

Policy and Procedure for Attendance

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Governors Committee:	C&P
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Review Cycle:	Every Year

1. Student Attendance Policies and Procedures

Cedars Academy is defined by its teaching and learning excellence and innovation; and equally by its warmth and inclusivity. We are committed to ensuring that each student's 'one chance' is their 'best chance'. At Cedars Academy we know that people thrive in positive and happy environments in which there are clear and agreed expectations and boundaries. It is this which shapes our ethos and culture and underpins our policies and procedures. All members of the Cedars Academy family - teachers, students, support and admin staff - are governed by our policies. They are written with this in mind. We all abide by the same codes of conduct and act respectfully to those we work with.

2. Mission statement

Ours is a community of learning, where secure partnerships create opportunities for students, staff, governors, parents and carers alike to participate and grow to become intellectually, emotionally and socially *fit for life*.

Due to amendments (April 2013) that have been made to the Department for Education's Pupil Registration Regulations to address attendance issues, it has been made clear to headteachers that they should not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances".

We are a specialist school for young people aged 3 to 19 years with physical, sensory and medical needs, speech, language and communication disorders, autism, and a wide range of other complex needs often associated with emotional vulnerability. It is within this context that we have developed our Attendance Policy.

3. Aim

Cedars Academy is committed to maintaining the highest standards of school attendance and punctuality for all Cedars Academy students. Underpinning this commitment is the understanding that unless students attend school regularly and punctually they will not be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The responsibility for maintaining the highest standards of attendance and punctuality is shared by parents/carers, students, Cedars Academy and a range of services within our Local Authorities. By co-operating and working together we can maintain the highest standards of attendance and punctuality. This in turn will ensure the highest standards of achievement.

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For everybody to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for

the absence is unavoidable. Policy sets out how together we will achieve the highest standards of attendance and punctuality by all.

4. Rationale

Learning:

Any absence affects the pattern of a young person's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any young person's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a young person's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding:

A young person may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly.

Safeguarding the interests of each young person at Cedars Academy is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for young people encompasses:

- Attendance.
- Behaviour Management.
- Health and Safety.
- Access to the Curriculum.
- Anti- bullying.

Failing to attend Cedars Academy on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give all parents/carers details on attendance in our regular Home – School Reports.
- Celebrate good attendance.

The Law relating to attendance:

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

The Law relating to safeguarding:

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness; medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time; emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Cedars Academy using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily

- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students 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 agreed

Persistent Absenteeism

An individual student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance drops below 85% or more for whatever reason.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any young person's educational prospects and we need parent/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the Persistent Absenteeism mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

Persistent Absenteeism students are tracked and monitored carefully through our AtL pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

If a student is considered a Persistent Absentee Cedars Academy will inform the Local Authority and refer concerns about attendance to the Attendance Service.

The Attendance Service employs Area Attendance Officers who:

- Support families, young people and schools to improve school attendance.
- Liaise between home and school.
- Advise and assist in other areas like child protection, bullying, exclusion, child employment and entertainment.
- Make referrals to other agencies for specialist help.
- Enforce parental responsibility for ensuring regular attendance at school.

5. Procedures

If a student is absent the parent/carer must:

- Contact Cedars Academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence, preferably before 10am.
- Or, parents/carers can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with them.

If a student is absent we will:

- Telephone or text the parent/carer before 10 o' clock on the first day of absence, if we have not heard from the parent/carer.
- Invite the parent/carer in to discuss the situation if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Cedars Academy AtL (pastoral) attendance team if attendance falls to a concerning level.

Our **Staged Response to Poor Attendance** is given Appendix 1 of this document.

6. Advice to Parents on Attendance

Absence from school under exceptional circumstances is slightly different from taking a holiday in term time. In deciding whether or not to grant a leave of absence for 'exceptional circumstances' we will want to consider the following:

- What is the normal pattern of attendance for the child(ren) who is asking for a leave of absence?
- What is 'exceptional' for one family might be the norm for another family?

Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' might include:

- Therapeutic or respite intervention
- A special one-off family event (30th wedding anniversary of grandparents; parents wedding) - but one that doesn't happen on an annual basis
- A funeral which requires the family to travel some distance etc
- The receipt of a special award which means the family need to travel some distance and stay overnight
- A parent who has the potential for a new job and wants to take their family with them to see if they like the area

Parents will need to complete a request for permission for leave of absence from school during term time, giving specific reasons why they feel there are exceptional circumstances. If you do decide to apply for leave of absence it is important to avoid:

- The beginning of terms or school years
- Time during the first year at school
- Periods close to or during examinations/course work deadlines
- Transition points such as preparation for leaving school

Requests will be considered on an individual basis taking into account your child's special education needs, attendance and progress. In response to a leave of absence request you will receive a response letter stating whether this leave of absence has been authorised or not.

The Academy may invite parents in to discuss the reasons for the leave of absence application, especially when the reasons are unclear:

- The Academy shall reply to all applications in writing stating whether or not the absence has been agreed
- If leave is not granted the reason for not authorising a request must be clearly stated
- If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence must be clearly stated; including the date the child is expected back in school

Whilst we accept that if a child has a medical condition and appointments with consultants necessitate absence from school, we would hope that appointments with GP's and dentists can be organised after school hours or during holidays wherever possible.

UNCRC Reference: Articles 3, 16, 23, 25

7. Evaluation

This policy and associated procedures will be evaluated every year by the Department Team Leader (T&L) in collaboration with the Governing Body (Curriculum & Pupils sub committee) to ensure it is still fit for purpose. Circumstances may require more frequent modifications.

Ratified by Cedars Academy Governing Body

Chair of the GB

Signature

Date: July 2019

Print Name

Cedars Academy: Staged Response to Poor Attendance

Registers – registers taken in class.

School Office – phone call made to the school office regarding attendance, reasons given by parent/carer recorded on SIMs

First Day Response – school office staff call parents/carers of children who are absent but have not contacted school before 10:00am

If no response is received it is recorded in SIMs as a (0)

Sibling absences are also noted.

Second Day Response – school office staff call parents/carers of children who are still absent but have not contacted school

If no response is received it is recorded on SIMs

Access to Learning will be alerted

Access to Learning will attempt to contact parent/carer

Third Day Response – Access to Learning will attempt to contact parent/carer

If there is no response a 'safe and well' visit will be undertaken

Attendance Monitoring – AHT Access to Learning monitors whole school attendance each half term.

A report is created showing which children have had a letter to parent/carer, attendance reviews, LIT referral or CAF

Letter to Parents/Carers – children whose attendance is below 93% receive a letter of concern. This is monitored half termly.

Where necessary hospital visits and genuine illnesses (including emotional wellbeing) are taken into account.

Patterns of attendance are monitored.

Home visit by the Family Liaison/Support Lead will be initiated to offer advice, support.

Attendance Reviews – clear improvement will result in no further action being taken

Where there is a further deterioration in attendance parent/carer will be requested to attend an Attendance Review with the Assistant Headteacher: Access to Learning and Family Liaison/Support Lead.

Patterns of attendance are discussed and school share their concerns and strategies/interventions agreed.

Request for Medical Evidence – parent/carer of children whose poor attendance persists will be advised the school will now require medical evidence to show that advice has been sought.

Without this evidence absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Referral to Legal Intervention Team – if children have ten unauthorised sessions in a 12 week period, a referral is made to the local authority Legal Intervention Team (LIT).

Warning Letter and Home Visit Appointment – the Local Authority will make an appointment with parent/carer at their home.

6 Week Monitoring Period – the Monday following this visit will mark the first day of the 6 week monitoring period, during which a PACE interview will be offered to parent/carer.

PACE Interview – during the 6 week period the parent/carer will formally be requested to provide additional information to the Local Authority about their child’s poor attendance. This will take the form of either a recorded interview or a written response to set questions. In both cases, the responses are made under caution in line with The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Outcome Meeting – at the end of the 6 week period the Local Authority will convene a multi-agency decision making group who will undertake a final review of the case with one of the following outcomes:

- No Further Action
- Penalty Notice
- Prosecution in Magistrate Court