

# **Sandwell Academy**



## **Attendance Policy**

**Attendance Telephone Number: 0121 524 2814**



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## **Introduction**

Sandwell Academy has high aspirations and your child can play their part in making these a reality. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to aim for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

## **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.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance**

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

### **To achieve this Sandwell Academy will:**

- Give you details on attendance in our termly mailings;
- Report to you at the end of each module on how your child is performing in school, their attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and tutor group achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.



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## **Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the Academy (not by 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 such as illness, medical/dental appointments which *unavoidably* fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the 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
- Children 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.

Whilst any child may be absent 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 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 makes things worse.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% 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 parents' fullest 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 students are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Any PA students and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan. The Plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a Connexions worker, use of team-building time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities based around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Head Teacher.



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## Absence Procedures

### If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the Academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

### If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Attempt to make contact after more than two days of absence to check on progress – this will usually be done by your child's Personal Tutor
- Invite you in to the Academy discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Personal Tutors and Deputy Head Teachers if absences persist;

## Contact Details

There are times when we need to contact parents about various issues, including absence, so we need to have the correct contact details for you at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up to date contact details. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year.

## Sanctions

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the Attendance Officer may refer the child to the Deputy Head with responsibility for Attendance and to the Head Teacher where necessary. We will try to resolve the situation by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Head can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Academy or the Local Education Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Sandwell's Education Welfare Service to ask for help or information. The EWS is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the Academy's reception or by contacting the Local Education Authority.



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## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and time with their class teacher receiving vital information for the lesson ahead. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child, inconvenient for the teacher and distracting for other students. This can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **8.15am** and teaching begins at 8.30am: We expect your child to be in class at that time by the latest.

Registers are marked by **9.00am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in lesson by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time and cannot give a valid reason, 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 on their attendance record. 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 Attendance Officer and/or the relevant Head of Year to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **Holidays in Term Time**

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 refraining from taking holidays during term time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance, in writing. At the discretion of the Academy, a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision, the Academy will consider the circumstances of each application individually.



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It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods, GCSE, A-Level or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

### **Academy Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives**

The Academy has set targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum target of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

We know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the region.

Throughout the school year we monitor absence and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our termly mailings and we ask for your full support.



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## **Staff Members Responsible for Attendance Matters at Sandwell Academy are:**

Mrs D McCabe-Smith, Attendance Officer  
Mrs J Bell, Deputy Head with responsibility for Attendance  
Dr G Smith, Deputy Head with responsibility for Year 7  
Mr P Taylor, Senior Teacher with responsibility for Year 8  
Mr M Bastin, Deputy Head with responsibility for Year 9  
Mr D Denker, Senior Teacher with responsibility for Year 10  
Ms N Vaughan, Deputy Head with responsibility for Year 11  
Mr A Gill, Deputy Head with responsibility for Sixth Form

## **Summary**

The Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend.

All Academy staff are committed to working with parents and students to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **Date of Policy/Review:**

August 2010

This most up-to-date version of this Policy will be available on the Academy's website throughout the academic year.