



## Attendance Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Thomas Deacon Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils/students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent attendance for all. This is based on the belief that, only by attending the academy regularly and punctually, young people are able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High achievement and attainment is linked directly to high attendance.
- 1.2** The whole academy community – students, parents and carers, staff and Academy Committee (AC) members at Thomas Deacon Academy have a responsibility for ensuring good attendance and have important roles to play. We are committed to working in partnership with families and other agencies to achieve best outcomes for children via the early help pathways available. The purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3** We believe that ours is a successful, welcoming academy in which you and your child/children plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of our school community to achieve excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, on time and every day on which the academy is open (Isle of Wight V Platt; see section 5.3), unless the reason for the absence is exceptional.
- 1.4** All staff (teaching and support) at our academy have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the academy community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 1.5** The school liaises closely with our Local Authority and other agencies using an Early Help pathway (Early Help Referral) which assists in the assessment of need, in order for appropriate support to be given. This initial pathway enables further referrals to external agencies to be made and further support acquired to support families to remove any barriers that are preventing regular attendance.

## **2. Attendance Officer**

- 2.1** Our Attendance Officer will over-see, direct and co-ordinate the academy's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the academy.
- 2.2** The Attendance Officer will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the relevant senior leader and are made regularly available to all staff, students and parents/carers (who will be regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance).
- 2.3** The Attendance Officer, supported by the Attendance Assistant, and in conjunction with Pastoral Teams, will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that appropriate and proportionate support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

### **3. Why regular attendance is so important - Learning**

- 3.1** Regular attendance is so important as it gives your child the best opportunity to learn. Any absences will affect the pattern of your child's schooling and consistent absences may seriously affect learning and achievement. Any child's absence disrupts teaching routines, not only for your child but for others in the same class.
- 3.2** Ensuring regular attendance at the academy is the **legal responsibility** of the parent/carer and permitting absence from the academy without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **4. Why regular attendance is so important - Safeguarding**

- 4.1** A learner may be at risk of harm if they do not attend the academy regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and, within the context of this academy, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for learners encompasses:
- attendance;
  - mental health & wellbeing;
  - behaviour management;
  - health and safety;
  - access to the curriculum;
  - anti-bullying.

Failing to attend the academy on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers, students, academy staff and external agencies.

- 4.2** To help us all to focus on this we will:
- regularly communicate the importance of good attendance to staff, students and parents/carers;
  - give you details on students' attendance via the Edulink One platform;
  - report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and rate of progress;
  - contact parents/carers directly, by letter, if your child's attendance drops below 96%;
  - celebrate and reward good attendance.

### **5. The Law relating to attendance**

- 5.1** Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states the "the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:
- (a) To age, ability and aptitude and;
- (b) To any special educational needs, he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

- 5.2** It is the legal responsibility of **every** parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an **additional legal duty** to ensure

their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

- 5.3** The Isle of Wight Council v Platt case (2017) considered by the Supreme Court makes it clear that regular attendance shall mean in accordance with the school rules. Therefore, any non-attendance which is not in accordance with the school rules will be deemed unauthorised. The school rules are determined by the school and are the days and hours that they are open for pupils to attend. Under this judgment all children registered at a school should attend 100% of the time unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this and for which clear evidence has been provided.

## **6. The Law relating to safeguarding**

- 6.1** Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **7. Absence Procedures**

### **7.1 Parents/Carers**

If your child is absent you must:

- **contact the Academy before 9:30am on each day of absence via EduLink or phone;**
- provide evidence on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- or you can visit the academy in person and report to Reception, who will arrange for the relevant Student Support Officer (SSO) or the Attendance Officer/Assistant, to speak with you.

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers, so we always need to have at least two contact numbers. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number; if we do not then something important may be missed. Contact details can be easily updated on the Edulink One platform or via a 'Change of Details' form (from the SSO), throughout the year.

### **7.2 The Academy**

If your child is absent we will, under our Safeguarding Policy:

- contact you via Intouch at the start of every day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- invite you to a meeting in order to discuss the situation with us;
- visit you at home in order to conduct a safe and well check; this may also be conducted by the Police;
- we may refer the matter to the Peterborough City Council Attendance Service if the attendance falls below **90%**. Peterborough City Council may consider issuing a Penalty Notice for Non School Attendance.

### **7.3 Support and Challenge**

Parents/Carers 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 academy will refer the child to the TDA Attendance Officer. They 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 recommend that the Local Authority use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

## **8. Managing Lateness – Guidance for Parents/Carers**

8.1 Poor punctuality is not acceptable.

8.2 The senior academy day starts at 8.45am and we expect all students to be in morning registration, with their tutor, at that time; students will receive a late mark, and a negative behaviour point, if they have not arrived by this time.

8.3 The junior academy day starts at 9.00am and pupils should arrive at 8.50am to ensure that they are on time for lessons; students will receive a late mark if they are not in class by this time.

8.4 At 9.15am all registers at both the senior and Junior Academy will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a student arrives after that time, they will receive a 'U' mark (unauthorised late) that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

8.5 If a student has a persistent late record, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the academy to resolve the problem, but parents can approach the academy at any time if they are having problems getting a student to the Academy on time.

## **9. Understanding Types of Absence**

9.1 Every half-day absence from the academy has to be classified by the academy (not by parents/carers) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, with supporting evidence.

9.2 **Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

9.3 **Unauthorised** absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been authorised. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- student refusal to attend;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a present mark (after 9:15am);
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;

- day trips and holidays not authorised as an **exceptional/unavoidable circumstance**.

This type of absence can lead to the Peterborough City Council Attendance Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

- 9.4** Whilst any child may be absent from the academy because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the parents/carers and the child. If your 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 increases the problem.

## **10. Leave of Absence – Guidance for Parents/Carers**

- 10.1** Taking leave of absence without exceptional circumstances, in term time, will affect your child's educational outcomes. As much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not allowing absence in academy time. Any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education as well as potential payment of a fine from the Local Authority.
- 10.2** Leave of absence request forms are available from the student's respective SSO at the main academy and from Reception at the Junior Academy.
- 10.3** There is **no** automatic entitlement in law for time off school, to go on holiday.
- 10.4** All applications for leave of absence must be made **4 weeks in advance**. In making a decision about whether to authorise this leave, the academy will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of absence and all evidence provided.
- 10.5** The Academy will consider the request and respond in writing with a decision.
- 10.6** It is important that parents/carers understand that we will **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional circumstances**.
- 10.7** Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the academy and/or different from that agreed by the academy, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions, such as a Penalty Notice per parent/carer per child or the student removed from the academy roll.

## **11. Procedures relating to absences during Academy Term Time**

- 11.1** When there is a period of unauthorised leave of absence, no exceptional circumstances have been given and the leave of absence has not been authorised by the academy, then the period of absence requested is recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority.
- 11.2** Where it is believed that a student has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil/student, the academy will inform the Local Authority and the student could be taken off roll after 20 days.

## **12. Persistent Absence (PA)**

- 12.1** A student becomes a “persistent absentee” when they miss **10%** or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need the parent/carer’s utmost support and co-operation to tackle this.
- 12.2** At Thomas Deacon Academy we monitor all absences rigorously. 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.
- 12.3** PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we may also combine this with mentoring where absence affects progress and attainment.
- 12.4** All PA, or potential PA cases, are automatically referred to our link Peterborough City Council Attendance Officer.
- 12.5** Parents/Carers of PA pupil/students will need to provide additional medical evidence in the form of:
- Medical prescriptions / Medication;
  - A letter from a Medical/Health Professional.
- 12.6** For pupils/students who have a long term medical condition, parents/carers will need to keep the Academy updated with regular medical guidance.

## **13. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be requested from the Local Authority**

- 13.1** A Penalty Notice can be issued if one of the following criteria can be met:
- Level of unauthorised absence leads to an unauthorised absence rate of **10%** or more within a minimum period of any 8 school weeks (a maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued in any academic year);
  - A single unauthorised absence event of at least 2 consecutive days (4 consecutive sessions);
  - Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed (9:15am) contribute to a level of unauthorised absence at **10%** or above;
  - Lack of adherence to the dates agreed for any authorised leave of absence without reasonable justification;
  - Students identified in a public place whilst excluded from the Academy (during the first five days of the exclusion period) without reasonable justification.

For further information regarding Penalty Notices, please refer to the **Peterborough City Council Code of Conduct** which is available on the Peterborough City Council website.

## **14. Payment of Penalty Notices**

- 14.1** Details of arrangements for the payment of penalties will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. Penalties should be paid in full, in one instalment, to the Local Authority and are retained to cover costs of issuing, enforcing or prosecuting recipients who do not pay.
- 14.2** The penalty is £120 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, but reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, as set out in The Education Regulations 2007.



- 14.3** If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the Local Authority, in accordance with the Department of Education, must either prosecute for the offence or withdraw the notice.
- 14.4** Prosecution is for the offence to which it relates rather than for non-payment of the Penalty Notice.
- 14.5** The decision to prosecute ultimately lies with Peterborough City Council Legal Services, who will consider whether the prosecution is in the Public Interest.

**15. Deletions from Register**

- 15.1** Under Section 8 (1) (h), (i), (iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, should your child fail to return to school by the time that registration ends on 20<sup>th</sup> day of absence, the academy is permitted to delete your child's name from their register.
- 15.2** This is possible if your child(ren) have not returned by the date specified because the following applies under Section 8(h) – that he/she/they will have continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and:
- at no time was the absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6 (2);
  - the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil/s is/are unable to attend school by reason on sickness or exceptional cause.

## 16. Our Monitoring and Intervention Strategy

Below is the basis of our intervention pathway. We treat each student individually and, therefore, each case may take a different route depending on the barriers, needs of the family and any other circumstances which may be impacting on regular attendance. We try to take a holistic approach to dealing with and resolving barriers to non-school attendance and use legal interventions as a last resort.

