



**The Ursuline Academy Ilford**

# **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

**2021**

**The Ursuline Academy Ilford**

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## **1. Why Regular Attendance?**

The Ursuline Academy Ilford exists to provide an excellent education for all its pupils, in the broadest sense of that term. We believe that regular attendance at school is an entitlement for each one of our pupils. Coming to school each day substantially increases the chances of successful outcomes for young people. Irregular and/or intermittent attendance seriously jeopardises progress and attainment and puts at risk personal fulfilment and life chances beyond school-leaving age.

## **2. Our Commitment**

Being in school is not only an entitlement, it is also compulsory. In keeping with all education providers, the Academy is committed to ensuring that every young person who is registered here attends regularly. In order to achieve this, we will work with pupils, parents and carers and appropriate external agencies including the Education Welfare Service to ensure that attendance is regular and sustained.

## **3. The Law**

The requirement for regular attendance is underpinned by legislation. The Education Act 1996 Section 444 as amended by Section 82 and 109 of the Education and Inspection Act states that a parent is guilty of an offence if a child who is of compulsory school age and a registered pupil at a school fails to attend that school regularly.

In particular if the parent 'knows' that a child is failing to attend regularly and fails to cause the child to do so then s/he is guilty of an offence.

## **4. Legitimate Cause**

The law recognises that a child may be absent from school for reasons other than the above namely:

- as a result of sickness or unavoidable cause (medical or other substantiating evidence may be required);
- when permission is given by the school.

## **5. Role of Education Welfare Service**

The Children's Services Authority has a statutory responsibility to enforce regular attendance of pupils registered at school. This is carried out by the Education Welfare Service (EWS) working with the school.

The Education Welfare Officer works closely with the Academy in a number of ways. S/he will:

- analyse data and trends relating to absence and punctuality;
- support the school by e.g. helping to draw up action plans;
- contribute when required to assemblies on punctuality and attendance;
- undertake 'late gates' as required;

- attend parent consultation evenings when required;
- write letters to parents/carers;
- visit home; and
- monitor any action being taken by the school to improve attendance and punctuality.

## **6. Direct Intervention with Pupils and Parents/Carers**

The EWO will also:

- initiate direct intervention with pupils whose non-attendance is causing concern;
- in partnership with the school devise strategies to improve attendance;
- ensure the Attendance Policy is being implemented appropriately including where necessary the use of legal action against parents;
- work closely with the school at transition to provide support for the most vulnerable.

## **7. Requests for Absence**

The Academy is committed to a policy of minimum avoidable absence during term time.

In addition:

- only the Headteacher acting on behalf of Governors has the authority to grant leave from school;
- parents must apply by letter/email and in advance for permission to authorise a term-time absence;
- parents must not assume that any such request will be met favourably;
- in accordance with Government guidelines parents are specifically reminded (at the new parent information evening following confirmation of a place in the Academy) that holidays are not to be taken during term time;
- the decision to authorise or not is recorded and kept by the school;
- permission is not granted after the absence has taken place;
- leave for holiday during term time is not approved;
- leave may be granted by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances, authorised at her discretion.

## **8. What is Meant by ‘Authorised Absence’?**

This is defined as absence as a result of:

- a pupil being absent as a result of illness and an adequate explanation having been received from a parent/carer or other appropriate adult;
- a pupil having been temporarily excluded from school;
- medical or dental appointment supported by an appointment card;
- other exceptional circumstances at the Headteacher’s discretion.

## **9. Sanctions for Unauthorised Absence**

A Penalty Notice may be issued for unauthorised leave. It will be issued by the EWS following discussion with the Headteacher.

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issue of a Penalty Notice.

Where unauthorised leave has exceeded the relevant timeframe the EWS will be advised by the Academy in order that steps can be implemented which may include removal from roll.

## **10. Absence Due to Ill-Health**

Any absence relating to illness exceeding FIVE days MUST be supported by medical evidence including instances where patterns of absence have occurred.

## **11. Punctuality**

- The school day begins at 8.40 which is the time when pupils are expected to **be in class** for Registration;
- The Register is closed at 9.10, thirty minutes after the start of the school day;
- Pupils arriving after the opening of the Register up to and including the 30<sup>th</sup> minute will be marked as being 'late' (Code L) and those arriving after the 30<sup>th</sup> minute will receive Code U – unauthorised absence;
- Pupils who come to school after 8.40 may only come on to school premises via Reception where her presence – and time of arrival - will be recorded. Such evidence will be used in the event of court action becoming necessary;
- Those who come late will be subject to the School's Detention arrangements on a Friday after school;
- The Headteacher reserves the right with the force of law to require attendance at school on Saturday morning for those who fail to respond to the Friday night Detention or for other breach of school discipline or rule;
- The EWO may undertake a 'late gate' inspection at the request of the Headteacher or on her/his own initiative.

## **12. Exceptional Circumstances and Special Consideration for Late Arrivals**

- Adverse weather and/or travel conditions;
- Pregnant pupil with prior agreement of Headteacher;
- The Headteacher or in her absence a deputy shall determine whether other exceptional circumstance or special consideration should apply.

### **13. Strategies to Improve Attendance and Punctuality**

- certificates for good attendance and punctuality at end of term assemblies;
- names highlighted in the School Newsletter;
- commendation letter to parents;
- inter-class competition for the best and most improved attendance and punctuality;
- recording attendance and punctuality in reports to parents/carers;
- displaying attendance/punctuality information in school Reception.

### **14. Responding to Continued Non-Attendance and/or Poor Punctuality**

Prompt, concerted action by vigilant staff is the single most effective response to non-attendance and poor punctuality. Nonetheless, additional action may be necessary if patterns of intermittent or persistent non-attendance/poor punctuality are identified. The Academy will carry out a thorough investigation of patterns of absence and where necessary a 'return to school' programme involving pupil, parent, a senior member of staff and EWO will be initiated. A pupil will need to feel secure in the knowledge that their return to school will be handled with sensitivity.

### **15. Children's Services Authority: Use of Legal Proceedings**

The Authority has a legal duty to enforce school attendance where there is no justifiable cause. In addition, a request for a *parenting contract* can be made for unauthorised absence under Section 19 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 in the following circumstances:

- where parents/carers have appeared reluctant to engage with the Academy and EWS in addressing a pupil's poor attendance;
- where a parent/carer identifies a need for expert help with parenting issues.

### **16. Penalty Notices**

A Penalty Notice, issued by the EWS can be issued in cases of unauthorised absence taken without permission.

The Children's Services Authority in Redbridge will consider every aspect of a pupil's wellbeing before considering whether a Penalty Notice would or would not be appropriate. Any decision on this will be made following discussion between the Principal and EWO and any other significant adult who has involvement with or knows the family/pupil.



## **17. Sixth Form**

All students are expected to attend registration every morning regardless of their contact period timetable. Students are required to stay on site all day and attend all lessons and study periods on their timetable. Where students do not have a timetabled lesson or study period, they should use one of the two study rooms or other facilities such as the school library to help complete private study. Attendance is monitored very closely and expectations are aligned with those of the wider Academy.

- students must provide evidence of a valid reason for non-attendance and this must be submitted to a member of the Sixth Form team;
- a minimum level of 95% attendance is expected of all students;
- if students fail to meet the floor standard, they will be invited to a meeting with their parents and an attendance plan put in place;
- ultimately, consistently poor levels of attendance may jeopardise a student's place in the Sixth Form.

## **18. Sixth Form Punctuality**

This is a crucial area for Sixth Form students and all are expected to arrive at school on time. Attendance times and acceptable reasons for lateness are in line with those applicable to the wider Academy. Sixth form students will also be required to attend the Friday afternoon detention as a result of lateness.

## **19. Responsibility of The Governing Body**

The Governing Body receives termly reports on attendance and punctuality and as well as a report from the Headteacher on the impact of any strategy used to bring about improvements where these are needed.