



## Attendance Policy



***Our Ambition: To be the highest performing MAT in the country***

***Our Mission: To improve the communities we serve for the better***

Written by	The Attendance Officer in conjunction with the Principals Review Committee
Ratified by Trustees	
Date for Review	January 2020
Signed by Chair of Trustees	(Sue Trentini)
Signed by Chief Executive Officer	(Lee Hessey)

# **The FORGE Trust Attendance Policy**

## **Vision**

***All children make at least good progress;  
no underperforming cohorts, groups or academies;  
all academies within the trust strive to be outstanding***

## **Aims**

At The Forge Trust, we aim to maintain a caring, supportive and disciplined learning environment, where children benefit from the best possible education. All staff are committed to this aim. We would like to know if you think we are not meeting your expectations, so that we have an opportunity to respond. We would also like to know your opinion on the things we do well.

## **Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities**

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, belief, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. The Forge Trust is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential. Policies are available on each of these that expand on this further.

All staff have equal access and inclusive rights to their work regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, belief, disability or ability. The Forge Trust is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment, and to achieve their full potential. Policies are available on each of these that expand on this further.

When each academy analyses persistent absenteeism, children with medical conditions and special educational needs (SEN) are considered, and appropriate action is taken accordingly.

## **Trust Expectations**

The FORGE Trust believes regular attendance is vital when it comes to children reaching their full academic potential; therefore we encourage all of our parents/carers to support us in giving your child every opportunity to achieve their best. At The FORGE Trust, we expect each child to achieve 97% or above attendance during the academic year. This does allow for 6 days of absence throughout the year.

## **Legal Requirements**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive full time education. The Education Act 2002 places the responsibility for enforcing school attendance on the Local Authority. This responsibility is delegated to the Targeted Support Service. Legal action will be instigated against parents/carers in relevant circumstances using the wide range of available options including:

- penalty notices;
- school attendance orders;
- section 444(1) and (1) (a) of the Education Act 2002.

At all academies in The Forge Trust, children should arrive to school on time every day the academy is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Any absences should be reported to the academy before 8.55am on the first day of absence, and if possible the predicted date of return given. A dedicated absence reporting line is available to parents for reporting absence.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend their respective academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the academy, the parents and the child. If a 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 may make things worse.

Academies and schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence, to the Early Help Service.

Academies and schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence has to be classified by the academy, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the academy can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Parents are expected to contact the academy at an early stage and to work with the academy's Family Support Team in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the academy may refer the child to the Early Help Service at the Local Education Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absences are those that the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

This includes:

- Parents 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;
- Absences which cannot be authorised as medical proof is required.

## **Examples of Unauthorised Absence**

Academies will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts, birthdays, visiting relatives, getting up late, having no clean uniform/shoes etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement of a family member).

If no reason for absence is given, an absence letter from the academy will be sent home giving the dates of absence as well as a request for a reason why the child was absent. If the absence is prolonged or the child has poor attendance, it is brought to the attention of the Principal, who will decide whether the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. If no reason is given after 2 weeks, the absences will automatically be classed as unauthorised.

Please ensure all medical appointments are taken out of academy time wherever possible, or at the very least the beginning or end of the day. The academy may need to request medical evidence if absences become a concern – the trust wants to support all families, so please talk with the academy about any issues and we can explain the reasons for any request.

## **Persistent Lateness**

Please ensure your child is at the academy just before the beginning of each academy day. You will be able to find start and end times on the academy website. All children who arrive after the registers have been closed at 9.05am must report to Reception. Lateness will be recorded in the registers as follows:

9.05am -9.15am – "L" Code

9.15am onwards – "U" Code

A penalty notice may only be issued where a pupil is persistently late for 10 separate instances over a period of six school weeks and where these are signified as a "U" in the attendance register. The issuing of penalty notices will be only in cases where the persistent lateness is marked as an unauthorised absence ("U" Code).

## **Absence Safeguarding Guidance**

In the rare event that a child was registered in the morning and then went missing throughout the day without a satisfactory explanation, there are guidelines that must be followed. If a child is 'missing', their whereabouts cannot be established within the academy. Academies within the trust will need to identify whether the child is at significant risk.

Children are more vulnerable who:

- are on a plan (child protection plan, child in need plan, looked after child, early help);
- have specialist educational needs and or a disability;
- have an education health care plan;
- there are indications that the child is at risk of CSE, grooming, radicalisation etc.

There may be other contributing factors that should be taken into consideration when determining if the child is at significant risk such as the child's emotional health, known issues at home etc.

Academy staff will always try to locate the child and attempt to establish the whereabouts of the child. Once a child has been identified as missing and cannot be located within the academy, the designated safeguarding lead will be informed.

Staff will use their professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the child's whereabouts before notifying the police. Parents/carers will always be informed before contact with the police is made, unless a child is at immediate risk of harm and a police response is needed. This will be judged on a case by case basis.

When a decision has been made to contact the police, the police will require information from the academy to assist in locating the child and returning them to a safe environment.

If a child has a social worker or case manager (e.g. Early Help) then they should also be informed.

Where a child is known to regularly go missing from school, a risk assessment for the child will be undertaken.

For further guidance please see the missing protocol or speak to Nottinghamshire County Council's Glen Scruby, Children's Missing Officer. [Missing.CME@nottscc.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Missing.CME@nottscc.gcsx.gov.uk) / 0115 8041045.

## **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued in line with the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct. Warning Letters and Penalty Notice Fines will be issued as follows:

## **Persistent Unauthorised Absence**

- Once a child has reached 3 days (6 sessions) unauthorised absence over a 6 week rolling period, the academy can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue a warning letter. The letter will make it clear that any further absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies;
- It is advised that the monitoring period for warning letters should be 12 weeks with the academy within the trust taking the lead in monitoring this;
- If the unauthorised absence persists and then rises to 5 days (10 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period then the academy can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies;
- In these cases the Local Authority may also consider what services or measures may be provided to prevent or reduce further unauthorised absence including support and interventions through the Family Service.

## **Holidays during Academy Term Time**

- If the academy has evidence that a parent has removed a child from the academy for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation, and the level of absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) in total over a 6 week rolling period, then the academy can issue or request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies;
- The standard of evidence required will be the same as that required for court cases brought under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996);
- The evidence should include a warning to the parent/s at the start of the 6 week time period and a record of support offered to the parent/s;
- Where a penalty notice is unpaid with the 28 day deadline, it will be necessary for the person who issued a penalty notice to provide evidence for the court case by way of a Section 9 Statement (a witness statement admissible in court under the Criminal Justice Act and the Magistrates' Courts Act and Rules);
- An Enforcement Lead from the Family Service will consult with the person providing the Section 9 Statement and offer guidance as required and arrange for the Section 9 Statement to be completed in the appropriate format.

In the **most** exceptional circumstances and after the consideration of a detailed written request, the Principal (in collaboration with the Trust) has the final decision whether to authorise any leave of absence – if parents/carers still take their child out of the academy during term time when permission is not granted legal proceedings may be taken by the Local Authority. This is in the form of Fixed Penalty Notices (fines) or legal action through a Magistrates Court.

The FORGE Trust does appreciate the value of taking family holidays, and also understands that many families wish to avoid inflated holiday costs during the traditional school holiday period. Therefore each academy within the trust will **not** have INSET days at various times during the year. Instead they will block their INSET days, and slightly amend term times accordingly to create one week for families to book a holiday at a much more competitive price. Each academy will let you know their respective INSET week at the beginning of the academic year so that you have plenty of time to book a holiday.

## **Support and Incentives**

We operate an open door policy at every academy within the trust, so if you have difficulties with getting your child into school, please contact the academy and they will support you. All of our staff will be happy to help and all academies have specialist pastoral support available, e.g. a Child and Family Support Worker who can offer support and advice for parents.

All academies within the trust celebrate good attendance in the form of incentives and rewards on an individual, class and whole school basis. This information will be available on the academies website. 100% attendance is celebrated in every academy within the trust on a termly and annual basis. Hospital appointments due to ongoing medical treatment will not affect 100% attendance awards/certificates as long as we have a copy of the appointment letter as proof.

## **Monitoring Arrangements**

Every academy within The FORGE Trust operates its own internal attendance audit procedure. Children with attendance falling below 90% are identified. The parents/carers are contacted by the Pastoral Worker within each academy to discuss concerns and determine how we can work together to resolve any issue which are affecting the pupils attendance and educational progress.

Attendance Panel Meetings are held in each academy to support the attendance audit procedures. The panel members consist of the Principal/Head of Academy/Child & Family Support Worker and any relevant outside agencies.