



Attendance Policy (Including Leave of Absence) Smith's Wood Academy Part of Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust

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Attendance Policy

1. Introduction and Aims

Smith's Wood Academy is committed to providing a full and effective educational environment for all our students to thrive in. We believe if students are to be successful and benefit from their education, both punctuality and excellent attendance is vitally important. Attendance and key patterns are monitored daily by the Attendance Team, with the school keen to work with parents/carers to ensure that regular patterns are established and maintained. We aim for most of our students to achieve 96% attendance and to continue to strive to improve towards the 100% attendance mark.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting and rewarding good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school
- Promote, challenge and support punctuality in attending lessons

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- It also refers to:
- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive full-time education. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that this happens by registering their child at a school or by making other arrangements to provide an effective education. If a child is registered at a school, only the school has the right to give permission to authorise a child's absence.

Failure to send a child to school could mean the Local Authority (LA) takes legal action in the form of an educational supervision order and/or a fine.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Governing Board

The school governing board are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 Principal

The principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Challenge and evaluate effectiveness of school attendance strategies
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation

3.3 Designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader for attendance is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Leading on the creation of intervention and reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Michael Martin and he can be contacted via m.martin@smithswood.fmat.co.uk

3.4 Achievement Teams

The Achievement Team consists of an Achievement Leader and Assistant Achievement Leader. They are responsible for:

- Creating a positive ethos within their year group which recognises good attendance and punctuality as being the norm

- Consulting with the Attendance Manager on a weekly basis to ensure they are tracking and monitoring attendance for their year group
- Quality assuring the delivery of attendance procedures through the tutor time programme
- Running attendance intervention groups for identified students
- Promoting attendance figures and raising the profile of attendance through assemblies and rewarding tutor groups and individuals in assembly
- Contacting and meeting parents/carers of students where attendance is a concern
- Monitoring the impact of any intervention strategies that have been put in place

3.5 Attendance Manager

The school attendance manager is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance manager is Gaynor Elliott and can be contacted via school on g.elliott@smithswood.fmat.co.uk

3.6 Classroom Teachers

Classroom Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily bases, using appropriate coding and submitting the information in a timely fashion
- Raising alerts if students are not present in lesson and keep students in lessons to ensure they are learning
- Welcoming students into lessons, particularly if students have been regularly absent to encourage their successful return to school
- Regularly referring to the importance of attending lessons and hook students with learning
- Creating engaging and interesting lessons that meet the needs of students
- Chasing up on any missed learning from students

3.7 Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily bases, using appropriate coding and submitting the information in a timely fashion
- Enquiring about a student's welfare following an absence from school
- Praising students whose attendance is on or above the school target or is improving
- Ensuring that any issues impacting on attendance are resolving
- Challenging internal truancy

- Completing an initial tutor intervention detailed below in section 3.12 for students who had 3 days or 6 missed sessions through unauthorised absence

3.8 School Office

The school office will take, transfer and respond to calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system and update the Achievement Team as necessary.

3.9 Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school and arrive punctually. Parents/Carers must inform school at the earliest possible time of any reasons for and an expected length of any absence, although daily contact will need to be made if a child is absent for more than one day. Parents/Carers are required to respond promptly to any school communications regarding absence or punctuality. Parents/Carers must ensure that no holidays are organised during term time and that medical appointments should be endeavoured to be made outside of school hours. Parents/Carers are also responsible for ensuring the school has more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.

3.10 Students

Students are responsible for ensuring they attend school regularly and punctually. Students arriving to school late must sign in at the school office and give a reason for their late arrival. Any student arriving after the registers have closed on a school day must provide a note to explain their morning absence and late arrival.

3.11 CSAWS (Central School Attendance and Welfare Service Ltd)

CSAWS support the school with specific processes associated with student's attendance at school. The Academy employs CSAWS to provide the legal monitoring services and support that will help reduce the number of persistently absent students and improve whole school attendance.

Our school procedures follow the expectations set out by the DfE in the guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (September 2022).

The processes used are based around the following principles:

- Acting to prevent poor attendance
- Using early intervention and Early Help to address patterns of poor attendance early and formulate ways to improve in agreement with stakeholders
- Targeted interventions (including Early Help and Formal interventions) for those students who are persistently absent or severely absent
- Having an understanding of barriers that impact on individuals' attendance and agree personalised plans for students with specific needs
- Undertaking formal statutory interventions where support have not been effective or engaged with

3.12 Monitoring Attendance

School will review student's attendance on a regular basis and the following actions will be implemented to support attendance to school. Students that are identified as vulnerable and students in receipt of Student Premium funding will be targeted first at all intervention levels. The actions listed below outline a guide of how school will support to improve attendance with students.

Initial Tutor Intervention**3 days or 6 sessions (AM or PM) unauthorised**

Tutor will have an informal discussion with student to remind them of the importance of attending school. Tutor to set an informal target for improving attendance and to ensure student is always aiming to achieve attendance of 96%. Tutor to explain that if the child gets to the first stage, there will be a meeting with parent.

Stage 1 Attendance Intervention – PASTORAL TEAM**5 days or 10 sessions (AM or PM) unauthorised**

The pastoral team will intervene with student and parent and offer support and guidance around their attendance. This will come in the form of a face-to-face meeting with parent/carers, child and a member of the Achievement Team for their year. A target for improvement will be set and if the target is failed, unless it is exceptional circumstances, the student will move to Stage 2. Early Help may be offered to family at this stage if necessary to support.

Stage 2 Attendance Intervention – ATTENDANCE MANAGER**10 days or 20 sessions (AM or PM) unauthorised**

The attendance team will intervene with student and parent/carers and offer support and guidance around their attendance. This will come in the form of a face-to-face meeting with parent/carers, child and the Attendance Manager. A target for improvement will be set and if the target is failed, unless it is exceptional circumstances, the student will move to Stage 3. Early Help may be offered to the family at this stage if necessary to support.

Stage 3 Attendance Intervention – CSAWS**15 days or 30 sessions (AM or PM) unauthorised**

The CSAWS team will intervene with student and parent/carers and offer support and guidance around their attendance. A referral will be made to the Local Authority for a Penalty Warning Notice. There will also be a face-to-face meeting with parent/carers, child and member of the CSAWS team. A target for improvement will be set and if the target is failed, unless it is exceptional circumstances, the parent may face a referral to the local authority who may issue a fixed penalty warning. Early Help will be offered.

4. Recording Attendance

The accurate and prompt recording of student attendance is essential and this information is required by the DfE (Department for Education). Smith's Wood Academy uses Bromcom, the school's data management system, to record attendance and this is monitored closely by the Attendance team, led by the Attendance Manager. Parents/Carers are asked to inform the school by 8:30am (by telephone or email) if their child is going to be absent that day and on any further days of absence. If any absence length is longer than 5 days and known, parents/carers are requested to inform the Attendance Manager by letter.

Parents are required to inform the Attendance Manager of any medical or dental appointments in advance of these by using the same method. We politely request that all appointments are made outside of school hours, wherever possible. We also request that if appointments during school hours are unavoidable, that students attend school prior to and after the appointment.

Any student that is late to school or needs to leave the school early are required to sign in using the electronic system to help support tracking individuals on school site for safeguarding reasons. If students have not been recorded as being present at school by 9:30am, an automated message will be sent out to the Primary Guardians the school has on file.

Any student that arrives between 8:30am, when the school entrance gates close, and 9:00am will be marked as Late (L) and given an appropriate consequence. Any student that arrives after 9:00am, with no reasonable explanation, will be marked as Unauthorised Late after register is closed (U). If a student receives 10 U codes, legal action may be initiated by the Attendance Manager.

5. Absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

If a child is absent from school parents should contact the school on the first day of absence to inform the school of the reason for absence. Parents are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence.

At 9.30am school registers are checked for any absences where there has been no contact by parents and reason given. School staff will send text messages to parents to ascertain a reason for the child absence from school. If staff are concerned about a child's absence or there is no response to text messages, they will follow the processes listed here. 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.

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual student to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated (DFE Attendance guidance 2022)

5.1 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. Each absence will be assessed by the school and they will decide if medical evidence is required. 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. This evidence should be provided to school within a 2-week period.

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

School may request medical evidence in the following scenarios:

- Attendance is below 92%
- Child is absent and there are frequent odd days absences due to reported illness
- Child is absent and the same reasons for absence are frequently repeated
- Child is absent and attendance is below expected levels and there is a concerning pattern of absence/reasons for absence.
- Where there is a medical problems and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support

5.2 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.

If a medical appointment cannot be booked outside of school hours, parents/carers are required to provide a copy of the appointment letter, card or text prior to the appointment. This can be communicated to the Attendance Manager

5.3 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 school will follow DFE guidance and not authorise absences for shopping, birthdays or child minding.

5.4 Religious Observance

School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

However, parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. Religious bodies maybe contacted to verify these occasions.

5.5 Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must advise school of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

School will authorise absence of Traveller children if their parent(s) are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place and has given indication that they intend to return.

Where Traveller children are registered students at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any student.

5.6 Requests for Leave of Absence (exceptional circumstances)

The Education (Student 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 student except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Procedure for requesting a planned absence:

- All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional. A parent/carers 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/carers.

- 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 officers 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 absence for exceptional circumstances they should complete the absence request form which can be obtained from the school office (Appendix 2). There is a requirement that parent/carer provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and may be required to meet with the Headteacher.
- Where the headteacher 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 the absence leave calculator.
- If the Headteacher 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.
- If the Headteacher 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 been 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 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.

5.7 Reintegration of Long-Term Absentees

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of students learning, and positive strategies should be employed to minimise such effects.

Key Principles

- We should always keep in touch with a student/and his/her family during a long absence.
- We should always make sure he/she is welcomed back.
- We should never make sarcastic comments about an absence – a thoughtless word can destroy hours of work by staff.

Headteacher and SENCO to consider a phased return where appropriate. This needs to be considered in line with the Solihull LA process and procedure, which includes seeking expert advice from relevant professionals and co-ordinating a multi-agency meeting. Consideration needs to be given to any special needs the student may have and appropriate support identified. Consideration must be given to a package of support which may include providing a mentor (staff member/student)

Class Teachers should ensure that the student feels welcomed back to school in an appropriate way and take any necessary steps to support their re-integration.

5.8 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 school will follow DFE guidance and not authorise absences for shopping, birthdays or child minding.

Students and families who are anxious about return to school

We are aware that many students, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school especially if they have been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary.

Parents should contact school to discuss concerns and school can give you more details regarding the measures we have put in place to reduce the risk in school. School will be working closely with other professionals as appropriate to support all our students return to school, this includes CSAWS who may contact you if there are attendance related issues.

5.9 Persistent Absence Fast Track

It is the responsibility of the school to be aware of and bring attention to any emerging attendance concerns.

In situations where a student begins to develop a pattern of absence, the school will try and resolve the problem, in conjunction with the student and parent/carer. If this is not successful, the school will liaise with external agencies and involve the Attendance Manager and the Attendance and Welfare Officers from CSAWS.

A letter of concern is sent to parent/carer if the number of absences for a student reaches 30 sessions missed. The letter will outline the student's attendance statistics and the risk they have of becoming Persistently Absent from School. It will also clarify that further absences will be assessed on each occasion and may be considered as unauthorised if evidence is not provided. It will also seek to understand if there are any underlying medical or emotional reasons that is contributing to their absence, which could trigger further support from school.

Further unauthorised absence will result in a meeting with the Attendance Manager, parent/carer and the student. If no improvement is made, a referral will be initiated to CSAWS Attendance and Welfare Officer, who may instigate legal proceedings where appropriate.

6. Lateness and Truancy

6.1 Persistent Lateness

It is the responsibility of the school to be aware of and begin dealing with any concerns emerging around punctuality.

In situations where a student begins to develop a pattern of lateness (arriving at school after 8:30am and before 9:00am), the school will try and resolve the problem directly with the student and their parent/carer. This could include the Achievement Team placing the student on an 'Attendance and Punctuality Report' to monitor their punctuality both to school and lessons. If a student arrives late to school on a regular basis, their learning begins to suffer. The graph below outlines the impact, in terms of learning time lost, of being late to school by the given amount of time each day.



If a student arrives to school after the registers have closed (9:30am) they will be classed as U (Late after register is closed). The following procedures are in place to address repeated U marks:

- 5 U codes results in a letter sent home and a meeting arranged with student, parent/carer and Achievement Team
- 10 U codes results in a meeting with the student, parent/carer and Assistant Principal
- 15 U codes results in a meeting with the student, parent/carer and either the Principal or the Trust Pastoral Lead
- 20 U codes results in CSAWS instigating legal proceedings where appropriate

6.2 Truancy

Smith's Wood Academy monitors attendance on a lesson-by-lesson basis during the school day using registers completed on Bromcom. This is part of the school's safeguarding protocols to ensure the whereabouts of students is known. If a student does not present to their lesson, the Attendance Team is informed and staff will be alerted to locate the missing students. If school are unable to locate the missing student, and there is suspicion that they may no longer be on the school site, parents/carers will be informed.

The Achievement Leads will investigate the whereabouts during the truant lesson and feed back to the Attendance Team accordingly.

If a student truant a lesson, they will be given an automatic 60 minute detention to ensure they make up the missed learning time. Parent/Carer will also be contacted and the student will be placed on an Attendance Report.

If a student is found to be truanting for a second time, the same sanctions will apply and in addition to this, the student will also spend a day in the Internal Exclusion Room.

If a student is found to be truanting for a third times, parent/carers will be invited into school for a meeting with the Achievement Team to address the issues. Part of this meeting will result in the student and parent/carers agreeing to sign a contract for Attendance.

7. Rewards

All students who gain 100% attendance for a full half term will receive a letter of congratulations sent home. If students maintain this they will also receive entries into prize draws, certificates and also be invited to the school rewards trips for attendance.

Achievement Leaders will publish and present awards in assemblies to recognise outstanding attendance.

Students who achieve 100% attendance for a week will receive praise points for this attendance.

8. ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. student attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Student not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to students	Not counted in possible attendances