



The Park Federation Academy Trust

James Elliman Academy

Attendance Policy

2017 - 2018

Approval

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| Signed by CEO and Federation Principal on behalf of the Board of Directors | Dr. Martin Young |
| Date of approval | September 2017 |
| Date of review | September 2018 |

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

James Elliman Academy

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

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

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil'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, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- give you details on attendance in our monthly newsletter
- report to you at parents' evening on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and certificates
- where absence is causing the school concern, parents will be informed in writing and in some cases asked to attend a meeting with the school's Attendance Officer and the Vice Principal for Inclusion and Safeguarding

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the 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 like 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 given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority, through its Attendance Service (AS) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the register e.g getting up too late, shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time
- excessive illness without medical evidence
- absence attached to a school holiday or half term break which has not been supported with substantial evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea 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.

You can support your child by:

- ensuring regular and early bed times
- helping with homework
- having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- providing a healthy breakfast
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly to the school
- retaining open and honest communication with your child's school
- being positive about school, even if your own experience was less than positive
- encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

Referrals to the Attendance Service

The school will refer a pupil to the Attendance Service once they have reached **38 sessions** of absence, of which 10 sessions are unauthorised within a **12 week period**.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) Thresholds

A pupil defined by the DfE as being a **persistent absentee** is any pupil who has 38 sessions of absence. The Attendance Service monitor pupils that are on track to become a PA by the number of sessions absent (2 sessions = 1 day), the following guidelines are used to help schools identify these pupils at the end of each half term.

| Identification at the end of each half term | Number of sessions of absence, at the end of the half term, to be on track for persistent absenteeism |
|---|---|
| Term 1 | 7 sessions |
| Term 2 | 14 sessions |
| Term 3 | 20 sessions |
| Term 4 | 25 sessions |
| Term 5 | 32 sessions |
| Term 6 | 38 sessions |

Therefore, a child is a persistent absentee as defined by the DfE once they have reached **38 sessions of absence**, irrespective of which part of the year we are in at the time, and for whatever reason. For example, if a child has had a block of illness during half term 1 for 20 days, they would have been absent for 40 sessions which make them a persistent absentee in half term 1 and therefore they will remain a PA for the rest of the academic year.

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 will be informed of this immediately. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and the school needs parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- contact us by telephone as soon as possible on the first day of absence and keep the school regularly informed, preferably daily
- or, you can come into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you
- parents and carers may report absence to the school for **the first three consecutive days**
- on the fourth day of an absence **the school will require medical evidence** to support the absence period. This can be in the form of a prescription or appointment card at the very least.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone you if we have not heard from you **by 10am on the first day of absence**
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and one of the Vice Principals if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Attendance Improvement Officer if attendance reaches **38 sessions** of absence, of which 10 sessions are unauthorised within a **12 week period**.

In the rare event that we cannot contact you to determine an absence we will:

- call the two remaining contact numbers to check everything is ok and ask you to make contact with the school
- send two members of staff to the family home if we cannot make contact with all three contact numbers held on the school system
- contact the police immediately for a welfare check if we have failed to make contact via telephone and a home visit has taken place and been unsuccessful

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents and carers about lots of things, including absence, so the school needs to hold **at least three contact numbers for different adults** at all times. Additional contact numbers do not need to be adults living locally as we would only use these if contact was unsuccessful and we were concerned for the family's welfare. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up to date numbers - if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Attendance Improvement Officer

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 school may refer the child to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) from the Local Authority. He/she will also 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, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. **The Education Act 1996 sec. 444.1 and 444.1.A states that:**

- *(1) 'If any 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.'*
- *(1A) 'If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence.
(S. 444(1A) inserted 1.3.2001)*
- *'If a child misses just five days each term over all the years he or she is at school, this is equivalent to missing one whole school year.'
(Slough Borough Council School Attendance Team)*

Parents, carers or children may wish to contact the Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Parents and carers may contact the Attendance Service on 01753 787670 or you can email attendance@slough.gov.uk. Alternatively there is an advice leaflet from Slough Borough Council's Attendance Team attached to this policy.

http://www.slough.gov.uk/downloads/Attendance_-_a_guide_for_parents.pdf

Regulations have been amended regarding the payment of Penalty Notices (fines).

Payment of Penalty Notice

- the penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days
- the payment must be paid direct to the local authority
- parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made
- there is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. The academy monitors lateness daily with the attendance officer and parents will be sent a letter once their child has 5 late marks.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8:45am for Reception to Year 6** and gates close at **8:55am**. We expect your child to be in class within these times.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the one of the Vice Principals and Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

The start time for the **Morning Nursery is 8:30 am** and for the **Afternoon Nursery it is 12:30 pm**.

Exceptional Leave

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 not taking children away in school 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.

Important information to consider regarding attendance

It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.

Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employment.

Graduates earn an average of £15.01 per hour. Young people that leave school with no qualifications earn an average of £7.44 per hour.

All Slough schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave. The Principal will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. You may be asked to provide evidence in support of your request.

The School will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave where possible to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.

Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The Attendance Service can issue Fixed Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence.

From September 2013 any unauthorised exceptional leave that takes place will result in a referral to the Attendance Improvement Officer and they can issue a fine to the family. This fine or penalty notice is £120.00 per parent, per child.

Academy targets, projects and special initiatives

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

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is one of the keys to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Slough.

Through the school year we monitor absences 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 newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Those people responsible for attendance management in this school are:

- Saira Rasheed (Principal) Focus: Attendance
- Bev Simmons (Attendance Officer) Focus: Attendance
- Rebecca Pinkney (Vice Principal: Inclusion and Safeguarding) Focus: Attendance
- Vice Principals' Focus: Punctuality

Summary

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education (DfE). Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports and optimises your child's attainment.

James Elliman Academy

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the attendance policy at James Elliman Academy.

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Parent's or Carer's Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Thank you.