



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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1. Introduction

Folkestone Academy is committed to providing excellence for students of all abilities. High attendance and good punctuality is essential for students to work to their potential, be successful and benefit from the opportunities available to them at the Academy. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Achieving high attendance is a necessity in preparing students for future working life as an adult. Students should be at the Academy, on time and every day that the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents and carers recognise their responsibility and obligation to make sure that students attend regularly. This Policy sets out how the Academy, its partners and parents/carers can work together to achieve this.

2. The Importance of Regular Attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. It is our expectation that all students will attain at least 95% attendance in each academic year of their academy career.

Ensuring students' regular attendance at the Academy is the **legal responsibility of Parents by law, all children of compulsory school age must attend school.**

Poor attendance not only undermines a child's education and future life chances, it sometimes puts children at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour. Permitting absence from the Academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

3. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a habit of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of the Academy staff.

To maintain a focus on this the Academy will:

- Maintain regular contact with parents and carers regarding their child's attendance via members of teaching and office staff, as well as the Year Teams where there are attendance concerns.

- Report to parents every six weeks on how their child is performing at the Academy. This will include information about their attendance and punctuality.
- Celebrate good attendance in Year Group assemblies each week and by displaying achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through praise and public recognition.
- Work closely with any external agencies involved with the family or child to improve attendance.

Reluctant attenders/school refusal

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work or bullying, please discuss this with the Academy at the earliest opportunity and the Academy will do everything possible to find a solution. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the situation worse and gives your child the impression that attendance does not matter.

4. Absence Procedures

If a student is absent parents should:

- Contact the Academy by 9am on the first day of absence and on subsequent days if required, unless guided by the Attendance Team, on the dedicated attendance telephone number: 01303 842424 or email: fasecondaryattendance@turnerschools.com
- Parents/carers may also come into the Academy and report to reception staff, who will arrange for a member of staff to contact them, if required.
- For absences that extend to a week (5 school days) some form of medical evidence is required; this can be in the form of a Doctor's note/copy prescription/sight of prescribed medication/completed Academy form.

If a student is absent the Academy will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if a message (that explains the absence) has not been received.
- Follow up calls will be made to parents/carers of students with continuous absence to check on recovery and expected return to school .
- For students with attendance below 95%, the Academy may invite parents/carers for a meeting to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and/or Heads of Year/Progress Leader, if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the School Liaison Officer (SLO) if attendance moves below 90%.
- The Academy will not routinely request medical evidence. However, if there is an excessive amount of illness, the Academy may request medical evidence to support absences. Parents/carers can provide medical evidence in order to account for the period of absence.

5. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the Academy year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. The Academy expects parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parents/carers will be informed of the concern immediately. The Academy will be proactive in supporting and communicating with families to ensure improved attendance and signpost to external support, where necessary.

All PA cases are automatically made known to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer (SLO).

All PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. This is combined with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

6. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons. Persistent poor punctuality will result in sanctions being applied e.g. punctuality contract or detention.

How we manage lateness in the Academy:

- At 9.00am the school day starts and students are expected to be in class at that time
- The main school gates open at 8.15am but students may access the Academy building from 8.00 am via reception.

In accordance with the Regulations, if students arrive after 10.00am or 15 minutes after their agreed start time, the U code may be applied to a student's attendance record which means they receive an unauthorised late mark for the morning session. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. (See Penalty Notice Proceedings)

If a student has a persistent late record, parents/carers may be asked to meet with the Head of Year and Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach the Academy at any time if they experience problems getting their child to the Academy on time.

7. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from the Academy has to be classified by the Academy (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Registers are taken twice a day by staff to record attendance marks for class. Registers are legal documents so the Academy staff are obliged to complete them accurately. Attendance marks are also recorded in every lesson to monitor student punctuality and guard against truancy. Information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers. The Academy can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa, if new information is presented. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school, there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Authorised

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as illness, medical/emergency dental/orthodontist appointments or other unavoidable causes, which can unavoidably fall in Academy time. Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Evidence of medical/dental appointments may be requested for these absences to be authorised.

Unauthorised

Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings (See Penalty Notice Proceedings). This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the Academy day
- absences which have never been properly explained

- children who arrive at the Academy late may receive the U code (unauthorised late), which is an absent mark .
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed, unless an authorised school trip
- oversleeping
- absence to look after an unwell sibling/family member
- inadequate uniform
- confusion over term dates
- School refusal

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, parents/carers should not condone their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending as this gives the child the impression that attendance does not matter.

8. Holiday during Term Time

From September 2013 the Department of Education announced an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, removing the Executive Principal ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure 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 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 Executive Principal may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to such a request is at the discretion of the Principal, 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. Such a request must be put in writing at least 2 weeks prior to the proposed absence and cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Exceptional Circumstances – An “exceptional circumstance” would have to be defined as unavoidable cause e.g. a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school. This decision will be made by the Executive Principal.

9. Penalty Notice Proceedings

A penalty notice may be issued under the following circumstances:

- Overt truancy (including students caught on truancy sweeps)
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Unauthorised leave for the purposes of a family holiday in term-time*
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the school register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

Parents/carers will be issued with a Warning Penalty Notice Letter from the Local Authority when attendance is less than 90% over a specific 12-month period. This letter sets out 15 school days (3 weeks) during which time no unauthorised absence should be recorded. If an unauthorised absence is recorded during this period a Penalty Notice and fine will be issued (one per parent/carer per child).

The only exception to this is for holidays taken during term time that exceed 5 days or more over a 100-day period (*) ie end of a term and beginning of a new term. A Penalty Notice letter is issued by KCC advising of a fine instantly without the 15 day watching period. The fine is issued to all parents/carers as defined below. If attendance is greater than the Academy's expectation of 95% on the last day of the holiday, no fine will be requested.

Where a Penalty Notice has been served regulations state that the penalty of £120 must be paid. This figure reduces to £60 if paid within 21 days. Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority may instigate court proceedings for failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at school. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent, but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. This includes:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

10. Children Missing in Education

No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Executive Principal and KCC PRU, Inclusion & Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education for 10 school days that are unexplained or if a family moves away from the area or out of the country but does not register with another school, the Academy will alert the local authority who will then take action according to the child missing in education policy and procedures. Movement of children between local authorities and schools is tracked nationally.

11. Contact Information

It is the parent's sole responsibility to ensure the school holds all up-to-date contact numbers, address details and list of emergency contacts throughout the school year.