

Attendance Policy

Smith's Wood Academy

Part of Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust

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Contents

Page 3	Introduction
Page 3	Aims
Page 3	Legislative Framework
Page 4	Expected Levels of Attendance
Page 4	Attendance Partnership Expectations
Page 5	Absence
Page 6	Illness
Page 6	Attendance Concern Letter
Page 7	Medical Appointments
Page 8	Procedure for requesting a planned absence
Page 9	Punctuality
Page 9	Attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education
Page 10	Truancy within School
Page 10	Alternative Education Providers
Page 10	Registers
Page 11	Use of Attendance Data
Page 11	Procedures
Page 13	Appendix 1
Page 15	Appendix 3
Page 16	Appendix 4
Page 18	Appendix 5

1. Introduction

We aim to ensure that all students attend school regularly and on time to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available. Regular, punctual attendance is valued and positively encouraged for all of our students.

2. Aims

- To improve the overall attendance of students at school.
- To improve students' attainment through good attendance.
- To encourage parents to ensure that their children arrive at school on time.
- To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including parents, students, teachers and governors.

To achieve these aims for our students, we are committed to the following:

- a welcoming, stimulating and safe learning environment;
- for all staff to feel happy to come to school to work with students, developing them to their full potential;
- high expectations of our students and all staff;
- a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum;
- recognise and celebrate achievements in all areas of school life;
- equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and school life;
- high quality teaching using a variety of teaching strategies;
- a range of resources that are effectively used to support and challenge learning;
- provide experiences, which will develop our students' spiritual, moral and cultural understanding;
- support, guidance & training for all those who teach and work with our children;
- foster and maintain links with our wider community.

3. Legislative Framework

Parents of registered students have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (sec 444) to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and fulltime basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

4. Expected Levels of Attendance

Attending school regularly and on time has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for students. Research shows that attendance and punctuality are important factors in school success.

At Smith's Wood Academy we expect all students to achieve attendance that is at least 97% at all times.

5. Attendance Partnership Expectations

5.1 We expect the following from all of our students:

- To attend school regularly;
- To arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day, having eaten breakfast;
- To tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

5.2 We expect the following from parents and carers:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually;
- To ensure contact is made with the Academy, by 8:30, whenever their child is unable to attend;
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day, having eaten breakfast.

5.3 Parents and students can expect the following from school:

- Early contact with parents when a student fails to attend school without providing good reason;
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance;
- Follow up support if needed.

5.4 Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance:

- Smith's Wood Academy has a named senior member of staff with responsibility for attendance issues who will liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the Academy where appropriate.
- Members of school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have responsibility for attendance issues in school.
- Attendance matters are reviewed by the Head of Academy and members of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Attendance issues are reported, on a minimum termly basis, to the Governing Body.
- School uses Central School Attendance and Welfare Service Ltd (CSAWS) to support the school with the processes associated with children's attendance at school. School employ CSAWS to provide the legal monitoring services and support that will help reduce the number of persistent absent students and improve whole school attendance.
- Referrals are made to the Local Authority Legal Enforcement Team for them to consider legal action for parents of poor attenders.

6. Absence

If a child is absent from school, parents should contact the attendance office on the first day of absence by 08:30, to inform the Academy of the reason for absence. Parents are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence, contacting each day.

By 10:00am, school registers are checked for any absences where there has been no contact by parents and reason given.

School staff will send text messages and / or make a phone call to parents to ascertain a reason for the child absence from school.

If staff are concerned about a student's absence or there is no response to text messages, they will follow the process in detailed in Appendix 1. This includes telephone calls to parents, other emergency contacts, home visits, referrals to the CSAWS Attendance and Welfare Officer and to the police for a safe and well check.

It is imperative that up-to-date contact numbers including second contact information and details are provided to school.

7. Illness

Not all illness requires an absence from school. For minor childhood ailments such as coughs, colds, ear aches we would not expect children to be absent. However, when

a parent makes the assessment that their child is unfit for school they should follow the above absence process.

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases, a parent's explanation of their child's illness can be accepted without question or concern. In circumstances where there are concerns about a child's attendance or reason for absence, further evidence of a child's illness may be requested

School will challenge parents' statements or seek additional evidence if they have any concerns regarding a child's attendance.

In fact, it is good practice to have clear systems in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing additional services in order to provide appropriate support to students, particularly for long term illness.

8. Attendance Concern Letter:

The Attendance Office will send a Concern Letter to a parent if their child's attendance has fallen below 93% and where a long standing medical or exceptional circumstance has taken place. The letter will inform the parent of their child's absence, further opportunities of support to increase their child's attendance to school, and information of the next steps with regarding to the legal process if their child's attendance does not improve.

9. Medical appointments:

Parents should avoid making routine medical appointments and dental appointments during the school day. In the majority of cases, appointments can be made outside of the school day/during the school holidays.

Where appointments have to be taken during the school day, only the time for the appointment and travel to and from will be classed as an authorised absence. Students are expected to return to school for the remainder of the day/attend school prior to the appointment.

It is our expectation that parents are required to provide a copy of the appointment letter or card prior to the day of the appointment.

The types of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- Attendance is of concern -less than 93%
- There are frequent odd days absences due to reported illness
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated

- Where there is a particular medical problems and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support

10. Other reasons for absences:

Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school on each occasion. Notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. The Academy will follow DFE guidance and not authorise absences for shopping, birthdays or child minding.

The Academy will follow the DfE guidance based around COVID.

10.1 Requests for Leave of Absence (exceptional circumstances):

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 have amended Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

11. Procedure for requesting a planned absence:

- All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional. A parent/carer should complete an absence request form (Appendix 2) and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the date required. School will respond to the request within two weeks. If school is aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed appropriate support will be offered to the parent/carer.
- DFE guidelines make clear that leave of absence during term-time should be regarded as exceptional. An example that can be given is that during 2012 London Olympics all police leave was cancelled. As a result, for that specific timeframe it was agreed that requests for leave for the children of Police Officer affected by the cancellation of their leave would be treated as exceptional.
- If a parent/carer considers they require their child to have a leave of absences for exceptional circumstances they should complete the absence request form, which can be obtained from the school reception or attendance office (Appendix 2). There is a requirement that parent/carers provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and may be required to meet with the Head of Academy.

- Where the Head of Academy is satisfied that there **are** exceptional circumstances to warrant the request of the leave of absence but has additional concerns such as the timing of the absence, the students' attendance record, they may use their own discretion in whether to authorise or not.
- If the Head of Academy deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a letter confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer (*appendix 3 : model pro forma*)
- If the Head of Academy deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised, a letter informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence being taken will be sent to each parent. The letter provided in this guidance (appendix 4) must be used.
- If once notified in writing of the decision to unauthorise the leave of absence, the absence is taken it will be marked as an unauthorised absence on the students' register. If the trigger of 10 unauthorised absences (sessions) is met, then the absences should be referred immediately to the Education Enforcement Team for consideration and could result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice.

12. Punctuality

It is important that students are punctual so that they do not miss out on the beginning of each school day. Students must attend on time to be given a present mark for the session.

If a student arrives late to school every day, their learning begins to suffer. Below is a graph showing how being late to school every-day over a school year adds up to lost learning time.



5 Minutes Late 10 Minutes Late 15 Minutes Late 20 Minutes Late 30 Minutes Late (Over one academic year)

To access the most of the school day we ask parents to ensure that their children are ready for line-up no later than 8:30am. The Academy is open from 8:00am for students to be on site.

Children arriving after 8:39am will be late for school and will report to the Deputy Excellence Leaders on the Academy Late Gate. Detentions are issued for all those coming into school late.

Where a student arrives after the register closes at 9:30am this will be classed as an unauthorised absence (code U as per DFE compulsory attendance codes).

The registers are monitored daily to identify students who are arriving late and regular late arrival for school will be challenged as not acceptable. Students who have 10 or more U codes will be referred to the Education Enforcement Team for the issue of a penalty notice.

13. Attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School should follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

All schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered student who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days of education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12). If analysis of attendance data indicates that there is a pattern of student absence (ie the same day every week), the Academy reserves the right to take the following actions:

1. Inform the Local Authority Safeguarding team because patterns of absence can be a sign of exploitation, neglect or other similar concerns.
2. Inform the police that we are concerned about the well-being and / or safety of child and request a safe and well visit

This attendance policy is part of a broader suite of safeguarding policies including the school's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

14. Truancy within School

Smith's Wood Academy monitor attendance to each lesson period of the school day using the registers, in order to ensure all students are safe in school and whereabouts known. If a student does not present to scheduled lessons/activities, the Attendance Officer is informed and staff alerted to find missing students. If students cannot be located and are suspected of leaving school premises, parents will be informed and the police notified of a missing child.

15. Alternative Education Providers

On rare occasions, a small number of students may be accessing an alternative education provider, agreed by the school for all or part of their timetable. In this instance the student remains on roll at Smith's Wood Academy. Attendance to approved alternative providers is monitored and reflected on school registers. The responsibility of ensuring that students are safeguarded and receiving appropriate education remains with Smith's Wood Academy.

16. Registers

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions.

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. Attendance registers will be kept in accordance with legal requirements, local authority guidelines and school regulations

Every half day of absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence can be given only when the Head of Academy has either approved in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be

away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences, including persistent lateness, must be treated as unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by a person designated to do so by the Head of Academy [see The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI No.2006/1751) – reg 7(1)].

There are procedures in place to resolve unexplained absences within two weeks. School complies with and uses the DFE Compulsory National Attendance Codes to categorise absence (Appendix 5).

17. Use of Attendance Data

All schools must provide their attendance data to the DFE. Most schools use their management information systems to send their data via school census. The figures returned are then published by the DFE as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

Smith's Wood Academy collect, use and store attendance information about our students and may receive information about students and families from their previous school. The information kept regarding attendance includes name, contact details, attendance records, late records and any relevant medical information.

Where there is cause for concern, this information is shared with CSAWS during regular attendance meetings held at school. CSAWS then follow up attendance concerns with parents and carers on school's behalf.

Attendance data and information is reported to the Academy Interim Executive Board (IEB) and Association on a monthly basis.

Where attendance has deteriorated rapidly, there are concerning patterns of absence, a number of unauthorised absences, or parents have not responded to concerns raised a referral may be made straight to CSAWS. Referrals will be made to the Local Authority Education Enforcement team for the issue of penalty notices where students have 10 or more unauthorised absences.

Absence and Punctuality Escalation Process

Acceptable and minimum expected pupil attendance to Smith's Wood Academy is 97% and above. Any pupil falling below this expectation will be actioned in the Challenging Absences Stages of Action outlined below (next page).

In addition to the Challenging Absences Stages of Action, the Attendance Team run the following processes;

Punctuality Challenge

L CODES

- 10 L codes – Punctuality Letter 1 sent by attendance team
- 10 L codes – Year team to speak to pupil and place on Punctuality Report
- 15 L codes – Parent invited in for meeting re late concerns
- 15 L codes – SLT/Head to meet with pupil and call parent to discuss

U CODES

- 5 U Codes – Attendance Team to call and speak to parent
- 7 U codes – U code Concern Warning Letter sent
- 10 U codes – SLT/Year Team to meet with parent and pupil on Punctuality Report
- 10+ U codes (when all about action have been taken) – Referral to CSAWS for legal action.

High Levels of Medical and Illness Related Absences

The attendance team run half termly reviews of all pupils with above average sessions of illness and medical absences to ensure adequate information has been gathered and plans in place for those in need. For those who are off with low level illnesses regularly or where there is a question over the veracity of the illness, school are able to request medical evidence (on each absence deemed appropriate). Those pupils 'placed' on medical evidence requests will receive a letter from the attendance team and each absence will be assessed as to whether medical evidence is required. This list will be indicated on the attendance tracker and reviewed termly. Pupils will be removed from the list where no further illness related absences have been accrued over a term.

SWA Challenging Absences - Stages of Action**STAGE ONE**

Pupil is **either** at 94-96% or has had 3 days unauthorised absences (UA)

dependent on trigger point and monitoring period

Actions to be completed (**all**):

- Attendance team indicate on Tracker as Stage One
- Attendance team email out whole school Stage One list so that;
- Form Tutor has discussion in Form about attendance concerns and feeds back to attendance team
- Concern Letter 1 sent to parent/s by attendance team
- Home visit if necessary and able (where no contact for example) by CSAWS

STAGE TWO

Pupil is **either** at 92-94% or has had 5 days unauthorised absences (UA)

dependent on trigger point and monitoring period

Actions to be completed in addition to previous stage (**all**):

- Attendance team indicate on Tracker as Stage Two
- Year Team to have attendance concern discussion with pupil in school
- Concern and Meeting Letter 2 sent by attendance team
- Attendance team meeting in school
- Home visit if necessary and able (where no contact for example) by CSAWS

STAGE THREE

Pupil is **either** at 90-92% or has had 7 days unauthorised absences (UA)

dependent on trigger point and monitoring period

Actions to be completed in addition to previous stage (**all**):

- Attendance team indicate on Tracker as Stage Three
- Year Team make contact with parent to discuss concerns
- Formal Concern Letter 3
- Attendance Team meet with pupil
- Home visit if necessary and able (where no contact for example) by CSAWS

STAGE FOUR

Pupil is **either** less than 90% or has had 10 days unauthorised absences (UA)

dependent on trigger point and monitoring period

Actions to be completed in addition to previous stage (**all**):

- Attendance team indicate on Tracker as Stage Four
- SLT/Head contact with parent to discuss concerns (telephone or meeting)
- Referral to CSAWS for legal action consideration
- Warning letter from the LA re legal action
- Further legal action as appropriate (Penalty Notice and Court action)
- Home visit if necessary and able (where no contact for example) by CSAWS

Year Team Discussion with Pupil – Attendance Concern Stage 2

To be returned to attendance team office

Pupil Name:

Reg:

Completed by:

Date:

Attendance is currently concerning. Gather relevant information about why absences have occurred.

How does the pupil feel about school and their attendance?

What support could be put in place to help pupil improve attendance?

Year Team Discussion with Parent– Attendance Concern Stage 3

To be returned to attendance team office

Pupil Name:

Reg:

Completed by:

Date:

Attendance is currently concerning. Gather relevant information about why absences have occurred.

How does the parent feel about school and their child's attendance?

Please make them aware that if they get to stage 4 legal action may be considered

What support could be put in place to help parent improve their child's attendance?

SLT/Head Teacher Discussion with Parent– Attendance Concern Stage 4

To be returned to attendance team office

Pupil Name:

Reg:

Completed by:

Date:

Attendance is of high concern – discuss absences and % of attendance inc number of unauthorised absences. Gather any information not already known.

What support has already been put in place? Discuss with parent what school have already offered (refer to previous stages)

Moving forward. Plan agreed. Ensure potential imminent legal action is explained.

