

Ormiston Forge Academy

Attendance of Students

July 2017



Approved by the Senior Leadership Team under powers delegated by the Governing Body:
July 2017

Review period: **June 2019**

At Ormiston Forge Academy we recognise the crucial part that good attendance plays in ensuring students achieve the best outcomes. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly, every day the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important that we work in partnership to ensure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Statutory Responsibilities

Ormiston Forge Academy maintains its attendance and admission records in accordance with The Education (Pupil Attendance Records) Regulation 2006 and The Education (Pupil

Registration) Regulation 1995 (amended 1997).

The Importance of Regular Attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence can seriously affect their learning. Under the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from the academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to achieve regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of academy staff.

To achieve this Ormiston Forge Academy will:

Provide parents with details on attendance in our reports and at parents' evenings.

Liaise with parents/guardians when there are concerns regarding attendance to discuss attendance and punctuality and how this relates to individual progress.

Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and Progress tutor group achievements.

Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings / events.

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, either in writing or verbally. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as:

- Illness, medical / dental appointments which unavoidably is in school time.
- Emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy 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 important to contact the academy in order that any issues can be addressed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we require parents' fullest support and co-operation in order 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 parents/carers 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 Attendance Agreement. The Agreement may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities based around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Principal.

Absence Procedures

If children are absent parents must:

- Contact the Academy via text message or telephone as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

If children are absent we will:

- Contact parents on the morning of the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- Attempt to make contact after more than two days of absence to check on progress;

- Invite parents in to the academy discuss the situation with our Attendance Officers/
Progress Year Leaders if absences persists.

Contact Details

There are times when we need to contact parents about various issues, including absence or illness, so we need to have the correct contact details for you at all times. Parents should help us to help them and their child(ren) by making sure we always have up to date contact details, including mobile telephone numbers and email addresses. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year.

Parents are expected to contact the academy 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 Lead Attendance Officer may refer the child to the Vice Principal with responsibility for Attendance and to the Principal 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 Principal 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 Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Sandwell's Attendance & Prosecution Service to ask for help or information. The Attendance & Prosecution Service is independent of the academy and will give impartial advice.

Truancy

On the rare occasions where a student is absent from Ormiston Forge Academy without the knowledge of parent / carer, the following procedure will be followed:

- The student's absence on this occasion will not be authorised.
- The parent / carer will be contacted at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to discuss the reasoning behind the student's decision to absent themselves from the Academy.
- Detentions will be issued to catch up on lost learning.
- Relevant support will be implemented where necessary.
- The student's attendance will be closely monitored for the remainder of the academic year.
- Future absence without a valid reason will not be authorised.
- Persistent unauthorised absence can be used to instigate court proceedings under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996.

Parents and carers are welcome to raise any concerns they may have regarding their child's persistent reluctance to attend the academy with the student's Progress Year Leader or the Attendance Officers.

Leave of Absence during Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by refraining from taking holidays during term time.

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

Due to amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as of September 2013, Head Teachers **may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Exceptional circumstances **do not include** family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after sick family members, babysitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping.

If parents/carers choose to take their child out of the academy during term time without leave of absence being granted then it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register.

If parents/carers consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then a written request should be made to the Principal.

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

- When a student is just starting the academy. This is very important as children need 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.

Staff Members Responsible for Attendance at Ormiston Forge Academy are:

Mrs L Kay, Vice Principal Inclusion

Mr T Daly Lead Attendance Officer

Mrs N Fischer, Attendance Officer Key Stage 3

Mr W Grant, Attendance Officer Key Stage 4