

**John
Cabot
Academy**

**Attendance
Policy**

Date Adopted: September 2012 , John Cabot Academy
Review Date: Annually

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the Academy's policy to establish good links and a working partnership with parents in order to establish and maintain good attendance. Parents will be informed by letter and on the Academy website of Academy term dates and days when students are not expected to attend (i.e. In Service Training days). In addition, any changes to dates will be sent home by letter and will also be posted on our website.

Students' attendance will be recorded twice during the day - at the start of the morning session and at the end of the afternoon session. In addition, teachers will take class registers for each lesson. Post 16 students will be registered in morning sessions where applicable and within lessons.

Students should arrive on time. If, for any reason, they are unable to arrive on time they should sign in at reception.

Attendance figures will be recorded for analysis by the Academy. Attendance figures will be forwarded to the local authority (LA) on a termly basis. Students with excellent levels of attendance will be recognised for this achievement.

The Academy requires all absences to be explained by a parent. Students should not be absent for reasons except illness or exceptional circumstances – these can only be authorised by the Principal.

Parents should make every effort to ensure that medical, dental and optician's appointments are not taken during term time.

Recent changes to the law (September 2013) mean that there is no entitlement for parents to take their children on holiday in school time. Any application for absence must only be in exceptional circumstances and the Principal must be satisfied of this, (Principals are not expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional). Requests for absence should be sent to the Principal at the Academy as early as possible. This does not mean that the absence will be authorised and, in some cases, can lead to the LA issuing a penalty notice. From September 2013, these Notices cost £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days maximum.

Tutors and Heads of Communities will monitor attendance looking for patterns of absence and lack of punctuality. They will seek an explanation for all absences according to the procedure detailed later. The data will be prepared for interrogation by the Attendance Officer who will analyse the attendance data during and at the end of each term.

Parents of students whose attendance is less than 96% will be contacted to discuss the reasons for the student's absences and to establish and agree strategies for improving attendance in line with the Academy's Attendance Meeting Form (Appendix 1).

Where such strategies are tried and attendance does not improve, this may result in an Academy Attendance meeting with an Academy Attendance Plan being completed.

Failure to improve an individual's attendance from this point may then result in the start of legal proceedings.

Implementation Date

December 2013

Review period

Annually

Date policy last reviewed

February 2016

Person responsible for policy

Vice Principal

Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to all students, their parents and staff.

Background information

John Cabot Academy is committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. The Academy believes that only if students attend regularly and punctually will they be able to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Procedures in support of this policy

In addition to these notes please also refer to your staff handbook.

Attendance

Student attendances must be recorded by a member of staff on the tutor group register on SIMS during the morning sessions and by all period 5 teachers for the afternoon sessions.

In the tutor's absence the register should be taken by the link tutor in the first instance, one of the Head of Communities or another member of staff. It is a requirement that the register is completed twice daily to ensure that accurate information pertaining to student attendance is kept at all times – it is the tutor's responsibility to ensure that this happens. In their absence the Head of Community will liaise with the support tutor to ensure that the registration for a tutor group is covered.

Reporting an absence

Parents should contact the Academy and leave a message on the absence line when a student is unable to attend the Academy through illness (or another valid reason).

If the Academy has not been notified that a student will be absent, the parent will be contacted by Truancy Call by 10.30am on the first day of absence to seek a reason. The register will be updated to acknowledge this where information is received from the parent.

All absences should be explained by a code letter indicating the reason for the absence, using the codes provided in SIMS.

All absences must be explained by a note or phone call from home. An explanation should be received by the tutor on the student's first day back at the Academy if parents have not already contacted the Academy or the Academy's Truancy Call is not able to get hold of parents.

If an absence is not explained the following procedure should be followed by the tutor:

- ask the student to bring a note the next day;
- ring parents (currently under review).

Tutors should seek help from the Head of Community / Inclusion Office / Attendance Officer where difficulties arise in obtaining explanations for absence.

On a weekly basis, tutors are asked to look for patterns of absence and lateness and to pass such information to their Head of Community.

Unauthorised absences

In the event that persistent absence is an ongoing problem, a student is absent following an absence request from a parent that the Principal has not authorised or a parent misleads or fails to inform the Academy about the reason for a student's absence, the Academy may issue a warning of a Penalty Notice in line with government guidelines; for example, a letter warning of the risk of a Penalty Notice application will be sent after 6 absent sessions over a period of 10 weeks (each AM and PM registration session counts as one session), along with a copy of the student's attendance records highlighting the unauthorised absence, penalty notice guidance from South Gloucestershire Council (Appendix 2) and an accompanying parent leaflet on how to improve a child's attendance (Appendix 3). The decision by the Academy to submit an application for a Fixed Penalty Notice will be taken in conjunction with advice from the South Glos council. Once the decision to proceed with a Fixed Penalty Notice has been made, the PN initial request form is completed and submitted (Appendix 4).

Attendance monitoring

The process followed by the Academy will involve:

- An initial attendance concern raised by poor attendance or an inability to determine the reason for an absence.
- In some cases this might be followed up by a letter, phone call or the setting up of an Academy Attendance meeting, or all of the above.
- The Academy Attendance meeting will set targets and review dates for improvement.
- Improvement will lead to review and potentially no further action but failure to improve attendance may lead to Fixed Penalty Notices and/or Full Prosecution.

Guidelines for intervention

The Attendance Officer, Heads of Community and rest of Inclusion team will follow these guidelines for analysing attendance data:

Target attendance is >96%

- Monitor student attendance (weekly through tutors, formally by Heads of Community and Attendance Officer – fortnightly).
- Where a student's attendance is of concern as determined by the Attendance Officer, Head of Community and/or Tutor, a phone call, attendance concern letter (Appendix 5) and/or parent meeting will be initiated.
- At Academy Attendance meetings agree targets and further review.
- If attendance does not improve, Attendance Officer makes an application to South Glos Council for either a Fixed Penalty Notice or to start the process of Full Prosecution.

Involvement of Parents

Good links and a working relationship with parents is an important prerequisite to good attendance.

The Academy will make it clear to parents why students need to attend regularly, what action will be taken by the Academy when students are absent, how parents are expected to notify the Academy of their child's absence and, in particular, what are to count as valid reasons for absence.

The Academy will arrange for parents of students with unsatisfactory attendance to be fully involved in the setting of attendance goals through an Academy Attendance meeting and creation of SMART attendance targets and plans.

The Head of Community will decide when an attendance phone call by the tutor needs to be made (94-96% attendance). For students with attendance between 90% - 94%, the Head of Community will send an attendance concern letter (Appendix 5), along with a copy of the student's attendance records highlighting the absences and an accompanying parent leaflet on how to improve a child's attendance (Appendix 3), which also invites parents in for a meeting to discuss the issues and sign an attendance contract (Appendix 1).

Student's attendance that is of serious concern <90% will be monitored and supported by the Attendance Officer. This may include an Attendance Plan agreed with student, parents and any other agencies involved, attendance mentoring and workshops, or referrals to other agencies such as CAMHS, FYPS.

In extreme cases, when there is no further course of action to be taken, the Academy may consider an application for a Full Prosecution in consultation with South Glos. Council.

Parents will be kept fully informed of improvements made by their children (or failure to improve).

When a student's attendance improves, it is important that this is acknowledged. When analysing the data, any student who has significantly improved following a concern and the subsequent intervention should receive an 'improvement in attendance' letter (which will be tailored to the particular student's improvement).

Students who have achieved a 100% attendance record over the course of the term, will be acknowledged through a 100% attendance certificate. This will also be acknowledged publicly through assemblies over the course of the year.

Leave of absence during term time

Leave of absence during term time will not be approved by the Principal unless in exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised leave may lead to a request to South Glos Council to issue further legal proceedings or a penalty notice.

All requests for leave of absence should be referred to the Principal via the Head of Community.

Parents will be required to complete a Holiday Checklist Safeguarding Form (Appendix 6) if a holiday is taken during term time, whether unauthorised or authorised in exceptional circumstances. This form requests details of the destination, dates and other information regarding the holiday. Documentary proof of the reason for the holiday may be requested.

Lateness

Any student who arrives late to the Academy should sign in at the late gate. Late marks will then be recorded on the 'Attendance and Punctuality Tracker' and the register. After 3 late marks a sanction of one day in isolation will be issued and a meeting with parents requested.

When the late is caused by reasons beyond a student's control, e.g. the Academy bus breaks down, he/she should be marked late but this should not count towards the 'three late marks equals a day in isolation detention'.

Parents will be notified of concerns about the lack of punctuality at this stage.

Tutors of students who are persistently late should contact parents in the first instance (under review) to seek an explanation and should discuss these with Heads of Community.

Late Codes in the Register

A student's register mark should indicate that they are 'late' (L) in the event that they arrive to tutor time after 8.30am (without an explanation from a member of staff). If a student is late and arrives after 9.15am, their mark in the register should be recorded as 'late after registers have closed' (U). This constitutes an absence so it is essential that the code is used appropriately (and not, for example, if a student arrives after morning registration at 8.50am).

Other relevant Information**Tutors need to be aware that possible reasons for non attendance might be:**

attitudes and pressures from home
failure to achieve
personality factors
history of truancy in earlier years
long periods of illness / low expectations for employment
no friends/bullying
influence of older students/adults
family history of poor attendance
students who have recently changed school
curriculum inaccessible

and should investigate accordingly, ideally through a mentoring session in the first instance.

The DfE report 'Truancy in English Secondary Schools' suggests that students reject particular facets of school (particular subjects in the curriculum; homework; coursework; teachers) rather than the institution as a whole.

Students' rights

All students at John Cabot Academy have the right:

- to be able to fully participate in all of the Academy's activities, both within and beyond the curriculum;
- to be assisted in identifying the causes of problems and be helped to remedy them. To be monitored and supported in their attempts to attend;
- to receive praise for their efforts and improvements made;
- to be helped to catch up with any work missed through illness or non-attendance;
- to have full access to the National Curriculum and to have work provided for them in cases of exclusion.

Students' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of students:

- to report to tutor base for registration at the designated times at the start and end of the Academy day;
- to sign in at reception if late for whatever reason to bring a note from home explaining the reason for any absence;
- to arrive promptly and with all necessary books and equipment for the start of each lesson.

Involvement of South Gloucestershire Council

In the event that the interventions the Academy has put in place have not resulted in a satisfactory improvement in the attendance of a student, the following should be considered:

- Fixed Penalty Notice for regular patterns of absence (8 sessions every 10 weeks)
- Full Prosecution

Staff responsibilities**Tutors**

In the first instance, the monitoring of attendance/absence will fall to the tutor, who will receive weekly data on their students' attendance, discuss the data with their tutees, request absence notes and make the initial call home when reason for absence is not provided (under review) and raise individual concerns with the relevant Head of Community.

Head of Community

The Heads of Community will review the data on a fortnightly basis in a meeting with the Attendance Officer and make decisions about the level of intervention required, and by whom, and update the record of this on the Attendance Intervention Tracker. They will then employ strategies to improve attendance in consultation with the Attendance Officer and Senior Heads of Community where necessary. The Head of Community will also use assemblies to promote the importance of attendance and the consequences of poor attendance, as well as celebrating good and significantly improving attendance.

Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer will keep a record of the actions arising from fortnightly meetings with each Head of Community, analyse the attendance data and share the relevant information with the Inclusion team and tutors on a weekly basis. Standard letters will also be produced and presented to Heads of Community to sign off before they are sent home along with the student's attendance certificate.

A weekly update of lesson registers not completed will be circulated to all staff and a personal email sent to individual staff who have not completed AM tutor register or the PM period register which are legally required. The Attendance Officer will oversee the interventions of students with serious attendance concerns, generally <90%; for example, arranging attendance workshops, creating attendance plans and contracts, and liaising with other agencies and academy staff as required. The Attendance Officer will organise a rewards system for students being mentored or under an attendance plan whose attendance significantly improves e.g. certificates and vouchers.

Senior Head of Community

Will meet with Heads of Community fortnightly to discuss attendance in the Community and support intervention when required.

Vice Principal

Will line manage the Attendance Officer, quality assure all the systems and processes concerning attendance, and update the Attendance Policy as required.

Other members of staff

Concerns may also be raised with a student's tutor or Head of Community by individual subject teachers. Year 6→7 coordinator to include a request for attendance information during the primary school liaison program and to feedback to Heads of Community any concerns regarding attendance.

In extreme cases, causes for concern should be raised with the Principal.

List of appendices

Appendix 1 – Academy's Attendance Meeting Contract

Appendix 2 – Penalty Notice Guidance from South Gloucestershire Council

Appendix 3 – 'How to improve a child's attendance' leaflet

Appendix 4 – Penalty Notice Initial Request form

Appendix 5 – Attendance Concern letter

Appendix 6 – Holiday Safeguarding Checklist

Appendix 7 – Application for Full Prosecution