



EBORA ACADEMY TRUST

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Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction

Ebor Academy Trust places high importance on punctuality and daily attendance. This is critical in the bedrock of a child's successful educational experience. This policy sets out the legal requirements and expectations for parents and carers in relation to pupil attendance. The policy also explains how its schools in the Academy Trust intend to support children and families who may encounter difficulties or barriers to positive daily attendance.

2. Responsibilities

Working together in partnership with parents is critical to ensuring successful attendance and therefore increased chances of positive attainment and wellbeing. Each school in the Trust is committed to supporting its children and families to achieve their full potential by ensuring their frequent and punctual attendance.

The expectation in relation to a pupil's attendance is one that is set out in law and stipulated under section 444 of the Education Act.

This policy reflects government guidance and all schools within the Ebor Academy Trust will ensure fair and consistent application of the policy.

It is a legal requirement for each school to take the attendance register twice a day: at the start of each morning and once during the afternoon. The Academy Trust school is required to notify the local authority if a student/pupil has irregular attendance or is absent continuously without authorisation.

3. Aims of the policy to promote good attendance

Each school is explicit in its overall aim that children should feel secure and happy in a well-ordered environment and that they should be enthusiastic about coming to school. Children have a right to experience a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum; non-attendance deprives them of this opportunity.

It is the aim of this policy that unauthorised absence should be 0% on a year-by-year basis and that authorised absences should be kept to a minimum. Whole school and individual monitoring will be in line with targets set by the Ebor Academy Trust on an annual basis.

In order to ensure attendance remains a high priority each school will;

- a) Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all children.
- b) Implement a common systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data every half term.
- c) Inform parents and carers each half term if their child's attendance is declining.
- d) Where patterns of poor attendance have been identified support will be offered.
- e) Implement a common system of rewards for attendance.
- f) Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and carers where required.
- g) Work in partnership with supporting services and agencies and the Local Authority.
- h) Recognise and meet the needs of the individual student/pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

4. Persistent Absence

Guidance from the Department for Education (2011) advises that if a child's attendance is below 90% he/she will be referred to as 'Persistent Absence'. Schools in the Ebor Academy Trust will work closely with parents and carers, the local authority and other external agencies to improve persistent absenteeism. This may include the use of parenting contracts and Attendance Panels.

The school will be monitoring attendance every half term. If a child's attendance drops below the national average we will notify parents of this and provide support to improve a child's absence. We are committed to working in partnership with parents to overcome any difficulties that could be preventing a child attending school on a regular basis.

5. Reporting absence

In line with safeguarding it is a clear expectation that all parents and carers must notify the school on the first day of a child's absence. If a child continues to be unwell then it is a requirement to inform the school office daily of that absence, unless agreed otherwise by mutual consent. Any children that have not been reported as absent may result in the school having to carry out a welfare check at the child's home to assure pupil safety.

The school will also require at least three emergency contacts for every child. This is not just in the event of a medical emergency, but in circumstances whereby a pupil is absent and the parent/carer is unobtainable and/or has not made contact with the school.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

There are a series of codes defined by the Department of Education which are used to denote authorised and unauthorised absence. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that the correct codes are recorded and that patterns in children's attendance are analysed.

The Headteacher of the school in certain circumstances is able to authorise absence. Detailed below are the reasons that would warrant an authorised absence.

- a) genuine illness
- b) unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- c) days of religious observance
- d) exceptional family circumstances, such as immediate bereavement

Absence from school will **not** be authorised for:

- a) shopping
- b) birthdays
- c) minding the house
- d) caring for brothers/sisters/relatives
- e) parent/carer illness
- f) sibling illness
- g) arrivals after the close of registration.

The head teacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be treated on an individual basis. Advice on what constitutes exceptional circumstances suggests situations such as children of service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside the term time, or families who need to spend time together following a crisis. Parents and carers are asked to ensure that they make any medical appointments for their child outside of the school day.

Parents and carers should put in writing all requests for a child's absence from school for any purpose. This should be sent to the school marked well in advance of any request for leave of absence during term time. Circumstances such as previous attendance, academic achievement, family circumstances and the time of year, will be taken into account. If a child has an older sibling, contact will also be made with local secondary schools so that a joint decision can be made. Should a leave of absence request not be authorised and the child is still taken out of school, a 'Fixed Penalty Notice' could be issued.

7. Enforcement

The school will always try to work supportively where a pupil's absence is becoming a cause for concern. In the first instance the school will communicate through a half term letter making parents and carers of the decline in attendance. Where a school has tried over time to engage a parent/carer to offer intervention to improve a child's attendance, yet the attendance is still declining or the parent/carer is not engaging then a referral to the enforcement department within the local authority will be made. The local authority may instruct legal action for repeated non attendance. It is always the school's hope to work by mutual consent and agreement. The school is aware that circumstances will prevail that may make absence unavoidable.

8. Fixed Penalty Notice

In certain circumstances parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice where they take a holiday in term time which is not authorised by the Headteacher. A Fixed Penalty Notice can require a parent to pay a sum of either £60 or £120. Each parent can be issued with a notice for each child so two parents with two children can potentially be issued with four notices.

9. Support and guidance available to those with poor attendance and punctuality

Where persistent absence occurs, or where persistent lateness or poor attendance is identified through the monitoring processes, the attendance lead in each academy will contact the family. They will offer support and assistance to families who are experiencing difficulties in getting their children to school. This will be via appointments in school, guidance and advice on attendance or contact with other agencies. In some cases, a persistent absence action plan will be instructed. Whereby the pupil's absence will be closely monitored for an agreed period of time. Together the school will work with the family to offer further support and guidance. If attendance continues to be poor at this point steps may be taken, as dictated by law, which may result in prosecution for non-attendance.

The Ebor Academy Trust has a duty to refer regular absence (authorised and unauthorised) to the relevant local authority. This may include any evidence to show how schools in the Trust have supported the student/pupil and parent to improve attendance. It is for each local authority to judge each referral on its own merits and make a decision on the next probable course of action.

10. Further information for parents and carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to read the guidance on authorised and unauthorised absence and information on Fixed Penalty Notices in the document 'School Attendance Statutory Guidance and Departmental Advice August 2013' Reference: DFE-00158-2013 via the Department for Education website

www.education.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>