



Attendance Policy

Approved by Governors: November 2016

Chair of Governors signature: 

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We aim to achieve an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence. For all our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend the Academy, on time, ready to work, every day that the Academy is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.
- 1.2 It is very important therefore, that you make sure that your child attends regularly. This policy sets out how together we can achieve this. We will work with parents/carers, staff, learners and Governors to achieve our aim of maximum attendance for all children.
- 1.3 Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect his/her learning. Any absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, all the Academy staff, Governors, and most importantly, the learners. We need to work together to achieve this.
- 2.2 Parents/Carers are responsible in law for ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of children in their care. Please familiarise yourself with our attendance policy so that we can effectively communicate with each other to overcome any problems which might affect your child's attendance. Permitting your child to be absent from the Academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and might, ultimately, result in prosecution.

- 2.3 Thomas Hepburn Community Academy values high attendance rates and will work proactively to promote good attendance by explaining our expectations. We will provide an effective and efficient system of monitoring attendance in accordance with legal requirements. We understand that external factors can influence learner attendance and we will work in partnership with parents/carers and other services to provide a range of strategies to deal with any issues.
- 2.4 Gateshead Local Authority Legal Intervention Team is a statutory agency which deals with attendance matters. This service is independent of the Academy and will give impartial advice and guidance for those parents/carers seeking help and information. Their number can be obtained from the main office.

3. Expectations

- 3.1 Parents/Carers can expect Thomas Hepburn Community Academy to endeavor to carry out the following:
- Record and monitor attendance and punctuality accurately
 - Make early contact with them when their child fails to attend the Academy unless a good reason has already been provided
 - Provide easy means of communication for parents/carers to contact the Academy when their child is unavoidably absent
 - Prompt and confidential action on identified issues
 - Put measures in place to promote good attendance and punctuality
 - Give you regular details on attendance in our newsletter
 - Report to you at least once a term on how your child is performing in the Academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
 - Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
 - Reward good and improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, prize draws and outings/events
 - Run promotional events when parents/carers, learners and staff can work together on raising attendance
- 3.2 Thomas Hepburn Community Academy expects parents/carers to ensure the following:
- Ensure contact details are up to date
 - Their child attends the Academy regularly and promptly
 - They contact the Academy on the first day of their child's unavoidable absence and communicate with the Academy when an absence is likely to be longer than one or two days
 - Their child arrives at the Academy appropriately dressed and equipped for the day
- 3.3 Thomas Hepburn Community Academy expects learners to ensure the following:
- They attend the Academy regularly and on time
 - They are prepared for the demands of the day

- They inform a member of staff of any problem they are experiencing which may hamper their ability to attend the Academy and access their education

4. Procedures

4.1 Registration

- The start of the Academy day is 8.30am. Teachers will mark their registers at 8.30am and make no further entries after that time. The Attendance Leaders will record all learners arriving after that time and will be responsible for making appropriate entries in the Attendance Register. The names of any late arrivals (after 8:30am) are recorded and Late Detention is issued.
- Learners who arrive after 8.30am will be recorded as late (L). As the Academy is a closed site at lunchtime no learner should be late without good cause for the afternoon session.

4.2 Absences

All absences will be recorded as 'Authorised' or 'Unauthorised'. 'Authorised absences' are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for an acceptable reason like illness or other unavoidable cause. The Academy is the only one allowed to authorise an absence. 'Unauthorised absences' are those absences where an explanation has not been forwarded by the parent/carer or an explanation has been received but not one which the Academy considers to be reasonable. Unreasonable reasons for keeping learners off from the Academy unnecessarily may be shopping trips, days off for birthdays, waiting for callers, looking after younger siblings. Truancy would also be in the unauthorised absence category.

4.3 Persistent Absenteeism

A learner becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the Academy year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absences thoroughly and any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parents/Carers will be informed immediately. PA learners are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA learners and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan to encourage improvement in this situation.

4.4 Holidays

- The current Department for Education regulations which allow Head Teachers to authorise Leave of Absence for holidays taken during term time, have changed from 1st September 2013.

- “The Amendments make clear that Head Teachers/Principals may not grant any leave of absence during Term Time unless there are exceptional circumstances” (DFE Website).
- If parents/carers take unauthorised leave of absence then Fixed Penalty notices (fines) can be issued to all adults who have parental responsibility for each of their children (both mother and father will receive a fine for each child).
- From 1st September 2013 the fine will be £60 per child if paid within 21 days or £120 per child if paid between 21 days to 28 days.
- If the fines are not paid within this guidance, then prosecution will follow.

5. Staff Roles

- 5.1 All staff have a general responsibility for attendance matters as part of child welfare, as we must all work together to improve attendance levels across the Academy and to ensure the safety and security of our learners. Specific responsibility is given to the Attendance Leaders and Attendance Clerk. Attendance data will be regularly communicated to all staff. This will facilitate the identification of particular cohorts whose attendance causes concern and enable appropriate strategies to be put in place to encourage improvement. As part of this process a Persistent Absentee (PA) register will be maintained and regularly reviewed.

6. Subject Teacher

- 6.1 The teacher should always take a register at the beginning of each lesson making it a formal occasion so that learners are aware the register is being taken. Please encourage good practice by leading by example by always being punctual to classes. Session registration is a legal requirement and will take place at the beginning of Lesson 1 and Lesson 4 for the afternoon session. If for any reason an electronic register cannot be taken then arrangements should be made to obtain a paper register from the main office. All supply and guest teachers will be supplied with paper registers as necessary. If the subject teacher suspects that a learner is truanting then the matter should be reported in the first instance to the attendance office.

7. Communication

- 7.1 Thomas Hepburn Community Academy will communicate this policy through the Academy brochure, the Academy website, the home-school agreement and regular newsletter articles as well as in the Staff Handbook/Policy documents.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 8.1 This policy will be monitored and reviewed in the first instance by a Vice Principal.

9. Those People Responsible for Attendance Matters in the Academy are:

- Heads of Year and Learning Mentors
- Attendance Leaders and Attendance Clerk
- Academy Leadership Group

10. Telephone Numbers

- 10.1 There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about issues, including absence, so we need to have current contact details at all times. We will try and contact parents/carers via telephone, text message service or letter. So please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact form.
- 10.2 The system of 'First Day Response' is intended to improve attendance levels and decrease levels of absence, especially those which are unauthorised. It should also bring incidents of truancy to the attention of the Academy and parents more quickly and therefore enable the staff to respond promptly and appropriately.
- 10.3 In order for the system to be effective it is essential that registers are taken promptly and sent (electronically or otherwise) immediately after they have been taken.

11. First Day Response

- Registers for Lesson 1 should be returned by 8.50am
- Information left by voicemail should be entered in register by 9.25am
- The Attendance Clerk will contact, by telephone/text message, the parents/carers of all learners who have a first day absence
- The Attendance Clerk will amend register code when a reason for absence has been obtained
- Should the Attendance Clerk be unable to make contact, a proforma/text message requesting the reason for absence will be sent
- Further attempts to contact parents/carers will be made on subsequent days by telephone, text and by letters, and amendments made to registers
- The Attendance Clerk will input electronic record of reasons for absence onto the SIMS system and this will be used in meetings with Learning Mentors, Head of Years, Attendance Leaders and at Governors' meetings
- If it has not been possible to make contact with the parent/carer or to ascertain a reason for absence the Attendance Leader and Attendance Clerk will carry out a home visit