



EBOR ACADEMY TRUST

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Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction

In order for all children to achieve their full potential they must be in school every day, on time and ready to learn. The Ebor Academy Trust places a high value on punctual and regular attendance. Every child and family in the academies will be made aware of the importance of this through regular updates, the positive promotion of good attendance, rewards for good attendance and, where necessary, discussions with families about the need to improve attendance and punctuality. We wish to foster good attendance and punctuality habits from the early years and throughout the child's school career and into adult life.

2. Responsibilities

Improving the attendance and therefore life chances of the children in the schools in the Trust, is the responsibility of parents/carers, the Trust, its schools and the child. Working together in partnership will ensure each child is most likely to achieve their full potential by ensuring their frequent and punctual attendance.

This policy reflects the expected practice in all schools within the Ebor Academy Trust. The fair and consistent application of the policy is the responsibility of all staff.

Each Ebor Academy Trust school will take the attendance register twice a day: at the start of each morning and once during the afternoon. The Academies will also notify the local authority if a student/pupil has irregular attendance or is absent continuously without authorisation.

3. Aims of the policy to promote good attendance

Explicit in the overall aim of the school is the principle that children should feel secure and happy in a well ordered environment and that they should be enthusiastic about coming to school. Children have a right to experience a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum; nonattendance deprives them of this opportunity.

It is the aim of this policy that unauthorised absence should be 0% on a year by year basis and that authorised absences should be kept to a minimum. Whole school and individual monitoring will be in line with targets set by the Ebor Academy Trust on an annual basis.

In order to improve the overall attendance of student/pupils in the schools we will:

- a) Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the schools in the Trust
- b) Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- c) Implement a common systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
- d) Implement a common system of rewards for attendance
- e) Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and carers
- f) Ensure we have positive and consistent methods of communication about attendance matters with families and the schools in the Trust
- g) Work in partnership with supporting services and agencies and the Local Authority
- h) Recognise and meet the needs of the individual student/pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

4. Persistent Absence

Guidance from the Department for Education (2011) advises that if a child's attendance is below 90% he/she will be referred to as 'Persistent Absence'. Schools in the Ebor Academy Trust will work closely with parents and carers, the local authority and other external agencies to improve persistent absenteeism. This may include the use of parenting contracts and Attendance Panels.

The school will be monitoring attendance every half term. If a child's attendance drops below the national average we will be notifying you of this, and looking to see where we can support to improve your child's absence. We are always keen to work in partnership with parents to overcome any difficulties that could be preventing your child attending school on a regular basis.

5. Reporting absence

It is vital that you inform the school office on the first day of your child's absence and subsequently daily if your child is still too unwell to return. If your child has a medical reason for this absence that means they will not return the following day please inform your child's school of this. Any children that have not been reported as absent may result in the school having to carry out a welfare check to assure pupil safety.

The school will also require at least three emergency contacts for every child this is not just in the event of a medical emergency, but in circumstances whereby a pupil is absent and the parent is unobtainable and or has not made contact with the school.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

There are a series of codes defined by the Department of Education which are used to denote authorised and unauthorised absence. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that the correct codes are recorded and that patterns in children's attendance are analysed.

Parents and carers should be made aware that it is for the Exe Headteacher and/or Head of School of each academy to decide whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. All reasons given for a child's absence are considered by the academy. As examples, absence from school **may** be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- a) genuine illness
- b) unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- c) days of religious observance
- d) exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

Absence from school will **not** be authorised for:

- a) shopping
- b) birthdays
- c) minding the house
- d) caring for brothers/sisters/relatives
- e) parent/carer illness
- f) sibling illness
- g) arrivals after a specific time in the morning – please see the guidance below for each academy

The head teacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be treated on an individual basis. Advice on what constitutes exceptional circumstances suggests situations such as children of service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside the term time, or families who need to spend time together following a crisis. Parents and carers are asked to ensure that they make any medical appointments for their child outside of the school day.

If the Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for him or her to determine the length of time that any child can be away from school. As a norm, leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents and carers should put in writing all requests for a child's absence from school for any purpose. This should be sent to the school marked well in advance of any request for leave of absence during term time. Circumstances such as previous attendance, academic achievement, family circumstances and the time of year, will be taken into account. If your child has an older sibling, contact will also be made with local secondary schools so that a joint decision can be made. Should a leave of absence request not be authorised and your child is still taken out of school, a 'Fixed Penalty Notice' could be issued.

7. Enforcement

The school will always try to work supportively where a pupil's absence is becoming a cause for concern. In the first instance the school will communicate with you to understand the barriers to the attendance. Where the school cannot ensure the child is coming into school, and the pupil is accruing a level of unauthorised absence then they will be required to consult with the local authority for further support and instruction in order to try to establish improved patterns of attendance. Where a child has a genuine medical need or concern that is preventing them from attending, the school will work in partnership with other agencies and professionals to support the child and family.

8. Fixed Penalty Notice

In certain circumstances parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice where they take a holiday in term time which is not authorised by the Executive Headteacher and/or Head of School. A Fixed Penalty Notice can require a parent to pay a sum of either £60 or £120. Each parent can be issued with a notice for each child so two parents with two children can potentially be issued with four notices.

9. Support and guidance available to those with poor attendance and punctuality

Where persistent absence occurs, or where persistent lateness or poor attendance is identified through the monitoring processes, the appropriate member of staff in each academy will contact the family. They will offer support and assistance to families who are experiencing difficulties in getting their children to school. This will be via appointments in school, guidance and advice on attendance or contact with other agencies. In some cases, families will be offered a Parenting Contract for attendance, Common Assessment or CAF assessment in order to fully support the family concerned. In more severe cases, such as 'Persistent Absence', staff will contact the Local Authority's Front Door Service. Together they will work with the family to offer further support and guidance. If attendance continues to be poor at this point steps may be taken, as dictated by law, which may result in prosecution for non-attendance.

The Ebor Academy Trust has a duty to refer regular absence (authorised and unauthorised) to the relevant local authority. This may include any evidence to show how schools in the Trust have supported the student/pupil and parent to improve attendance. It is for each local authority to judge each referral on its own merits and make a decision on the next probable course of action.

10. Further information for parents and carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to read the guidance on authorised and unauthorised absence and information on Fixed Penalty Notices in the document ‘School Attendance Statutory Guidance and Departmental Advice August 2013’ Reference: DFE-00158-2013 via the Department for Education website www.education.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>