

# **SWINDON ACADEMY POLICIES**

## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy (L02)**

### **Introduction**

At Swindon Academy, we expect all students to attend regularly to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular school attendance and educational attainment are inextricably linked. We recognise that regular attendance at school is essential for good learning and continual progress and ensures that students get the best possible outcomes from their period in compulsory education. All school staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

We expect all of our students to aspire to 100% attendance and appreciate the full support of parents and carers in encouraging this. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance for secondary students and 96% for primary pupils. The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

### **Aims of the Policy**

This policy is intended to continue to improve the attendance and punctuality of all students at Swindon Academy by:

- a. Ensuring that good attendance and punctuality are priorities for all those associated with the school including students, parents and staff
- b. Providing a framework which defines the respective roles and responsibilities of all interested parties and ensures consistency in dealing with issues of attendance and punctuality
- c. Ensuring the maintenance of accurate registers which allows the school to account for the whereabouts of each pupil at any given time
- d. Gathering of reliable data in line with Authority and Government guidelines for the purposes of reporting on individual and whole school attendance

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. Swindon Academy has an effective system of incentives and rewards, which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and appropriately challenge the behaviour of those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

### **Parents**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and allowing your child to be absent from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding

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matter. Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence. Parents cannot approve absence.

We expect parents/carers to recognise the importance of regular attendance at school and seek their support in:

- Ensuring that their child attends school every day
- Ensuring that their child arrives on time
- Keeping school informed of a student's absence (see absence procedures for details)
- Attend all meetings arranged regarding attendance and punctuality
- Attending Progress Review Days

### **Absence Procedures**

#### **If your child is absent, you must:**

1. On the first day of absence, contact the school as soon as possible on 01793 426909 selecting the absence option and leaving a message. Please leave a clear message that states your son/daughter's name plus their tutor group and reason for absence and the date they are expected to return to school.
2. On the first day they return, send in a note with an explanation of the absence – this must be done even if you have already telephoned us. This should be a signed and dated letter.
3. If you are unable to ring or email, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you as soon as possible. You can also reply to the text message sent to you by the school.

#### **If your child is absent, we will:**

1. Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. This system is known as 'First Day Calling'.
2. If the academy is concerned about your child's attendance a member of the SLT or attendance team may visit you.

The above protocols apply to all absences. Should a student's attendance fall below 95% then a series of additional actions will be implemented to monitor and address all attendance concerns. Details of these are detailed later in the policy.

### **Registration Procedures**

#### **Primary Phase**

Class Teachers will register pupils at 08.30 and after lunch. Students who are late should be taken to main reception. A member of staff from the primary phase will be contacted and the student will be taken to class. If a student arrives after 08.40am they will be marked as absent, and will be required to bring a note of explanation; until such time the absence will be coded as unauthorised and will affect the percentage of attendance.

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## **Secondary Phase**

### **Morning Registration**

Students should arrive at the academy no later than 8.10am ready for the start of lesson 1 at 8.20am. Registers taken during lesson 1 are the official registration for the morning session. Class teachers will mark the register promptly. The accuracy of this mark is vital to all the other parts of the attendance procedures.

Students who arrive at the academy after 8.20 am and before 09.20am will be marked late on the register and will be given an after school detention of 60 minutes the same day.

Students who sign in at reception after 09.20am will be marked absent, and will be required to bring a note of explanation. The absence will be coded as unauthorised and a late detention will be issued; this excessive lateness will affect the percentage of attendance and leave parent/carer at risk of a fine.

Once the morning attendance register has been closed, the attendance officer will complete the unexplained absence report. Students who are absent will be placed on the visit list. An appropriate member of staff will be allocated to visit the child's home.

### **Afternoon Registration**

Afternoon registration is taken from period 3 which ends at 12.05pm. Class teachers will mark the register promptly. The accuracy of this mark is vital to all the other parts of the attendance procedures.

Students who are permitted to go home for lunch and return late back to the academy will be marked late on the register and issued with an after school detention. If a student is persistently late back to school from lunch then the lunch pass will be retracted.

## **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**

These are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

#### **Absence can be authorised if:**

- A student is absent with permission granted by the Principal
- A student is ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause

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- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong
- The school at which the student is registered is not within walking distance of the student's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LEA for the student's transport to and from school
- A student is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) are met
- There is a family bereavement
- A student is attending an interview with a prospective employer, or in connection with an application for a place at an institute of further or higher education, or for a place at another school (during Year 11, this can be recorded as an approved educational activity)
- A student is excluded
- A Year 11 student is granted study leave (not normally more than 15 days)
- A student is involved in an exceptional special occasion

### **Unauthorised Absences**

An absence will be unauthorised where the school does not consider the absence as reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. When attendance falls below 95% (96% for primary pupils) all absences will need to be supported by medical evidence. This type of absence can lead to the Academy using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

#### **Absence is unauthorised if:**

- parents/carers keep children off school unnecessarily
- truancy occurs before or during the school day
- absences have never been properly explained or the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- children arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays are taken in term time which have not been agreed
- a student fails to return after the period of time agreed by the school for a family holiday
- a student takes a holiday during term time
- medical evidence is not provided. Examples of medical evidence could be medical appointment slips, or medical prescription packaging or hospital appointment letters

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 school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

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If a student misses school without good reason, the school will issue Penalty Notices, as one of a number of legal powers, to parents. These fines must be paid within 28 days and failure to pay will lead to prosecution.

### Improving Attendance

At Swindon Academy, we use 6 categories to monitor each student's attendance. These are as follows:

#### Attendance Categories for PRIMARY

Outstanding	• 97.5 - 100% attendance
Good	• 96 - 97.4% attendance
Requires Improvement	• 94 - 95.9% attendance
Poor Attendance	• 90.1 - 93.9% attendance
Persistent Absence	• 85 - 90% attendance
Excessive Persistent Absence	• Less than 85% attendance

#### Attendance Categories for SECONDARY -

Outstanding	• 97 - 100% attendance
Good	• 95 - 96.9% attendance
Requires Improvement	• 93 - 94.9% attendance
Poor Attendance	• 90.1 - 92.9% attendance
Persistent Absence	• 85 - 90% attendance
Excessive Persistent Absence	• Less than 85% attendance

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In the cases where a student's absence becomes a cause for concern and falls below the academy target of 95% (96% for primary) we will implement a series of actions to ensure that the situation is addressed and rectified in order to ensure an improvement in attendance.

### **Persistent Absence (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

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

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our Student Support and Development Team. We may also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Key Worker, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer and risk prosecution if attendance fails to reach and maintain 90%.

### **Lesson Attendance**

A register is taken electronically at the beginning of each lesson using SIMS. The register taken in the first lesson of the day will be the official register for the morning session. The register taken in the final lesson of the day will be the official register for the afternoon session.

### **Absence during the School Day**

No student in years 7 to 11 may leave the school premises during the school day without permission from their College Manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). All students must sign out at the Attendance Office.

### **Illness during the School Day**

Should a student become unwell during a lesson he/she will be sent to Student Support in R12 by the teacher in charge. At Break or Lunch Time, students feeling unwell can go directly to Student Support in R12 and report their condition.

Trained staff will then assess the illness and make a decision (through the College Manager or SLT) about whether parents need to be informed and whether a student will be sent home or collected by parents. No student should leave school for such arising medical reasons without staff permission.

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## **Holidays in Term Time**

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time for holidays, and the academy does not have to authorise such absences. Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Parents who wish to take their children out of school during term time must formally request a holiday from the Principal using the Swindon Academy Absence Request Form, which is obtained from Reception.

On the completion of an application form, the Principal will decide, based on the student's attendance record, and other relevant information, whether or not to authorise this.

While absence may be granted for a holiday during term time, it is entirely the school's decision and is not a parental right. Other than in exceptional circumstances a family holiday should not be arranged during school time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. If a parent has received a Penalty Notice for an unauthorised holiday and then repeats this offence, Swindon Academy will not apply for another Penalty Notice but instead may instruct the Local Authority to prosecute for this offence through the Magistrates' Court.

Government Regulations Guidelines 2006 stipulate that any failure to return to school within **20 days of continuous absence** due to holiday will result in your child being removed from roll.

## **Penalty Notices**

### **Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence**

You could be issued with a penalty notice if your child is absent from school without permission. This can include parents who take their children on holiday during term time without getting authorisation from the school.

The penalty **for unauthorised absence** is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days. (If you fail to pay a penalty fine, you may be prosecuted)

The penalty for taking your child(ren) on **holiday during term time** without authorisation from the school is £60 per parent, per child, per holiday.

Penalty notices can be issued by:

- Local Education Authority

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- The Principal (other members of SLT authorised to do this)

A maximum of 3 penalty notices can be issued per child per year.

### **Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child 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 pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8.20am (8.30am for Primary)** and we expect your child to be **at school by 8.10am (8.20am for Primary)** at the latest. Any time after **8.20am (8.30am for Primary)** will be marked as late (L). Registers are marked at **8.20am (8.30am for Primary)** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.20am (8.40am for Primary)**, the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the College Manager and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. You can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We are here to support you and your child if there are difficulties.

### **Same Day Late Detentions (Secondary Only)**

Your son/daughter will be detained after-school if they are:

- a. late to school (see above) or
- b. late to any lessons during the day.

Students that arrive 3 or more minutes late to a lesson will be marked as late (L) on the register and will automatically be placed in an after school detention for 30 minutes on the same day. You will be notified by text if your son/daughter has been detained.

Late arrivals to school, 5 minutes or over, will incur a 60 minute after school detention on the same day.

### **Penalty notices for lateness**

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If lateness to school is frequent and persists a Penalty Notice may be issued to parent/carer as the child would have an unacceptable amount of UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE.

### **Appointments**

Parents should attempt to arrange appointments for their child outside school time whenever possible. When the appointment is local, the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment. Medical evidence should be provided to support appointments taken during the school day.

### **Rewarding Attendance**

Students will be rewarded for good attendance throughout the year through a range of rewards.

In addition, the academy will also run reward trips for students that meet the eligibility criteria, which will include meeting the academy attendance target of 94% or other clearly defined criteria.

Swindon Academy will also employ the following range of strategies to encourage good attendance:

- a. A positive learning environment where students feel valued and welcomed
- b. An appropriate curriculum suited to the needs of all student.
- c. Making students aware of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality through the work of their form tutor and the student tracker
- d. Weekly monitoring of attendance data by the Student Support and Development Team, to identify patterns of attendance/absence, and to set individual student and tutor group targets
- e. Regular reminders to parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance, through an attendance flier, newsletters and parents' evening.
- f. Weekly meetings in order to identify how best to support students who are experiencing attendance difficulties
- g. Letters from the academy to parents where their child's attendance falls below 94%
- h. Automated first day text contact with parents/carers of an absent student
- i. Support for students who are absent for any extended period of time, through the provision of work at home, and a planned programme of re-integration on return. The Learning Adviser (Attendance) takes lead responsibility for this work

### **Roles**

#### **Teachers and College Tutors**

Teachers and form tutors are responsible for recording attendance at the start of each lesson and tutor period. Registers are legal documents and must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct symbols/codes. No student may take a register.

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### **Attendance and Welfare Team**

The attendance team will check registers every lesson and tutor period to ensure that all teachers and tutors are completing registers correctly and on time. The attendance team will also follow up all absences and consider a penalty fine or legal proceedings if your student fails to attend school.

### **College Leader**

The college leader will work with a student when a student's attendance falls below 94% and places the student in the DFNA. Parents/carers will be notified of this in writing.

### **College Manager**

The college manager will work a student and their family when attendance falls below 90% and places the student in the FNA category. Parents/carers will be notified of this in writing and will be invited into a meeting to discuss our concerns.