



# **PONTEFRACT**

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## ACADEMIES TRUST

### **ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF POLICY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- 1.01 Across the Trust, all staff strive to ensure that all pupils/students receive a full time education that maximises the opportunities for all pupils/students to fulfil their potential.
- 1.02 In all Trust schools 100% pupil/student attendance is expected and each school has in place a range of procedures and strategies that actively promotes good attendance, recognises good attendance and punctuality, and seeks to address unjustified absences.
- 1.03 Pontefract Academies Trust recognises the link between high levels of attendance and academic progress. To this end, each school has a responsibility to provide a welcoming, productive and safe learning environment, which supports high levels of attendance.
- 1.04 All school staff have a responsibility to promote good attendance and key staff in each school will work with pupils/students and their families to ensure that each pupil/student attends the school regularly and punctually.
- 1.05 In each school there will be effective and efficient communication systems (which include email and text communication) between pupils/students, their families and appropriate agencies.
- 1.06 Each school will work with multi-agency partners, or other agencies to provide information, advice and support to promote high levels of pupil/student attendance.

## **1.1 ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY AIMS**

- 1.1.1 The aims of this Policy and school procedures are:
  - 1.1.1.1 To continually improve the overall percentage of pupils/students attending each school.
  - 1.1.1.2 To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with each school, including pupils, parents/carers, teachers and SPRB members.
  - 1.1.1.3 To have in place a staffing structure, with roles and responsibilities that promotes consistency in carrying out attendance related activities.
  - 1.1.1.4 To provide guidance, support and advice to parents/carers.
  - 1.1.1.5 To develop systems to record, report and analyse attendance and punctuality data.
  - 1.1.1.6 To develop positive and consistent communication between parents/carers and each school.
  - 1.1.1.7 To have in place systems for rewards and sanctions.
  - 1.1.1.8 To work in partnership with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Team and other agencies to improve attendance and punctuality and ensure that children are safe.

- 1.1.1.9 To recognise, and put in place, individualised plans for pupils/students with specific needs (this includes pupils with Special Educational Needs, pupils/students with a disability or pupils/students with a medical condition).

## **2.0 LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES OR LEGISLATION**

- 2.01 This Policy links to the Trust's legislative duties, as defined by the Education Act 1996 and 2002, the Children's Act 1989 and 2004 and the Equalities Act 2010.
- 2.02 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 makes clear that parents/carers are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education. Under section 444 of the same Act, a parent/carer who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.
- 2.03 This Policy links, and refers to advice and guidance issued by the Department of Education. This includes:
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018).
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2015).
  - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and subsequent amendments).
  - The Local Authority's Education Welfare Policy and procedures.
  - Children Missing Education ([Children missing education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk))
- 2.04 This Policy links to the Trust's Behaviour for Learning Policy.

## **3.0 PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

- 3.01 Each school has in place systems to recognise and reward pupils/students who have sustained high levels of attendance and who consistently arrive to school and lessons on time. We also recognise where pupils/students have succeeded in improving their attendance and/or punctuality.
- 3.02 At key times during the academic year good attendance and punctuality will be celebrated. Each school recognises that in order to promote good attendance pupils/students need to experience an engaging curriculum, feel safe at school and feel they achieve during their time in school.
- 3.03 Each school will inform pupils/students and their parents/carers of their attendance levels at regular (often weekly) intervals.
- 3.04 Parents/carers will be reminded regularly about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- 3.05 Parents/carers should contact their child's school, at the earliest opportunity to discuss occasions where their child may need additional support, or other reasonable adjustments, to accommodate exceptional circumstances. This may include a change in family circumstances or a change to their child's health/wellbeing.
- 3.06 All actions and sanctions used by each school are used to improve attendance and punctuality and aim to provide a good education to all pupils/students.

#### **4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PONTEFRACT ACADEMIES TRUST**

##### **4.01 In each school you can expect:**

- 4.01.1 All staff to have a responsibility towards improving attendance and punctuality.
- 4.01.2 That we will have in place accurate attendance recording systems that will provide accurate information and inform tracking and monitoring systems. This data will be used to monitor individual patterns of attendance, patterns of attendance across the year and implement strategies to improve attendance at any point during the academic year.
- 4.01.3 All staff to implement this Policy consistently.
- 4.01.4 Leaders to have due regard towards the Equalities Act, and, where appropriate or required, make reasonable adjustments for pupils/students with specific needs.
- 4.01.5 That we will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absences.
- 4.01.6 That we will work closely with parents/carers where we believe a pupil's/student's attendance is a cause for concern.
- 4.01.7 That we will support pupils/students to improve their attendance and punctuality.
- 4.01.8 That we will promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality to pupils/students and their parent/carers throughout the year.
- 4.01.9 That we will support pupils/students in returning to school, following a period of extended absence.
- 4.01.10 That in the instances of declined absence requests we will communicate our decision promptly to parents/carers. See Section 10 for further information.

#### **5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF (SECONDARY) STUDENTS**

##### **5.01 We will make clear our expectations to students with regard to attendance and punctuality.**

##### **5.02 These expectations are:**

- 5.02.1 To arrive on time and ready to learn.
- 5.02.2 To attend 100% of the time.
- 5.02.3 To be punctual to all lessons.
- 5.02.4 To clearly register for lessons and advise a member of staff (such as SLO, Attendance Officer, Form Tutor, EWO) if they have not been able to register.

5.02.5 To ensure that any messages from parents/carers, or notes in planners are passed to a member of staff.

5.02.6 To follow the Trust's Behaviour for Learning Policy.

## **6.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS**

6.01 Parents/carers have legal obligations to ensure their child attends school regularly. The majority of our pupils/students have good attendance and arrive to school on time.

6.02 When your child begins their education with a school in Ponterfract Academies Trust, we make clear our expectations to parents/carers. These expectations are:

6.02.1 To ensure your child attends school on each school day, dressed in full uniform and ready to learn.

6.02.2 To ensure your child attends school on time. This includes making suitable arrangements for any transport/drop off to allow your child to arrive on time.

6.02.3 To be aware of term dates and avoid booking holidays during term time.

6.02.4 To avoid keeping your child away from school for any reason other than illness, or other authorised reason. See Section 10 for further information.

6.02.5 To inform the school (by the start of the school day) that your child is unable to attend, providing the reason for absence and when you expect them to return. If no return date can be provided, it is expected that parents/carers contact the school each day with an update.

6.02.6 To provide information, when requested by the school, about periods of extended or frequent absences.

6.02.7 To meet with pastoral staff at the school to discuss concerns about your child's attendance or punctuality.

6.02.8 An understanding that for educational reasons, only in exceptional cases will absences be agreed.

6.02.9 An understanding that where your child's attendance or punctuality gives the school cause for concern then we will discuss this with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Team to explore ways in which we can improve these attendance/punctuality levels.

6.02.10 Parental support in applying sanctions for non-attendance or lateness. The Behaviour for Learning Policy provides further information.

6.02.11 To advise the school of any changes to their contact details or those individuals they have nominated as alternative contacts.

## **7.0 REGISTRATION**

- 7.01 There is a statutory requirement to take a register twice a day, once for a morning session and once for an afternoon session which is dictated by the school day.
- 7.02 If pupils/students fail to register by these times, they will be considered as having an unauthorised absence, unless a satisfactory explanation is received.
- 7.03 Each school follows the Government guidance on attendance and absence codes. These can be viewed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>.

## **8.0 PUNCTUALITY**

- 8.01 Pupils/students that arrive to school after 09:01 am are considered as 'Late' and if they arrive after 10:31 am they are absent and receive U code.
- 8.02 Pupils/students will be required to sign in (or parents/carers confirm their arrival to Reception in primary settings).
- 8.03 Repeated lateness will be dealt with the same way as absences. For persistent or frequent lateness, each school will work with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Team to improve punctuality. This may result in legal proceedings against parents.

## **9.0 AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- 9.01 This area of the Policy explains what is considered to be authorised or unauthorised absence.
- 9.02 Any absence interrupts the continuity of pupils/students learning and only in exceptional circumstances will a school agree a period of authorised leave. The Government publish the latest guidance and parental advice on school attendance on their website.

### **9.1 AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- 9.1.1 Authorised absence is where the school has agreed the reason for the absence and approved it. This approval can be in advance, or agreed after the absence, where a satisfactory reason has been given for the absence.
- 9.1.2 Any requests should be made to the Headteacher and only a representative of the Headteacher can authorise absences.
- 9.1.3 Absences may be authorised for reasons such as:
  - 9.1.3.1 Illness
  - 9.1.3.2 Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
  - 9.1.3.3 Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)
  - 9.1.3.4 Days of religious observance (see **Appendix 1**).
  - 9.1.3.5 Study leave (for recognised qualifications)
  - 9.1.3.6 Exclusion
  - 9.1.3.7 Involvement in a public performance, significant sporting activity (e.g. Olympics) or significant public event.

- 9.1.4 Parents/carers should contact the school at least 15 minutes before the start of the school day, on the morning of the absence, to explain the reason for absence and provide an expected return date.
- 9.1.5 It is at the discretion of the school to authorise absences, based on information provided.
- 9.1.6 Parents/carers should be aware that during an extended period of absence or an extended period of frequent absences the school has the right to change the status of the absence to unauthorised. In these cases a representative of the school must communicate the change to parents/carers and look for ways in which the school can continue to support an improvement in attendance.
- 9.1.7 Even when circumstances are considered exceptional, please note the considerations outlined in **Appendix 1**.

## **9.2 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- 9.2.1 Unauthorised absence is where a school has not agreed the reason for the absence. Absence will not be authorised for reasons such as:
- 9.2.1.1 Looking after unwell family members
  - 9.2.1.2 Days out, including exhibitions, sporting events etc.
  - 9.2.1.3 Birthdays
  - 9.2.1.4 Shopping trips
  - 9.2.1.5 Family holidays. **Parents/carers are advised not to take pupils/students out of school for holidays during term time.**
- 9.2.2 Absences which have not been explained, or where the school does not accept the explanation, will be treated as unauthorised.
- 9.2.3 For persistent or frequent unauthorised absences, the school will work with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Team to improve attendance. This may result in legal proceedings against parents/carers.
- 9.2.4 Where a pupil/student has 20 days or more of continuous unauthorised absence and no contact has been made, they will be reported to the Local Authority as a child missing education and they will advise on if they need to be taken off role.

## **9.3 MEDICAL/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS**

- 9.3.1 Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours, wherever possible. Where this is not possible pupils/students are expected to attend the school before and after the appointment.
- 9.3.2 Parents/carers will be asked to provide confirmation of the appointment (time/date/reason) in order for the absence to be authorised.
- 9.3.3 Authorisation will only be given for reasonable travel time to and from the appointment. Where it is considered practical for the pupil/student to attend the school before and/or after the appointment and they do not attend, this will be considered as an unauthorised absence.



- 9.3.4 If emergency appointments are made at the start of the day, causing the pupil/student to arrive late, confirmation of the appointment must be provided, otherwise the absence will be treated as 'late'.

## **10.0 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES**

- 10.01 If a pupil/student is absent at morning registration without any contact from their parent/carer, we will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence.
- 10.02 Each school has a safeguarding responsibility to identify any pupils/students who are missing from education and we will make contact with those individuals named as contacts on a pupil's/student's record to establish the whereabouts of the child.
- 10.03 The school will make contact by telephone call, email or text message.
- 10.04 Where the school cannot make contact representatives of the school will make a home visit. We will also make a home visit where there are continuous concerns about a pupil's/student's attendance or punctuality. Where possible, we will advise parents/carers that we intend to make a home visit, although this may not always be possible.
- 10.05 The school will follow up any visits with letter or email.
- 10.06 In all cases the school will continue to contact and work with parents/carers to support them in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
- 10.07 In cases where the pupil/student has SEN, disabilities or other medical needs, the school will seek advice from the SEN and other professionals to work with parents/carers to support them in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
- 10.08 Where no sustained improvements in attendance or punctuality are demonstrated the school will work in partnership with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Team to improve attendance/punctuality. This may result in formal or legal proceedings against parents/carers, including Penalty Notices.

## **11.0 PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

- 11.01 A pupil/student is a persistent absentee when they miss more than 10% of their possible sessions in an academic school year.
- 11.02 Each school will prioritise any pupil/student who has reached this threshold or at risk of reaching this threshold and will implement strategies to improve the pupil's/student's attendance. Any strategies will involve communication and requests for meetings with parents/carers.
- 11.03 Where appropriate, or required by law, the school will engage with other agencies to support improvements in attendance and/or punctuality.

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## **12.0 RE-INTEGRATION FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF EXTENDED ABSENCE**

- 12.01 When a pupil/student returns to their schooling following a period of absence a personalised plan will be developed as to how the school will support an improvement in attendance.
- 12.02 This plan will be discussed with parents/carers to gain their commitments to the actions and improvements required.
- 12.03 In the case of pupils/students with SEN/D this may require an Education Healthcare Plan, and in these circumstances relevant professionals will be involved in the planning of the pupil's/student's successful return (e.g. SENCo, Health Professionals etc.).
- 12.04 In these cases a nominated member of staff will be the key contact to monitor and review the pupil's/student's return.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Please be aware that when requesting leave each school will only authorise in exceptional circumstances and not in the following circumstances:

- Requests for pupils/students in Year 2, 6, 11, will not generally be authorised, even for exceptional reasons.
- Requests made for leave during exam periods.
- Requests made for leave where there are coursework deadlines.
- Requests made for leave during SATs preparation or during the period of time when pupils/students sit SATs.
- Requests made for absence in September-October.
- Requests made for pupils/students who have attendance below 95%.
- Requests made for pupils/students who have had previously unauthorised absences, including where family holidays have been taken during term time.

### **Religious observance**

The Department of Education advises:

*'Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.'*

If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for the school to agree to authorise the absence.

Parents/carers are advised to contact the school to discuss any requests for leave made for religious observance.