of an unauthorised holiday.
- The student is absent from the Academy due to not returning to the Academy from an authorised holiday at the given date.

Any absence taken without the permission of the Principal will be recorded as unauthorised absence in the Academy register, which is a **legal document**.

It is for the Principal and **not** the parent to make decision as to whether the absence should be authorised.

It is the parent's responsibility to provide all evidence of absence and bear any costs that this may incur.

Holidays in Term Time – What the law says

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten Academy days. The amendments make clear that Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principals should determine the number of Academy days a child can be away from the Academy if the leave is granted.

Coding

The Academy is required to submit data reflecting student level absence codes.

For the purposes of holidays, register regulations state they should be coded as follows:

F – Agreed Extended Family Holiday.

G – Unauthorised Holiday.

H – Holiday.

Further guidance regarding holiday coding, can be obtained from the DfE website.

Accurate coding enables the Academy to evidence and evaluate absence trends for term time holidays and target interventions, particularly with regard to students who become Persistently Absent following a family holiday early in the academic year.

What this Academy will do

When deciding whether to authorise a term time holiday, the Academy will need to consider if there are **special, individual or exceptional** circumstances for the request. There are some obvious considerations:

- Close to or during examinations.
- When valuable group work with other students is taking place that cannot be repeated.
- If a child needs help in certain subjects to access all the education support that is offered.
- During the induction period when a child transfers from one school to another and needs to familiarise themselves with the new school/academy environment.
- During the first year in a new Academy when students may experience problems settling in.
- Previous similar requests.
- Overall attendance pattern.

Holidays during term time should be seen as an exception to the norm. So, what are 'exceptional circumstances'?

It will be the decision of the Principal as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. The Principal will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term-time.

An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or there may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the Principal might consider that an immediate holiday might enable the child concerned to better deal with the situation.

The Principal will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Principal will agree to authorise any further absence.

Other factors will include the likely impact on the child's education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning; **there is a strong link between the amount of absence at the academy and the qualifications that its students achieve**; for example, whether the holiday falls during a year in which the child is due to take a public examination.

Procedures for following up absence

Absences should be explained by parents to the Academy on the first day of absence prior to 9.30am. Notes, letters and telephone messages will be retained by the Academy with dates and times if appropriate to ensure evidence is available for recording purposes and any legal intervention taken by the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service. All verbal conversations should be recorded with date, time and names of staff and parents involved for the same reason.

To ensure the safety of children, where parents have not contacted the Academy prior to 9.30am, the Academy will operate its first day contact procedures and text parents to ascertain the reason for absence. Where there are concerns as to the safety or welfare of a child, the Academy will endeavour to contact parents. This may be done in conjunction with Education Welfare Service, Children's Social Care, Health or the Police where appropriate. If contact cannot be obtained children are marked absent and placed on an Absence Sheet for tutors to follow up.

Failure to respond to absence telephone calls, letters or home visits will result in the child being marked as unauthorised and/or absent and an immediate referral to the Education Welfare Service for investigation.

Where possible, parents should confirm in writing the reason for absence from the Academy.

If a student is persistently absent or late after register has closed and the Academy's efforts to effect an improvement have proved unsuccessful, a referral will be placed with the Education Welfare Service for investigation and legal intervention if necessary. This may include a full prosecution, penalty notice or Education Supervision Order.

Prior to referral to Education Welfare Service, the Academy will have contacted parents in writing of their concerns and attempted at least one appointment in the Academy with the parents to discuss

these concerns. Parents will be advised that the Academy will no longer authorise absences without appropriate evidence, until there is an acceptable improvement in attendance and that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. Registration certificates will show unauthorised absences when referred to Education Welfare Service – ‘O’.

Children missing from education or who may otherwise be at risk

Plympton Academy will follow the procedures set out in the Children Missing from Education Policy and Procedures as agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board. It is important that parents/carers inform the Academy if they move house/area etc, giving full details of any new address and the proposed Academy. The Education Welfare Service will follow up all students who are believed to have left the area. The Academy and the Education Welfare Service will make ‘reasonable’ enquiries to locate the student. No student should be deleted from the Academy roll until the Education Welfare Service has agreed this.

Truancy sweeps

The Education Welfare Service and the police undertake truancy sweeps a number of times throughout the year and often in conjunction with other services and agencies. Any students found during the Academy day will normally be returned to the Academy and parents will be notified. Evidence from truancy sweeps may be used in prosecutions.

Strategies for promoting attendance

- The Academy will offer an environment in which students feel valued and welcome. The Academy’s ethos demonstrates that students feel that their presence in the Academy is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will always be taken. Early intervention is often the key to preventing more frequent absences.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to students. Every effort is made to ensure that learning tasks match student’s needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Good attendance will be praised appropriately.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the Academy brochure, parents’ evening, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Students who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be reintegrated back into the Academy upon their return.
- Students who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Attendance Lead will have regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those students who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Academy will regularly analyse data so that early identification can be made of student’s absence and especially those who are persistent absentees (or in danger of becoming a persistent absentee – PA). A student is considered to be a PA student if their attendance falls below 90%.
- Good attendance will be promoted with children through attendance awards made termly and annually to students with 100% attendance in assembly and class and those with the greatest improvement in attendance.
- The Academy will consider target setting for individual groups, students etc.

Attendance Statistics

Plympton Academy will regularly analyse attendance statistics in order to ensure effective strategies are in place to support students in raising attainment and attendance.

Where we feel there is a disproportionate category of students (e.g. travellers, SEN, ethnic minority groups) and the Academy feels that this category causes a negative impact on the overall attendance percentage, calculations can be undertaken both including and excluding that category so that the impact can be more clearly seen.

Safeguarding

Academy attendance is a safeguarding issue – see Academy Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies. All registers will be marked daily and monitored.

The Academy Attendance Policy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the Behaviour, Anti-bullying, SEN and Child Protection policies. The active involvement of Governors, parents/carers and all staff within the Academy is essential to the review process. Students can also make a valuable contribution to policy development.

This policy and procedure are based on:

The Education Act 2002

The Children Act 2004

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 as amended.

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 2012

Crime and Disorder Act 2003.

Criminal Justice Act 2003.

Guidance on the education-related provisions included in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. Sections 19, 20 and 23.

Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998.

Race Relations Act Amendment 2000.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005.

Single Equality Act 2010.

DfE Behaviour and Attendance Strategy and updates.