



Attendance Policy

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Guiding Principles

- Southern Academy Trust strives to ensure that all its pupils access a full-time education.
- Each school will work with pupils and their families to ensure every pupil attends regularly and punctually.
- Each school will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents/carers who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Each school has an effective system of communication with parents/carers together with appropriate agencies to provide mutual information and support.
- Each school will support all aspects of the Education Act 1996 and the Children's Act 2003: 'Every Child Matters' by implementing this policy in a consistent manner.
- Each school will have regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and reasonable adjustments will be made for young people.

What you can expect from Southern Academy Trust and its schools:

- We will promote good attendance and punctuality and will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absence.
- We will work closely with parents/carers where pupil's absence is cause for concern.
- We will support pupils to achieve good attendance and punctuality.

What Southern Academy Trust expects from Pupils:

- To attend regularly and on time
- To be punctual to all lessons
- To ensure all messages and notes from parents/carers are taken to the appropriate place (age appropriate)

What Southern Academy Trust and its schools expect from Parents/Carers:

- To ensure their child attends regularly, punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn
- To ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless they are too ill to do so
- To avoid keeping their child away from school for any reason other than illness or other authorised explanation
- To avoid arranging holidays during term time
- To promptly inform the school if their child is unable to attend including the reason for absence and expected date of return

- If no indication of a return date has been given, parents/carers should contact the school on each day of absence.

Registration

- The law requires the register to be taken twice a day – at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session.
- Pupils are expected to arrive on time in order to be ready for the start of the first lesson.
- Registers close 10 minutes after the start of the session. After this, pupils will be marked as late, after 25 minutes of the start of the session; pupils will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation has been received.
- The register is marked using the DfE Attendance and Absence Codes (see Appendix 1).
- Guidance on applying the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 can be found in 'Advice on School Attendance' published 2012 by the DfE.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval for absence in advance or where the explanation given afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for the absence. Parents/carers may not authorise absence; only the school can do this.

- Absence may be authorised for such reasons as:
 - Significant illness
 - Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
 - Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement
 - Days of religious observance (see Appendix 2)
 - Exclusion
 - Involvement in a public performance
- Absence will not be authorised for such reasons as:
 - Looking after brothers/sisters/unwell parents/carers
 - Birthdays
 - Days out
 - Shopping trips
 - Family holidays where permission has not been granted (please note, family holidays during term time will not normally be approved)
 - Special occasions, where the school does not agree that the absence should be granted
- Following an explanation from parents/carers regarding a child's absence, the school will decide whether or not it accepts the explanation and authorise/unauthorise accordingly.
- Absence which hasn't been explained will remain as unauthorised.

How we respond to Absence/Lateness

- If a pupil is absent at morning registration without contact from a parent/carer to explain the absence, the school will contact parents/carers. We take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will always do our best to contact parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of their pupil's absence.
- Where a pupil's absence is cause for concern, the school will write to parents/carers and/or invite the parents/carers into school or visit parents/carers at home.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a Persistent Absentee when they miss 10% of their schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Any pupil whose attendance has reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority for intervention. Intervention may be via:

- An action plan to improve attendance will be created which may involve a CAF and referrals to other agencies alongside meetings between relevant school staff and parents/carers.
- Where parents/carers fail to co-operate with support and strategies provided by the school, further advice may be sought which could lead to legal sanctions being imposed. Persistent Absence data is communicated to the relevant Local Authority and Department for Education via the School Census on a termly and annual basis.

Leave of Absence during Term Time

Any absence interrupts the continuity of pupil's learning. Government legislation now states that only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence; please refer to the Department for Education for the latest guidance. Parents/carers are strongly urged not to take pupils out of school for holidays during term time.

It is expected that a Request Form is submitted to the school at least 4 weeks in advance of the proposed absence. All factors that need to be considered must be stated on the request form. The Academy has the right to serve a Fixed Penalty Notice on parents/carers who insist on taking their pupils out of school without authorisation. Fixed Penalties require each parent to pay a fine of £60 per pupil if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay within the specified timescale could result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure regular school attendance. This legislation also applies to any pupil taking leave of absence without prior notification to the school.

Statutory Requirements, the Law and the Local Authority

- Registers are legal documents; regulatory requirements placed on schools regarding the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child receives a suitable education.
- Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.
- The Academy works together with the relevant Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibility. There are a range of legal sanctions that may be imposed for dealing with unauthorised absence: Fixed Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts and Orders, Education Supervision Orders or referral to the Magistrates Court which can recommend fines (up to £2500) or up to 3 months in prison.
- All sanctions are used to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce absence.

Appendix 1

DfE Attendance Codes, Description 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. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> 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	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Appendix 2

Religious Observance

Authorised absence may be granted for religious observance, for example, Eid. The Department for Education definition is as follows:

“Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals.”

If the religious body has not set the day apart, there is no requirement for the Academy to approve the absence or grant leave of absence.

Individual religions and their religious observance are too numerous to detail in this document.

Parents should contact the Academy to request leave of absence for all religious observance.