

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

**Approved by Governor committee:
Student & Curriculum – November 2019**

**Date to be reviewed:
November 2023**

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

**Final Approval:
The Principal – LT Meeting 2nd December 2019**

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 to develop the personal qualities they need for future success.

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 every day and on time, unless there is an unavoidable reason for the absence. 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.

1. Aims

- To maintain a high percentage of student attendance and punctuality at Chelsea Academy, well above the national average
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students
- To provide a systematic approach for gathering and analysing attendance related data to promote timely and effective intervention at all levels
- 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 on a weekly basis, the SOL Attendance Tracker with students and staff to encourage high levels of 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

2. Legislation and Guidance

Any absence affects a child’s education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. It also 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 the absence of their child from the Academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in legal action.

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance 2019](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census 2017-18](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Academy Procedures

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

3.1 Attendance registers

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each Academy day and every session thereafter. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Attending an approved off-site education provision
- Dual registered with another education provision
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Students must arrive to Academy by 8:35am on each Academy day.

The register for the Coaching Time will be taken at 8:40am and will be kept open until 9:30am. (See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes).

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Reporting absence

The Academy will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason for them. The Academy will ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use on the register.

If a student is absent, parents / carers must:

- Contact the Academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence, explaining the reason for the absence, the likely length of the absence and the expected date of return.
- Send a note or email, or visit the Academy reception, on the day the student returns from the absence with an explanation of the absence, even when an initial explanation has been given by telephone.
- Parents should provide medical evidence to explain their child's absence, in the form of a medical letter or note from their child's GP (when their child's absence has fallen below 95% or when attendance concerns have been raised by the Academy).

If a student is absent, Academy staff will:

- Chelsea Academy operates a telephone messaging system to notify parents of absence to contribute to promoting the safeguarding of children. This means that parents / carers will receive a text message 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.
- Invite parents / carers to a meeting to discuss their concerns with the relevant member(s) of staff if the situation persists.

- Refer the matter to the School Nurse and / or the Early Help Team following discussion with parents if attendance continues to fall.

Telephone numbers:

It is essential that the Academy has up-to-date telephone numbers, postal addresses and email addresses for parents / carers, along with details of two emergency contacts, 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 to these are notified to the Academy.

3.3 Unplanned absence

- Parents must notify the Academy on the first day of an unplanned absence
- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness
- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the Academy may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily
- If the Academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

3.4 Medical or dental appointments

- We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of Academy hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of Academy for the minimum amount of time necessary
- Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences
- Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the Academy can authorise such absences can be found in Sections 4 and 5

3.5 Lateness and punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day / lesson, they can miss work and important information. Students arriving late also disrupt lessons and it can cause them embarrassment. Good punctuality is also an important life skill which students need to learn. Ongoing poor punctuality can also lead to absenteeism.

- The formal Academy day starts at 8.35am and we expect students to have arrived in good time
- Students arriving after the gate has closed at 8.35am, will be recorded as late. If students arrive late to the Academy, they will receive a sanction. Sanctions will be escalated if the student persistently arrives late to the Academy
- Parents will be informed by a daily text message if their son / daughter arrives late to the Academy. Persistent and / or excessive cases of poor punctuality will be sanctioned accordingly.
- At 9.30am morning registration will be closed. If a student arrives persistently late after this 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.

3.6 Reporting to parents / carers

Academy regularly reports to parents / carers on their child's attendance. This is communicated to parents in written form through termly Progress Checks. We inform parents / carers about how their child is performing at the Academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment. We also reward outstanding or significantly improving attendance.

4. 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 in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical / dental appointments (which fall in Academy 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 Bi Borough Attendance Team, 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 the Academy too late to be registered as present for the session in question without good reason
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays (exceptional leave) in term time which have not been agreed by the Academy
- Excessive time off for illness without medical evidence (if a student's attendance falls below 95%). Medical evidence may be requested by the Attendance Officer in order for an absence to be authorised
- Students acting as Young Carers for their parents or family members

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

- A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to the child's educational prospects and full parental support and cooperation is required to tackle this
- Chelsea Academy monitors all absence thoroughly. Regular absence is communicated to parents and students by: letters, telephone calls and meetings with students' Learning Coach or Head of Year
- Any student who has reached the PA level or is at risk of moving towards this level is a concern and parents / carers will be informed of this immediately
- PA students are tracked and monitored carefully and appropriate supportive interventions are put in place
- 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 always involve a referral to the Early Help Team.

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 and honest communication with the Academy
- Being positive about the Academy (even if their own experience of schooling was less than positive)

Whilst any student may be absent from the Academy because of illness, 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. When a parent / carer has concerns about their child's attendance, they should contact their child's Learning Coach or Head of Year immediately.

5. Granting approval for term-time absence

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 for absence 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 Bi Borough Supporting School Attendance Team and recommend a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for any unauthorised leave of absence.

6. Legal sanctions

The Academy can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from Academy. The decision about whether or not to issue a FPN ultimately rests with the Principal, following the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- When an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole Academy on a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues FPNs when necessary.

7.3 The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer:

- Takes calls from parents about absence and records the information on the Academy system
- Monitors attendance data at the Academy and individual student levels
- Reports concerns about attendance to the relevant Head of Year / Attendance Lead
- Works with Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Principal when to issue a FPN

7.4 Class Teachers and Learning Coaches

Class Teachers and Learning Coaches are responsible for:

- recording attendance daily on SIMS, using the correct codes, and submitting any absence notes to the school office
- Ensuring accurate registers are entered on SIMS **within the first ten minutes of every lesson including Coaching Time**
- Having one-to-one conversations with students about the importance of attendance and encouraging them to attend regularly

7.5 Heads of Year (HOY)

HOYs are responsible for:

- Taking registers when Learning Coaches are not present and entering this information on SIMS
- Having a weekly attendance meeting with the Attendance Lead to discuss individual student attendance
- Liaising with parents / carers and informing them / discussing attendance issues about their child as and when needed
- Sharing and discussing attendance data in Year Team meetings

8. The Early Help Team and the LSCP 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 dealt with 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 or / and in the Academy but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's

attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Early Help Worker can use sanctions such as FPNs or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 441 and 441a which states: *'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 /carers 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

9. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed once every two years by the Vice Principal. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to the following Academy policies:

- Teaching and Learning policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy

11. Person responsible

The person responsible for attendance at Chelsea Academy is the Principal

12. Summary

The Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its Attendance Policy to parents / carers and to promote high levels of 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.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Students present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the Academy
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer / educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised off-site sporting activity approved by the Academy
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit / trip organised, or approved, by the Academy
W	Work Experience	Student is on a Work Experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but not attending alternative provision
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	Academy has been notified that a student is absent due to illness

M	Medical / dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the Academy
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the Academy
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	Academy is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student Arrived at the Academy after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in the Academy	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Academy site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local / national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the Academy
#	Planned Academy closure	Whole or partial Academy closure due to half-term / Bank Holiday / INSET Day