



## **Attendance Policy**

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Academies to note: This is an OA template, but it must be checked for local context/times/procedures etc. The updated academy version should be returned to OA central for uploading onto each website.	

## **Introduction**

This policy is written in accordance with DfE guidance on school attendance (Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, November 2016).

**“There is a strong correlation between the amount of absence and the qualifications children achieve” Department for Education**

## **Rationale**

- To ensure that every student succeeds whilst at the academy
- To ensure that every student has access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave the academy
- To ensure that every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- To ensure that every student uses every day to gain knowledge and understanding
- To promote students’ welfare and safeguarding

To achieve those goals, at Olive Academies, we believe it is essential that students are not absent from school.

Our aim is to foster a sense of responsibility, a joy of learning and to create, therefore, a community where learning is felt to be important and crucial to securing well-being and increased life chances. Attendance is a safeguarding issue - the health, safety and wellbeing of students is paramount.

Academy staff work closely with link agencies to ensure maximum attendance and therefore achievement for all students. Staff work with parents/carers to achieve good attendance and involve the services of the Educational Welfare Service in the best interests of the child.

Students who attend regularly will succeed and secure economic wellbeing in the future. They will enjoy making a positive contribution.

There are 195 statutory school days per year and there are then 170 other days available for holidays which would not have a negative effect on a student’s education.

## **Categorisation of absence**

When a student is absent from school, the law categorises that as either ‘authorised’ or ‘unauthorised’.

The law states that it is for the academy to determine into which category any absence fits, it is for the academy to decide whether any absence is ‘authorised’ or ‘unauthorised’.

## **Authorised absence**

Examples of the type of absence which may be authorised:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (although these should be made wherever possible out of school hours.)
- Exceptional family circumstances (at the discretion of the school)

## **Unauthorised absence**

Examples of the type of absence which will not be authorised are:

- Lateness – but arriving late is better than not arriving at all
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Special treats
- Looking after family members
- Holidays in term time

### **The need for parental explanation**

All absences must be explained either by telephone call, text message, email or letter by a parent or carer. However, this in itself does not automatically authorise the absence.

It is for the academy to decide whether or not to accept the explanation offered. You may be asked to provide evidence of a doctor's visit (e.g. appointment card or prescription).

Long term absences must be discussed with academy staff to enable them to offer the student access to education to which they are entitled. Where a parent/carers anticipates in advance that his or her child will be absent then as much advance notice as possible should be given.

### **Holidays during term time**

Parents/carers are reminded that they do **not** have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for holidays. Holidays will only be granted if the headteacher considers that there are special circumstances. The DfE guidance updated in October 2014, makes it clear that 'headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'. Examples of circumstances which by themselves are very **unlikely** to be considered as special and thus leading to a grant of permission include:

- To fit in with parental working patterns
- Economic reasons, such as cheap flights and/or accommodation
- To overlap with beginning or end of term.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

#### **Olive AP Academy – Suffolk Central (OA-SC)**

Attendance is a student welfare and safeguarding issue. The academy takes its safeguarding responsibilities in these areas very seriously.

- Students should arrive on site between 9.00 and 9.15. Registration closes at 9.30 and should a student not have arrived by then and no explanatory telephone call received, a member of staff will make contact with the child's parent or carer via a telephone call or automated text message.
- Students who arrive after 9.30am will be marked as late and a reason will need to be given for the late arrival to school.
- Students who arrive after 10.00am will be marked as absent for the am session.
- We always notify parents/carers if students abscond from academy premises and if necessary, notify the police.

- If a student becomes unwell whilst at the academy, parents/carers are informed. Depending on the age of the student and the severity of the illness a decision will be made as to whether the student should be collected by a parent or carer or sent home on their own.
- In some instances, taxis are used as a means of transport to and from the academy for students. The taxi firm in use has been identified in agreement with the Local Authority and meet all relevant safeguarding requirements. Academy administrative staff are responsible for organising the transportation of students via taxis and a record is kept of all journeys. Parents are informed if a student is being taken home at a time other than the end of the school day.
- Students will be admitted as soon as possible after referral to the academy and no later than on the sixth day following an exclusion, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Attendance is recorded the day following a student's admission interview.
- When students join the academy they will attend an induction where their needs are assessed. The academy records attendance from the first day of induction.
- Where a student has not attended school for two or more days and the academy has not been able to contact the parent/carers a home visit will be arranged.
- Where a student has not attended the academy for one week, and the academy staff have not been able to make contact with a parent or carer, the Education Welfare Service will automatically be informed
- Where students attend alternative provision off-site the providers are to contact the academy with the student's attendance on daily basis before 10am
- The academy provides a tutor who closely monitors the attendance and progress of students in their care. The tutor will maintain contact and provide information to parents/carers.
- The academy provides an administrator to ensure that the attendance of all students is closely monitored and absence effectively dealt with.
- Attendance of all students is reported to parents/carers on a termly basis through a school report. The report is presented at parent/carer consultation meetings each term where the impact of attendance on student progress is discussed with individual families.

### **Parents/carers**

Strong links and effective communication with parents/carers is vital.

- Parents/carers must telephone the academy by 9:15am on the first day of any absence to explain the reason for absence and give an expected return date.
- Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance. Students must arrive on time, in school uniform and ready to learn.
- Parents/carers must provide an up to date contact number and an emergency number that may be used in exceptional circumstances. It is important, that should the need arise, we can contact parents /carers without delay.
- Where a student attends a college or alternative provision the parent /carer must inform that institution of the absence, in addition to informing the academy.
- On a student's return to school, following an absence, a written note or a doctor's note should be provided.
- The headteacher reserves the right to ask for medical evidence before making a decision as to whether to authorise the absence. This must be presented within one week of the last day of absence.
- Data on attendance will be shared with parents/ carers and students regularly and discussed at parent and carer consultation meetings.

- Parents/carers who do not give an acceptable reason for the absence of their child must understand that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If children have medical appointments parents/carers must supply appointment cards.
- Parents/carers should note the dates of both national (usually May and June) and internal examination periods. The national dates cannot be changed for any reason. Year 6 will sit SATs exams in May. Staff will publish examination dates as soon as they are known. If the national exams and SATs are missed they cannot be retaken during that exam period.
- The journey to school for some students may involve the use of one or more forms of public transport. Parent and carers must ensure that their child leaves in plenty of time to allow for possible delay. Some students may qualify for assistance with the cost of transport. The decision as to route and type of transport rests with Suffolk council and an application should be made at the earliest opportunity in order that no education will be missed before the relevant pass is issued.
- Parents/carers must ensure that students attend on the first school day following initial interview. The interview is followed by a short induction period.
- Parents/carers must sign the Home/Academy Agreement. This states the responsibility of the parent/carer and student to ensuring that expectations relating to attendance are met.
- Parents/carers must commit to ensuring that students attend on a full time basis unless medical evidence proves that this is not possible.

### **Students**

Students are expected to be responsible and independent. Except where there are exceptional circumstances they are personally responsible for maintaining good attendance.

This applies to attendance to lessons. Arriving in school and not attending lessons does not constitute good attendance. Good attendance also means good punctuality.

- All students will be provided with a timetable showing clearly their own lesson schedule.
- Students must attend all lessons on their timetables, including all lessons with alternative providers.
- Students are expected to attend punctually every day.
- Students will not leave the academy site without permission from staff.

### **Teachers:**

- record attendance to each lesson.
- report absence from lessons to senior staff.
- report lesson attendance to parents/carers through the termly report.
- may arrange for students to attend additional lessons in a subject in order to ensure students catch up on lost learning.

### **Tutors:**

- meet frequently with tutees to discuss progress and attendance.
- keep parents/carers informed of attendance where there is concern.
- set attendance targets for tutees.
- report absence patterns to senior staff.
- arrange and chair stage 2 absence escalation meeting (see Appendix 1).

### **Attendance Procedures**

- Attendance registers are taken at 9.15 and at 1.30pm.
- A system of first day calling operates: as soon as a register is closed parents/carers are called or an automated text message is sent and notified that their child is absent. It is expected that these calls are responded to as soon as possible in order to ensure the safety of students.
- Records of phone calls to parents/carers are kept and reported to the Education Welfare Service when appropriate.
- The Education Welfare Service works with the academy's family liaison officer to support families in maintaining good attendance at school. To this end, home visits may be made.
- Where there is a repeated pattern of absence it will be considered appropriate for a Common Assessment Form (CAF) to be completed in order to obtain a clear picture of difficulties being experienced. This will enlist the help of other agencies.
- The attendance of individual students is regularly monitored with reference to the academy's absence escalation process. This process is outlined in Appendix 1.
- At an escalation meeting, the attendance percentage achieved, as well as numbers of authorised and unauthorised absences and the number of late marks, are discussed with parent/carers and targets set where necessary.

### **Rewards**

- 100% attendance will be rewarded and celebrated at the end of each week with a certificate and a Freddo (chocolate bar)
- Most improved attendance and 100% attendance for a term are rewarded in letters home with 'Love to Shop' vouchers

A copy of this policy is available to all staff, parents/carers and students on our website

<http://apsuffolk.oliveacademies.org.uk/>

Appendix 1

**Absence escalation process**

The absence escalation process follows a set of guidelines set out by the Education Welfare Service to re-engage students who are missing significant numbers of days' education.

