

# **City Academy Whitehawk**



## **Attendance Policy**

This policy was adopted on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024

This policy is due for review on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

Key contacts		
Role	Name	Contact details
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## **Introduction**

Aurora Academies Trust gives a high priority to children's educational achievement and believes that excellent attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all pupils to achieve their full potential. This policy has been introduced in order to help our schools achieve this aim and the staff and Local Academy Board (LAB) at City Academy Whitehawk are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

## **Background and Principles**

There are strong and evidence-based links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. We are committed to working in partnership with the Local Authority to reduce overall absence and persistent absence. The school supports local initiatives and strives to ensure all staff, students, parents and carers place a high value on school attendance. We are committed to actively promoting Early Help and promoting multi-agency support for vulnerable children and their families.

When children are supported to attend school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular attenders usually leave secondary school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities: this journey begins at primary school as poor attendance creates learning gaps that are hard to plug.

## **Parents are legally responsible for their child attending regularly**

All children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education.  
Parents:

- Must make sure their child is regularly attending school or 'otherwise' (i.e. another suitable alternative),
- Are guilty of an offence if their child doesn't regularly attend school.

This is set out in [section 7](#) and [section 444\(1\)](#) of the Education Act (1996).

The DfE reiterates that responsibility for ensuring attendance lies with parents, including care givers or anyone with 'parental responsibility', in its [statutory guidance for schools](#) on page 5.

## What is good attendance?

At City Academy Whitehawk, we define good attendance as consistently over 96%, although good attendance for children with underlying medical conditions or who experience a severe illness will of course look different. Children with on-going medical conditions may have an Individual Health Care Plan in place that outlines reasonable adjustments to a student's timetable where current medical evidence to support this is in place.

Good attendance will be celebrated at our school, with regular class awards presented in achievement assemblies and certificates for individual pupils. Please personalise for your school here with fuller details about how good attendance is celebrated and promoted.

## Definitions of Absence

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or has been agreed in advance by the school.

The school gates open at 08:30 so that children can be on time for the start of the school day in class at 08:45. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late (see section on Punctuality below).

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably by phone, email or in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as:

- Illness,
- Medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (for non-urgent appointments, we ask these are attended out of school),
- Emergencies or other unavoidable cause

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- Absences which have never been properly explained,
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark,
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays,
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised,
- Cases of recurrent illness causing frequent absence, with no medical evidence provided, may be recorded as unauthorised.

This type of absence is likely to lead to the school referring cases to the Local Authority for fixed penalty notices and prosecution.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **If your child is absent, you must:**

- Contact us via phone or email at 08:00 on every day of absence (unless a medical professional has given advice to take a specified number of days absence from school and this has been shared with the school). We ask that you please leave a voicemail if the line is engaged.
- Provide medical evidence if the reason for the absence is sickness and it is likely that the absence will continue for more than a week.

### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Text and/or telephone you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you,
- Call all authorised emergency contacts to try to establish your child's whereabouts,
- Carry out a home visit to ensure the safety of the child if no contact is made,
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if a period of absence persists or absences are regular,
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team if the situation does not improve.

## **Punctuality**

While all families may on rare occasions be unavoidably late, general poor punctuality is not acceptable. The school gates open at 08:30 so that children can be on time for the start of the school day in class at 08:45. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late (see section on Punctuality below).

### **How we manage punctuality:**

- Children arriving after close of registers (08:45) will arrive to the school office and collect a late slip.
- Office staff will enter each child onto the appropriate class register with a 'L' (late) mark.
- Children receiving a late slip after 09:15 will receive a registration mark of 'U' which means that although a child is now present in school the absence will count as a half day unauthorised absence. Obviously if there was a genuine need to be late (ie something medical) then the lateness would be authorised as described above,
- If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the school Attendance Officer who will discuss the concerns with you. Any child who continues to be late after this meeting may be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team resulting in a fixed penalty notice.

## **Persistent Absenteeism**

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.



If a child has attendance that has fallen below 93%, their parents will be notified that this is a cause for concern and their attendance will be regularly monitored, to prevent them becoming a Persistent Absentee. If attendance does not improve, the school will follow attendance management procedures - this will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks, and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns.

Attendance Support Meetings will be used to explore barriers to attendance, both in and out of school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support to the child in school, or Early Help intervention if the needs are wider and whole family support is more appropriate.

Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school's concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance. If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school's Attendance Officer will refer the case to the Local Authority Attendance Team to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued. A family may receive up to three fixed penalty notices in a 12-month period.

## Support For Pupils with Medical Needs, or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Some pupils will face greater barriers to school attendance than their peers. These include children with physical and mental health conditions and special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any child, therefore our attendance

ambition is the same as for any other pupil. However, we recognise that additional support may be needed to enable them to access their full-time education. This may include:

- Making reasonable adjustments and putting an Individual Health Care plan in place where needed,
- Accessing additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) where appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services,
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including (where applicable) ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan is accessed,
- Strategies to reduce in-school barriers such as concessions regarding uniform, access to support during the school day, break and lunch time arrangements,
- Joined-up pastoral care, especially for those affected by anxiety around school attendance.

Part-time timetables may be considered in exceptional circumstances, for example, as part of a re-integration package to support a pupil returning from long-term sickness absence. However, this should be in place for the shortest time possible and not used as a long-term solution. There will be formal arrangements in place to regularly review this with the pupil and parents/carers, with a time-limit when the pupil will be expected to return to school full-time.

## **Holiday Requests/Term Time Absence**

The Head Teacher can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances (see below). Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis by the school's Attendance Officer who has oversight for attendance. If a parent feels there is an exceptional reason for which their child needs to be granted leave from school, permission must be sought 2 weeks before the planned absence (contact the school office on 01273681377 or email [cawadmin@auroraacademies.org](mailto:cawadmin@auroraacademies.org)). No absence can be authorised retrospectively.

## **Fixed Penalty Notices**

The school adheres to the Local Authority's Code of Conduct with regards to pupil attendance and Fixed Penalty Notices.

### **Circumstances when penalty notices might be issued**

#### **Unauthorised Absence/Truancy:**

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed amounting to 10 more sessions in 10 weeks). CAW to change this to 6 in 6

- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory level following intensive support.
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term suspension or permanent exclusion.
- Persistent absence (below 90% over a period of time with no reasonable or medical explanation).

### **Unauthorised Leave:**

- Penalty notices **will always be** issued for **all unauthorised leave taken during term time**. Unauthorised absences will be issued with a fixed penalty notice to any adult with parental responsibility who takes the child out of school for the absence (in cases where parents are separated: one separated parent will not be fined for the action of the other separated parent).
- This includes excessive delayed return from holiday without prior school agreement (beyond one additional school day).

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1st September 2013, removes reference to holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments now make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

NAHT guidance suggests the following as circumstances which might be considered to be exceptional:

- Bereavement,
- Serious illness of a close family member,
- Wedding within the immediate family,
- Service personnel returning from a long tour of duty.

We also authorise absence for significant religious festivals (eg Eid; Hannukah) although we can't authorise a holiday to celebrate this (ie travelling to spend Eid with family).

If the decision is made not to authorise, the school Attendance Officer will send a letter to the parent/s confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised and will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued. If an unauthorised absence is taken, the Attendance Officer will complete a request that consideration be given to the issue of a penalty notice. The request will be sent to the Local Authority within two weeks of the pupil returning to school. The Local Authority will then issue a penalty notice.

### **Withdrawal of Penalty Notice**

Penalty notices may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- When it is issued to the wrong person,
- When issued outside the terms of the Local Authority Code of Conduct,



- When an offence has not been committed,
- If a parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address,
- If there are unforeseen exceptional circumstances and the leave of absence becomes authorised.

## **Prosecution For Non-Payment of a Fine**

The prosecution would not be for non-payment of the fine, but for the original offence of failing to ensure child's regular attendance at school. The Council may use the fact that a penalty notice has been issued and remains unpaid as evidence. The Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team would look at all the circumstances of the case when assessing the likelihood of securing a conviction for the original attendance offence.

If the decision is made to proceed with prosecution then as a matter of good practice, in any interviews with parents, the Local Authority will act in accordance with the spirit of the Codes of Practice set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), ensuring that the parent understands the basis for the interview, their needs are taken into account, their rights are explained and the interviews are conducted fairly.

## **Summary of Responsibilities**

Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time.
- Be appropriately prepared for the school day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly.

Families will:

- Encourage their children to attend school every day and on time.
- Ensure that they contact the school by 8am whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day.
- Provide the school with up-to-date home, work and emergency contact numbers.
- Request absence in exceptional circumstances at least 2 weeks in advance (unless an emergency) via the school office ([cawadmin@auroraacademies.org](mailto:cawadmin@auroraacademies.org)).
- Make arrangements to complete curriculum work if an extended period of absence has been agreed.

Teachers will:

- Ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time at the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the class.
- Ensure all notes and messages received are sent to the office.
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to the school Attendance Officer/Headteacher/DSL as appropriate.

- Inform parents/carers of attendance percentages for their child/children via the annual report.
- Maintain positive links with families whilst communicating concerns.

School Attendance Officer will:

- Monitor all pupils whose attendance has fallen below 93%.
- Generate absence/punctuality letters to parents/carers and organise Attendance Support Meetings with parents/carers.
- Support the Headteacher/school attendance leads in monitoring and identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern.
- Liaise with the Headteacher/DSL to refer children and parents/carers to appropriate agencies for intervention and support where needed, eg Early Help services.
- Liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Team to issue fixed penalty notices.
- positively promote good attendance within the school.
- Generate awards/certificates etc to celebrate good attendance.

The Head Teacher will:

- Set annual targets for attendance.
- Positively promote good attendance within the school.
- Oversee the implementation of the attendance policy and procedure.
- Ensure the collection of accurate statistical data.
- Develop efficient monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Report to the Local Academy Board.

The Local Academy Board (LAB) will:

- Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place.
- Review termly reports from the Head Teacher in respect of attendance data and trends.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy.

The Local Authority will:

- Support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid.