



Ark Blacklands Primary Academy

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Together, we achieve

Updated October 2022



1. INTRODUCTION

All children of school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability or any special need they may have. Regular academy attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Ark Blacklands Academy takes the responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils very seriously. It acknowledges that irregular attendance can disrupt continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement/low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within the academy.

We feel the whole academy community should take responsibility for attendance. Therefore, this policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of academy attendance are aware and informed.

2. AIMS

The aims of the Attendance Policy are:

- a) To raise the importance of good attendance in line with Ofsted requirements.
- b) Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- c) To improve punctuality.
- d) Promote opportunities to celebrate and reward children for attendance and punctuality achievements.

3. GUIDELINES

Reasons for absence

Parents and carers are asked to contact the academy office before 9:00am by phone or in person if their child needs to be absent from the academy.

Authorised absences

Acceptable reasons include sickness, hospital appointments, dentist appointments, recognised religious holidays (1 day per holiday only) and funerals. Medical appointments should be arranged outside of the academy day, if possible. Where this is not possible, we would expect pupils to miss only part of the day.

Unauthorised absences

Unacceptable reasons include shopping, going to a non-medical appointment, visiting relatives, buying shoes, going for a haircut, parent/carer unwell and taking holiday, for example by acquiring cheaper flights outside of academy holidays.

Holidays/Trips

The academy supports the view that every lesson counts and discourages parents/carers from taking holidays during term time.

Only the Principal can authorise absence.

4. ACTION TAKEN WHEN PUPILS ARE ABSENT

There are occasions when absence is unavoidable. These include:

- a) Illness.
- b) Medical or education appointments.

If a parent knows in advance of absence due to an appointment, the academy office should be informed and the appointment card shown.

If a child is ill, the parent or carer should ring the academy to inform us and on return present a written note explaining the absence. If your child is absent and has been prescribed medicine by the doctor please can you bring the medicine or prescription into the academy so we can photocopy it.

On the first day of absence, if the parent or carer has not called the academy to advise why their child is not in school, the academy will attempt to contact the parent or carer. If there is no successful contact made, the academy will carry out a home visit to ensure the safety of the child. If the home visit is unsuccessful, the academy will put a letter through the front door. This letter states that the parent or carer should contact the school urgently or a referral will be made to the police to carry out a welfare check.

If no reply is received; the absence is counted as unauthorised.

5. WHAT HAPPENS IF ATTENDANCE IS UNACCEPTABLE

The Principal/Attendance Officer reviews the attendance of all pupils monthly. If the attendance of a pupil falls below 95% the reasons for the absence are investigated.

The reasons for absence are discussed. If there are no extenuating circumstances the following procedure is instigated:

- a) The Attendance Officer will write to the parent or carer. The situation is reviewed at the next month's check.
- b) If no improvement is seen the Attendance Officer will request an appointment with the parent or carer. The situation is reviewed at the next month's check.
- c) If no improvement is seen the school will write again requesting an appointment and ask for medical certificates to be provided for each subsequent absence to be authorised. An Attendance Improvement Plan may also be implemented at this stage.
- d) If the attendance does not significantly improve, a referral to the Educational Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) will be made. In non-improving situations a penalty notice may be served

Ø See Appendix 1

If your child's attendance is unsatisfactory (below 95%) you are at risk of a referral to the Education Welfare Officer and may be liable for fast track court prosecution, prosecution and/or a fixed penalty notice under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

If the child is below 5 years of age, ESBAS will not accept a referral. In this instance the Principal will pursue the situation.

A Penalty Notice can be applied where appropriate for:

- term time holidays (minimum of 10 sessions in total - 5 school days)
- persistent unauthorised absence (minimum of 10 unauthorised absences during a 10 school week period)

6. LATENESS

The academy operates a staggered start to the school day:

Year Groups	Start Time
Reception, Year 1 and Year 6	8.30am
Year 2, 3, 4 and 5	8.40am

Pupils who arrive after their year group's start time must enter the academy through the main entrance. They must then be signed in as late on the school's late book system (Inventory).

Registers will close 30 minutes after the start of the school day. All pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked with the code U or with another absence code such as 'I' or 'M'.

Pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded in line with current guidance.

Any child receiving 5 U's in any half term may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The procedure for consistent lateness is the same as for absence – i.e. at 10% lateness the Principal is informed by the Attendance Officer.

- a. Referral made to see ESBAS – one month is given for improvement.
- b. If no improvement is seen ESBAS will request another appointment.
- c. If there are unacceptable improvements after a month, a further referral to ESBAS is made.

'Cause for Concern' registers for absence and punctuality are kept.

7. PUNCTUALITY INSPECTION

We also do sporadic punctuality inspections at the academy gate. Our Attendance Officer is sometimes involved in these.

8. HOW WILL THIS INFORMATION BE COLLATED?

A register of absence and punctuality referral is kept. The Attendance Officer and the Principal manage this register and meet regularly to decide necessary action.

9. PUPIL ABSENCE AND EXTENUATING FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCE

If parents or carers need to remove their child from the academy for any reason, they must complete a Withdrawal from Learning Request form. No absences for holidays should be authorised, unless in extreme or exceptional circumstances. Permission for absence will only be given if there are extenuating circumstances. If the absence is not authorised, the parent or carer may be liable to a Fixed Penalty Notice.

10. REGISTERS

These are important legal documents which must be completed carefully and promptly at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

Children entering the classroom via the academy office are late and should be marked as such, even if the register has not been taken yet.

II. REWARDS AND SANCTIONS

The class with the best attendance for the previous term is recognised and presented with a reward in the whole academy assembly.

Children with 100% attendance are presented with a certificate at the end of each term. Further prizes and awards may be presented for attendance.

APPENDIX I: PROCEDURE FOR THE ISSUE OF PENALTY NOTICES:

Academies will notify ESBAS of all cases where attendance has fallen below 90% in the preceding 6-week period and no valid reason for the absence has been provided by the parent/carer, along with evidence of what measures they have taken to bring this matter to the parent's/carer's attention.

The Local Authority (LA) will produce an information letter for distribution to all parents/carers whose children have been identified as falling below 95% attendance at their respective academies. This will set out clearly the circumstances whereby a Penalty Notice can be issued and the consequences for failure to pay within the required time scale.

Each pupil's attendance will be monitored for 15 academy days following the issue of the letter to see if the desired improvement has taken place. An acceptable improvement is an increase in attendance above 90% for the 15-day period.

Should the required improvement not take place and no valid reason for the absence is provided, the Court Officer will decide whether to issue the Penalty Notice or to proceed with a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Where a Penalty Notice is issued, it will be sent by the Court Officer through the post using First Class post to the parent's last known address.

Following a change to advice issued by the DfES in recent months, Penalty Notices may now be issued to the parents/carers of all pupils registered at Ark schools, irrespective of their actual home address. This also means that follow-up prosecutions where parents/carers fail to pay the Notice or to improve their children's attendance will extend to families resident outside the area.

Withdrawal of Penalty Notices:

The LA will withdraw any Notices issued if:

- a) It can be established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person.
- b) The use of the Penalty Notice does not conform to the terms of the Protocol.

Where either of the above occurs, written notice of the withdrawal shall be given to the recipient and any monies paid over shall be fully refunded.

Also, no proceedings under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 shall be instituted against the recipient in respect of the period covered by the withdrawn Notice.

Payment:

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

A Penalty Notice shall be for the sum of £60 if paid within 28 days rising to £120 thereafter until the final deadline of 42 days.

Payment in full of the Penalty Notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted under any other enforcement powers for the period.

Any revenue arising from the issue of Penalty Notices will be retained by the LA to defray the costs involved in their issue or any subsequent prosecutions arising from non-payment.

Non-Payment:

Non-payment of Penalty Notices within the prescribed time limits will result in a prosecution under Section (1) or (1A) of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence of failing to ensure the regular attendance of the child/ren at school.