

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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Linked Policies:

- SEND
- Anti-bullying
- Behaviour for Learning
- Child Protection Policy & Procedures
- Missing Child

St Wilfrid's CE Academy
Attendance & Punctuality Policy



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1. Rationale

As a provider of education, firmly rooted in Christian values and teachings, we believe it is not only our legal responsibility to encourage students to attend the Academy every day, (190 days per year), but also our moral responsibility. Instilling excellent attendance and punctuality not only provides our students with resilience and the ability to meet and overcome challenges, it allows them to take full advantage of all the opportunities available whilst preparing them for their future. Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and it is also essential so that students can reach their potential and achieve success. There is strong evidence to support the link between GCSE examination results and excellent attendance. At St Wilfrid's we expect all of our students to aspire to 100% attendance and appreciate the full support of Parents and Carers in encouraging this.

2. Policy aims

- To improve the efficiency of monitoring attendance and punctuality and to identify, at the earliest opportunity, those students for whom attendance/punctuality to **the Academy** and to **lessons** is a problem.
- To ensure that all students, whatever their circumstances, understand the importance of maintaining excellent attendance and punctuality records so that they are able to maximise their academic potential by accessing quality first time teaching and are able to benefit from extra-curricular activities that are available.
- To reduce further the numbers of persistent absence, unauthorised absences and late marks.
- To recognise and reward those students who not only attend the Academy on a regular basis but are also punctual to both the Academy and class.
- To make the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders clear and to outline clearly all procedures and processes related to attendance and punctuality.

3. Procedures

i) Registration

This will be carried out twice a day using the Academy electronic system (SIMS), during Period 1 and afternoon registration. The school registers will close at 9.20am and 1.30pm each day.

Teaching staff are required to complete registers for every class taught. If computer access is available in the learning environment, SIMS must be used as a method of recording attendance. If unavailable, staff must keep paper records of student attendance and return these to the Attendance Manager as soon as possible.

ii) Absences

All absences will be recorded as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. From information provided by Parents/Carers, appropriate codes in line with national reporting requirements will be used to categorise the authorised absences. These codes can be found [here](#).

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy due to the following reasons:

- a student is absent with permission granted by the Principal;
- a student is ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- there is a family bereavement;
- if a student is attending an unavoidable dental/medical appointment;

- a student is attending an interview with a prospective employer, or in connection with an application for a place at an institute of higher education, or for a place at another school;
- religious observance in line with Blackburn with Darwen Policy;
- a student is excluded;

Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the Parent/Carer and this type of absence can lead to the Academy using sanctions and/or Blackburn with Darwen commencing legal proceedings in line with statutory guidance.

Examples include:

- keeping children off school without a good reason, for example, to look after siblings, mind the house, to celebrate a birthday, go on holiday;
- truancy;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at the Academy too late to get a mark, after the registers have closed without valid reason;
- taking holidays that have not been approved by the Academy in advance;
- where a student fails to return after the period of time agreed by the Academy;
- where medical evidence is not provided. Example of medical evidence could be, doctor's certificate, medical appointment slips or medical prescriptions.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the Parents/Carers and the child.

Parents/Carers are advised never to cover up an absence or to give in to pressure to excuse their child from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Throughout June & July 2020, the Academy provided the opportunity for all students to raise and discuss any concerns or anxieties they may have with returning to school in September following school closure due to COvid-19. These anxieties have been addressed by the Academy with individual students and from the concerns raised, the Academy has identified students potentially in need of further support in September. Some of these students, in particular PP & students previously identified as persistent absentees (PA) will be contacted by the Academy prior to returning to the Academy to encourage and provide support where necessary. Where students are absent due to a reluctance to attend due to concerns about Covid-19, the Academy will seek to resolve these issues by working closely with the student and their family to ensure they attend school every day.

If a student misses the Academy without a valid reason Blackburn with Darwen may issue a Penalty Notice, in line with current legislation, to Parent/Carers. Such fines must be paid within 28 days and failure to pay will lead to prosecution and further costs of the Parents/Carers.

Reporting Absences

If a child is absent, Parents/Carers must:

- on the first day of absence, contact the Academy as soon as possible on 01254 604000 selecting the absence option, or the Attendance Line direct on 01254 604043, and leave a clear message that states your son/daughter's name plus their tutor group and reason for absence;
- write a note to inform the Academy of any absence **during** the Academy day where a student is required to leave the Academy premises e.g. for a medical appointment. This will then be countersigned by the student's form tutor to allow the student to leave the site. As a student signs out at the reception via the electronic inventory, a permission slip will be provided to show that the absence has been authorised;

Should Parents/Carers fail to provide an explanation for their child's absence, they will receive communication from Academy after 2 missed registration periods. If, within 3 days of the absence, there has still been no explanation provided, a letter provided by the Attendance Manager, will be sent home to Parent/Carers. If still no explanation is provided within two weeks, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' and reported to the DfE as such. Where there are students with repeated unexplained absence, these will be reported to Blackburn with Darwen, and a Penalty Notice will be issued.

If your child is absent, the Academy will:

- telephone or text Parents/Carers on the first day of absence if no reason has been provided.

If the Academy is concerned about a child's attendance, relevant staff may conduct a home visit in order to identify the reason for the child's absence.

Where there is a known absence in advance, Parents/Carers should write to the Principal, outlining the reasons for the absence for the consideration. Such requests will be considered in line with the exceptional circumstances identified by the Government. The Principal may authorise absence for a family holiday if:

- there are '**exceptional**' circumstances **and** the request is made in advance by the Parent/Carer with whom the child normally lives **by submitting** to the PA to the Principal, the Local Authority Discretionary Leave of Absence form, (available from the Academy website).

If a child is taken out of the Academy for a family holiday without the Principal's prior authorisation the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' and noted in the student's records.

If a child goes on a family holiday which has been 'authorised' by the Academy yet fails to return by the agreed date any extra time absent from St Wilfrid's will be counted as 'unauthorised'.

If a child fails to return within 10 days of the expected date of return, then the Academy may remove a child from the Academy roll and notify Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority accordingly.

If a student is absent from St Wilfrid's on a family holiday without authorisation, the Academy may ask the Local Authority to serve a Penalty Notice. This Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 per child at the Academy, for each adult with parental responsibility which, if not paid within 21 days, rises to £120. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice within 28 days would likely result in court prosecution.

If a student is absent from the Academy for more than 5 consecutive days due to a medical condition the Academy reserves the right to ask for medical evidence to be provided to explain the absence. Medical evidence may also be requested in cases of repeated absences for ill health where there is a concern regarding the total amount of time absent.

The Academy is proactive in reducing the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the Academy year. The Government refer to these as 'persistent absentees', whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category. This may include contact home via letter or phone, or parents/carers being invited into the Academy for an Attendance Planning Meeting (APM), where any barriers to attendance can be discussed, support offered and attendance targets agreed upon.

Where a child is absent and contact with home cannot be made, including home visits, the Attendance Manager will report the child as a Child Missing from Education (CME) in line with LA guidelines. Following joint investigations, where no contact is made and no forwarding address or school provided, the student will be removed from roll after a continued absence of 20 days, or under the direction of the LA.

Arrangements if a student becomes unwell with symptoms of Coronavirus

If this occurs during school hours, within the Academy:

- The student will be triaged by a nominated first aider and symptoms checked in-line with [NHS guidance](#). If a supervising adult is required, they will wear disposable gloves, disposable apron and fluid-resistant surgical mask and eye protection.
- If symptomatic the student will be isolated in an allocated classroom and family member will be contacted to collect them from the Academy.
- Parents/carers of students who are sent home due to showing symptoms of Coronavirus should follow the [‘PHE stay at home guidance’](#).
- A parent/carer must inform the Academy as soon as they are in receipt of the outcome of a COVID-19 test to inform the Academy’s next steps.
- Prior to a student returning to the Academy the parent/carer must provide evidence of a negative test result. [Further information about NHS COVID-19 testing can be found here.](#)
- **If a confirmed case occurs within the Academy, we will follow PHE advice and fully comply with any track and trace requirements. We would then communicate with students and parents/carers as necessary with further detail and next steps.**

If this occurs outside of school hours:

- St Wilfrid’s is to be immediately notified if a student or any members of their household display symptoms of COVID-19 infection and the [‘PHE stay at home guidance’](#) is to be followed.

iii) Lateness

If late, after 8.50am, students should sign in at the main reception and provide a reason for being late. The Attendance Manager will ascertain the reason for lateness using the following two options:

- if late **through no fault of their own** e.g. the bus arrived late or broke down, students should be marked as ‘present’ with a comment added to reflect the reason; a student arriving after the close of registers following a medical appointment will be recorded as L with minutes late recorded.
- if late **through their own fault** e.g. Overslept, an ‘L’ should be recorded and thereby will be recorded on the student’s end of term report and DfE returns as such. A note of the minutes late will be recorded against that L.

Please see the table below that outlines the protocol to be followed for students who arrive at the Academy late without valid reason. This protocol will commence half-termly – where ongoing concerns arise, further measures will be implemented. The Attendance Manager keeps a register of students who have arrived late. This will allow the early identification of safeguarding concerns.

Number of times late/half term	Sanction	Further Action
1	Warning	n/a

2	20 minute after-school detention	Letter to reflect concern about frequency of late arrival
3	40 minute after-school detention	Letter to reflect continued concern about frequency of late arrival
4	1 hour after-school detention	Phone call home to reflect concern about frequency of late arrival
5+	1 hour after-school detention	<p>Parents/Carers will be invited into the Academy to discuss any subsequent late mark and a punctuality plan will be agreed for that student. Where a student fails to respond to the plan further interventions will be implemented in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.</p> <p>Monitoring of this will be the responsibility of the Attendance Manager, with the support of the relevant Student Support Manager, Year Manager and Assistant Principal.</p>

Students, who are late with no valid reason after the close of registers at **9.20am and 1.30pm**, will receive a 'U' mark, an unauthorised late. Where a child receives multiple 'U' marks, steps may be necessary to involve outside agencies to address the issues responsible for this and it may lead to legal action from the Local Authority, in addition to the implementation of the above late strategy.

4. Duties

Parents/Carers are responsible for their child's school attendance and punctuality. The 1996 Education Act requires parents/carers to ensure that their children receive efficient, full time education.

The Academy has a legal duty to record student attendance twice daily – once in the morning and once in the afternoon. An entry must be made by law on all attendance registers for all students of compulsory school age who are on the Academy roll. There is a Senior Leader, designated to ensure that attendance is recorded in line with statutory guidelines.

5. Roles and responsibilities summarised

The Academy will ensure that:

- students are registered accurately and efficiently using the Academy electronic system (SIMS) by Academy staff only;
- the Attendance Officer, or in some instances, the Student Support Manager or Family Support and Safeguarding Manager, will contact the home of a Looked After Child if they are absent from morning registration without notification from home. Referrals to appropriate agencies will be made where appropriate;
- attendance of all students is monitored and intervention put in place for those students failing to meet the 90% benchmark in line with government guidelines;
- attendance and punctuality records are monitored closely on a weekly basis by the Attendance Manager, with the support of the relevant Student Support Manager, Family Support and Safeguarding Manager and Assistant Principal responsible for attendance;

- punctuality is monitored and poor punctuality is followed up;
- the Academy Attendance Manager, the Student Support Manager and/or the Year Manger will meet regularly with those students with poor attendance and set targets to improve. Where necessary, this will involve meetings with Parent/Carers who do not respond to written communications. Where there is no sustained improvement further action will be taken that may lead to the prosecution of parents/carers under current legislation;
- strategies to support long term absentees (medical/emotional health) will be implemented and a tailored reintegration package will be considered as appropriate for individual circumstances. Where such reintegration fails a referral to the St Thomas' Centre, Medical, will be made ;
- the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality is communicated to students through Assemblies and Celebration Assemblies where 100% attendance is celebrated;
- the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality is promoted via Parent Information and Parent Consultation Evenings.

Students are expected to:

- attend the Academy regularly, striving for 100% attendance
- be punctual to the Academy, form time, assemblies and lessons;
- inform their Form Tutor if they know of a reason which may affect their attendance.

Parents/Carers will:

- ensure that their child attends the Academy every day they are fit and well to do so;
- inform the Academy on the first day of absence via the absence line if their child is absent giving a specific reason;
- discuss planned absences with the Academy well in advance and seek appropriate leave of absence in good time, in writing, by submitting the Leave of Absence form, from the Principal;
- avoid taking their child out of the Academy during term time for holidays, as these will not be authorised unless exceptional circumstances exist;
- make all reasonable efforts to avoid making doctor or dentist appointments during Academy hours.

6. Communication

Parents/Carers will be informed when a student's attendance causes concern as outlined in this policy. A student's annual attendance record will be reported to Parents/Carers at the end of each academic year. Any issues regarding attendance, where letters have been sent home or meetings with parents/carers have occurred, will be recorded on the Academy electronic system (SIMS) within the student's personal database. Reports pertaining to attendance will be given at each Student Welfare Committee meeting of the Governing Body. Parents/Carers will be able to access information regarding the attendance of their child through the Parent Access Window (PAW).

Attendance data will be collated by the Data Officer as required for the reporting of the 'Academy Census' information.

7. Long term absence

If students are absent for 10 consecutive days without justifiable explanation the Education Welfare Service will be consulted. Procedures will then come in to operation following Section 444 (4A). The student's place on the Academy roll will be reviewed.

8. Evaluation and Review

Attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices. The curriculum will be monitored and developed to meet the needs of all students, encouraging engaging lessons where students receive high levels of teaching which result in excellent learning.

Review meetings will be held with all students and parents/carers where there are issues regarding absenteeism. They will establish strategies and targets to re-engage students in the life of the Academy thereby facilitating a student's holistic development enabling them to grow in to a well-rounded individual equipped for life in this world and the next.

9. Appendices

- a. Attendance Matters Leaflet – Advice for parents/carers**
- b. Unexplained Absences Letter**
- c. Request for Medical Evidence Letter**
- d. Attendance Planning Meeting (APM) Letter**
- e. Failed to Attend APM Follow-up Letter**
- f. Exceptional Circumstances Acceptance Letter**
- g. Exceptional Circumstances Refusal Letter**
- h. Late to lesson letter**
- i. Punctuality to the Academy Letter**
- j. EWO warning letter**
- k. Leave of Absence Application Form**