

The Milton Keynes Academy

Student Attendance Policy

Introduction

This is a successful Academy and your son/daughter plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at the Academy, on time, every day that it is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling 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 your child's regular attendance at the Academy is your legal responsibility and permitting absence without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Also in some cases, after a warning letter, the Academy may issue a fixed penalty notice which carries a fine of at least £50.

Promoting regular attendance

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

To help us all focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing at the Academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrating good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;
- Run promotional events when parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the Academy.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from the Academy has to be classified by the Academy (not the parents) 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 the Academy for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in Academy time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the use of sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at the Academy too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Whilst any student may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the parents and the student. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 20% or more schooling across the Academy year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student’s educational prospects and we need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our Village system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA students and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Senior Coach or a Connexions worker, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Student Welfare Officer.

Absence procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into the Academy and report to Reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Senior Coaches/Vice Principal/Senior Vice Principal if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Education Support Worker if attendance moves below 87%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Education Support Worker

Parents are expected to contact the Academy at an early stage and to work with the 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 Education Support Worker. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these staff can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrate's Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at the Academy are available from the Academy.

Alternatively, parents or students may wish to contact the Education Support Worker themselves to ask for help or information. They will give impartial advice and their number is available from the Academy office.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend the time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The Academy day starts at 8.30am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 8.45am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives 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 they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head of Learning Village and/or Education Support Worker to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to the Academy on time.

Holidays in term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away during term time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in term time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off from the Academy to go on a holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the Academy a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision the Academy will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the Academy, but it is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a student is just starting at the Academy. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS), GCSE or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- When a student's attendance rate is already below 93% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the Academy, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Academy targets, projects and special initiatives

The Academy has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the Academy and for classes are on display and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for the Academy is 92% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in Milton Keynes.

Through the Academy year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided and we ask for your full support.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in the Academy are:

- The Education Support Worker
- The Vice Principal
- The Head of Learning Village

Summary

The Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All Academy staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Policy Ownership, Monitoring and Review

The responsibility for ensuring that the Academy adheres to this policy and that this policy is periodically reviewed rests with: Principal of the Milton Keynes Academy.