



# SUMMERBANK PRIMARY ACADEMY

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date of Policy	December 2021
Adopted by Governors	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2021
Review Date	Autumn 2023

# 'Together We Grow'

## **Rationale**

This policy recognises our commitment to striving for excellent attendance for all children in our academy community. It sets out our procedures and practice, the sanctions and legal consequences of poor attendance and the rewards for good attendance. This policy will be reviewed annually in line with current legislation and DfE guidance.

Summerbank Primary Academy recognises that it is a legal requirement that every child has the right to obtain a good education if they are to succeed in life and develop to their full potential. It is also recognised that for most to succeed, regular and punctual attendance at school is essential.

## **Promoting Good Attendance**

Summerbank Primary Academy will use all opportunities to promote good attendance and punctuality including Home School Agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives to improve attendance.

The academy will:

- Provide a welcoming environment where children feel safe and valued
- Raise awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Encourage and support parents/carers to achieve good attendance for their child
- Encourage children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and set targets to improve
- Celebrate good attendance
- Have procedures in place to ensure children settle in after extended absence
- Report to parents each term on their child's attendance
- Employ members of staff with responsibility for monitoring and improving school attendance
- Work closely with the Education Welfare Department to monitor attendance

## **Rewards and incentives**

- Termly attendance certificates
- Termly 100% attendance prizes
- End of year 100% attendance reward

## **Parental Responsibility**

Under Section 44 of the Education Act 1996, parents or those with parental responsibility for children of school age, are required by law to ensure that their

children are in receipt of full time education. Children are required to attend and stay in school.

***'If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.'***

This responsibility also extends to ensuring that the children attend school regularly, punctually, suitably dressed and in a fit condition to learn.

We expect parents and carers to:

- Be responsible for their children's regular attendance
- Notify the academy on the first day of absence when their child is unable to attend with the reason for their children's absence
- Contact the school on a daily basis for the duration of the absence
- Provide medical evidence if requested in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note etc.

Attendance issues arising will be raised by sending letters home, by telephone, home visits, attendance clinics, at parents evening and if necessary cases will be formally referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Parents will be promptly informed over any concerns regarding attendance and given the opportunity of discussing these matters with the Headteacher and, if appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer.

### **Academy Procedures**

- The academy is required to take the register twice a day at the beginning of each am and pm session. This shows whether the pupil is present or absent. The absence code will indicate if the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Marks are transferred onto the computerised system.

In managing the attendance and punctuality of its pupils the academy will:

- Keep appropriate attendance records
- Make accurate information on attendance available to designated staff which will also be used to inform the Governing Body of attendance and punctuality trends.

### **Authorised Absence**

The Headteacher or the designated member of staff acting on her behalf has the ultimate responsibility for authorising absence, not the parents, and will do so when a valid reason is given for a child's absence. A pupil's absence from the academy will be considered unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.

Examples of authorised absence:

- Genuine illness
- Operation/pre-planned medical procedures
- Home office appointments where evidence of appointment has been provided

*This list is not exhaustive*

### **Unauthorised Absence**

An unauthorised absence will be given when a child does not attend the academy, and a valid reason is not given for their absence, or, when the Headteacher refuses to authorise an application of leave in exceptional circumstances. If attendance deteriorates and is at an unacceptable level, the academy may consider not authorising any further sickness absence unless medical evidence is provided which covers the period of absence. Late arrival beyond the close of registration can also lead to an unauthorised absence mark in the register.

Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other family members are unwell
- Daytrips / holidays

*This list is not exhaustive.*

### **Reporting Absence**

On the **first day of absence** parents should inform the academy by one of the following ways:

- By telephone - academy number is 01782 233611
- By letter – handed either to the class teacher or the academy office on the first day of absence
- In person at the academy office
- By showing an appointment card or letter
- By filling in a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances form (in advance) following an appointment with the Education Welfare Officer
- By informing staff

When the reason for a child's absence has not been reported, the academy will contact parents on the first day of absence by telephone, which is then followed by 'teacher to parents' text service in order to establish if the reason for absence is anything that requires intervention/support. If a child's absence is not reported, this may result in a home visit as part of our safeguarding procedures.

### **Medical and dental appointments**

Parents / carers are expected to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the academy holidays. If this is not possible then authorisation will be given where confirmation of the appointment is received via one of the methods already listed. A signing in/out book is kept in the office to record such appointments. Children are expected to attend the academy prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to the academy following the appointment wherever possible.

### **Bereavement**

The academy is sensitive to family requests for a child's attendance at funerals or associated events. The Headteacher / attendance officer will offer the family advice over absence in this instance.

### **Religious Observance**

We recognise the importance of religious observance to families and that children of different faiths attend our school. In line with Local Authority policy, one day's absence is authorised in this instance (for example EID, Diwali etc.) when the celebration falls on a school day.

### **Family holidays**

Holidays during term time can have a significant impact on a child's progress and as such cannot be authorised. To illustrate the impact of taking holidays in term time, it should be noted that if children are taken on a two week holiday every year, and have the average number of days off for sickness and appointments, then during their educational career, they will have missed the equivalent of a year of their learning.

An amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removes reference to family holidays to make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. This amendment came into effect on 1 September 2013.

Parent/carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from the academy for a holiday and, in law, are obliged to ask for permission in advance for any exceptional leave during term time.

When a 'Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances' form is requested from the school office, parents are required to attend a meeting to discuss this with the EWO and attendance lead and the form will be available at this meeting.

The Academy may issue a Penalty Notice warning letter and/or request a Penalty Notice (fine), in relation to holidays taken during term time and for any other unauthorised leave of absence. The Penalty Notice is issued to each parent, for each pupil by the Local Authority. Payment of Penalty Notices within 21 days is £60 per parent, per child and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120 per parent, per pupil. Non-payment of the Penalty Notice may result in legal action.

### **Lateness**

Children can get very easily upset when they arrive late at the academy after registration. This can cause distress and they also miss the start of the school day which in turn impacts on their learning.

Children are expected to arrive punctually for the start of the day.

- Children should arrive between 8.50 – 9.00am

- The academy gates are locked at 9.00am and children arriving after this must report to the school office where they will be registered in the late book.
- Children arriving after 9.00am will be given a late mark - 'L'
- Registers close at 9.20am and any child arriving after this time will be given an absent mark in the register - 'U'
- The late letter system will be implemented usually after three lates in any term and if the reasons for persistent lateness is deemed unsatisfactory by the attendance lead
- The Education Welfare Officer will carry out regular unannounced 'late gates'
- Parents will be challenged regarding persistent lateness and the Education Welfare Officer will become involved.
- If a pupil is late beyond the close of registration and the 'U' mark is awarded, this is an unauthorised absence and therefore could result in a statutory warning letter being sent out.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The Headteacher, in liaison with the attendance team and the Education Welfare Officer will regularly review the registers and late book in order to work with the families whose patterns of attendance and/or punctuality are causing concerns. All parents will be informed via the annual report and termly attendance certificates of their child's overall attendance. The Headteacher monitors attendance weekly and reports to governors on a termly basis. The DfE publish attendance data annually via ASP.

The academy encourages good attendance through clear communication with parents about the effects of non-attendance and/or regular lateness. If there is cause for concern then the following procedures will be followed:

- A letter will be sent home to parents of all children whose attendance becomes a concern, (not reaching the primary national average, or a PA pupil) each child's attendance is examined on an individual basis
- An individual child's attendance will then be monitored and further action/correspondence implemented as appropriate
- If a child's absence is persistent, and becomes a concern, parents/carers will be invited into an attendance clinic. A letter will also be sent home advising parents/carers that no further absences will be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. This can be in the form of a GP letter, medical appointment card or the label from any prescribed medication covering the period of absence.
- School is in weekly contact with the Education Welfare Officer. Whole academy attendance and individual attendance is monitored on a weekly basis through regular meetings with the attendance team. If there are concerns around a child's attendance the Education Welfare Officer will become involved, this may lead to an official Education Welfare Service referral which would start the statutory intervention process. Parents will be informed about any attendance concerns via the letter monitoring system, meetings in the academy, and academy staff.

## **Learning**

Any absence affects your child's learning and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up.

## **Understanding Absence Percentages**

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%

This makes it easier to understand:

- 95% equates to half a day off every two weeks
- 90% equates to a day off every two weeks
- 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks
- 80% equates to one whole day off each week

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. This is why we work very hard to encourage positive attendance.