

Introduction

At Brook Learning Trust we bring together our unique academies in our belief in the power of education to change lives and communities. It is our steadfast purpose to challenge and defy the barriers that constrain the educational progress of any child. We set high aims for aspiration and secure collective responsibility for all our children's achievements. Our work is underpinned by the values of Integrity, Respect, Courage, Optimism, Excellence and Accountability.

Aims of the Policy

The Ebbsfleet Academy is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Academy Councillors, the Principal and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote good attendance. At The Ebbsfleet Academy we consider good attendance to be 96% or higher with no more than 2% lateness.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning. If there has been no contact from parents, we will conduct a safeguarding visit after the third day of absence.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.20 am. The school gates close at 8.30 am. If a student arrives to school after 8.30 am, they will be seen by the attendance officer on the gate. The reason for lateness will be recorded and the child will sit a same day detention.

The Role of Academy Staff

At The Ebbsfleet Academy there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Ms Cardnell, Vice Principal, has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues alongside Ms Fry, Attendance Officer.

Tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and teachers during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of Ms Fry, Attendance Officer, to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by email.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence. If a child has not returned in three days, and there has been no contact, a safeguarding visit will be conducted
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- >96% attendance – the Tutor will contact home to discuss attendance.
- 96 - 92% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents
- >93% attendance – where no improvement, a student and parents may be seen by an Academy Councillor Attendance Panel
- Where the measures above have been taken, and level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification

Children Missing Education

- No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Principal and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:
- Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:
- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school

Lateness

- At The Ebbsfleet Academy the register is taken at 8.30am and 1.10pm. Pupils arriving after 8.30am must enter school by the student entrance where their reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L'). Students will be issued with a detention
- The register will close at 9.20 am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence
- Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

- **Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:**
- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

- Only the Principal can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified
- If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised
- Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:
- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)
- Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing
- When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution
- **Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance**
- **Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017**
- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family
- To attend a wedding or funeral of family
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break

- Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Principal can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence
- Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:
 - With leave (the school has given permission)
 - Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
 - Religious observance
 - Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport
- In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school
- The Principal may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Principal's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively
- If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school
- Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority

Appendices to this Policy

Available from Ms C Fry, Attendance Officer, on request

Appendix 1	Late letter (Code L)
Appendix 2	Late letter (Code U)
Appendix 3	Absence Letter
Appendix 4	School Attendance Meeting Letter
Appendix 5	Absence Evidence Letter
Appendix 6	School Letter Warning re: Penalty Notice Referral
Appendix 7	Unauthorised absence confirmation of PN request
Appendix 8a	Leave of Absence Request form
Appendix 8b	Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)
Appendix 8c	Response to Leave Request submitted retrospectively (Not Authorising)
Appendix 9	Unauthorised leave confirmation of PN request
Appendix 10	School letter where they believe a holiday was taken
Appendix 11	'N' Code letter
Appendix 12	Traveller Attendance letter
Appendix 13	Traveller Absence due to travelling
Appendix 14	School Referral Pathway
Appendix 15	Home Visits Guidance

POLICY REVIEW AND RATIFICATION

Policy reviewed annually and ratified by academy council in March

Reviewed by SLT	March 2018
Summary of amendments to this iteration:	New policy in September 2017 No changes made in March 2018
Ratified by the academy council	March 2018
Next review & ratification	March 2019