Attendance Policy

Issue No. 8

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

This policy and the academy's commitment to good attendance have due regard for the DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024'.

Absence from the academy affects the pattern of a student's schooling, and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a student's regular attendance at the academy is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from the academy without a good reason creates an offence in law. At Arco Academy, we set aspirational targets for the whole school attendance of a minimum of 95%. This is in line with the DFE guidelines and ensures that our students come to the academy every day and make the best possible progress.

SECTION 2 - PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

The academy's Attendance Champion is 'Sakeelah Bangura, who is a member of the academy's leadership team. The role of the Attendance Champion is summarised as follows:

- speaking to the school's strategy for monitoring and improving attendance
- analysis of data
- regular reporting
- prompt follow-up of absence

The academy aims to promote a high level of awareness of the need for regular and prompt attendance. We will:

- Maintain attendance registers electronically and retain them for a minimum of six years from the end of the year to which they refer.

- Ensure staff training in promoting good attendance and the timely maintenance of attendance registers, ensuring that staff have been given an awareness of how to remove barriers to attendance and understand the avenues for support, both within and beyond the school.

- Advise parents & carers of the academy's expectations during the induction days, review meetings and on 'Parents Day' and keep parents regularly informed about their child's attendance.

- Work closely with the LAs regarding attendance, providing a 'whole-family' response, and report students' daily attendance to all referring agencies

- Ensure a strong focus on early intervention and support to improve attendance, working proactively and promptly to improve attendance, liaising as relevant with parents, carers and external bodies, underpinning the academies' action through the timely sharing of attendance data. Intervention and support will be provided before any legal action is taken.

- If a student does not arrive to the academy within the hour of the academy start time, contact will be made with parents & carers to clarify the reason for their child's absence and our attendance officer will encourage students to attend the academy if applicable. This will happen between 9.00am and 10.00am and the reason for absence will then be logged. At this stage, if we have been unable to make contact with the parent or carer, we will continue to make contact via different channels and decision will be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) regarding next steps. This could result in Children Services being contacted. If the academy has not been able to ascertain where a student is after following the steps above, the student will be classed as a missing child in education and they will be reported to the police. The same will apply if the parent/ carer cannot confirm their child's whereabouts. Students who are vulnerable will always be prioritised and safeguarding taken into account.

- Arco Academy's register closes 1 hour after the academy start time. Should students arrive after this time, in line with the DFE guidance, they will be marked as absent for the am session.

- Contact with home will also be made by the DSL, Attendance Champion and/or School Home Support Practitioner should a student's attendance be a cause for concern. Support will be provided to the family and through working together, action plans will be designed collectively and interventions put in place to help family to improve attendance.

- Only under exceptional circumstances will we temporarily change the target attendance grade, with the view of increasing this to the expected minimum target of the whole academy over a period of time and if applicable. Each student is still expected to reach their minimum target and if they have fallen below set target, steps set out in 'Understanding Types of Absences' will be taken'

- Good and improved attendance are celebrated through acknowledgements, certificates, rewards and attendance leadership board which is updated weekly.

SECTION 3 - UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCES

Every half-day absence from the academy has to be classified by the academy (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED . This is why information about the cause of absence is always required. Unauthorised absences are those which

- the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘leave’ has been given. This includes:
- Parents & carers keeping their child off academy unnecessarily 4
- Truancy before or during the academy day
- Absences which have never properly been explained
- Students who arrive at academy too late to get a mark
- Activities such as shopping, looking after other students or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time. The DfE guidance no longer permits holidays taken in term time to be categorised as authorised..

The DfE requires the school to permit leave of absence only in the following circumstances:

- To attend an offsite approved educational activity arranged by the school or local authority
- To take part in approved sporting activity
- To take part in work experience
- To attend another school at which the pupil is registered (dual registration)
- To attend an educational visit or trip
- To take part in a regulated performance
- To take part in employment abroad
- To attend an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution
- To study for a public examination
- As part of an agreed temporary, time-limited, part-time timetable
- Where the school deems there to be other exceptional circumstances*

*The DfE instructs that ‘other exceptional circumstances’ are to be indicated in the register using Code C and that this must be used only sparingly. Every use of Code C must be accompanied by a written rationale to explain why this categorisation is justified.

- Part-time timetables can be arranged only for pupils with health issues and not for reasons of behaviour.

Whilst any student may be off because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best
resolved between the academy, parents & carers and child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend the academy, then we will work with the family and external agencies, where appropriate, to understand the cause of the problem.

Informal. When a child's attendance drops below 95%, this will usually be addressed through an initial verbal conversation.

Stage 1. If there is no improvement a formal letter will be addressed and sent to parents or carers (decision made on a case -by-case basis), highlighting the cause for concern.

Stage 2. If the child's attendance still does not improve, a 2nd warning letter will be sent, for more serious cases of poor attendance below 90%, a meeting between a member of staff and parents/carers will be arranged. Absence at this level is affecting any student's education and we need the fullest support and cooperation from parents & carers to deal with this.

Poor attendance will be discussed with the relevant parent school of the student. The academy will authorise non-attendance where reasons for absences have been provided and evidence has been seen. Where appropriate, the school the student is on roll at will also be notified.

Stage 3. If throughout the formal stages, there is no improvement, a third letter will be issued and the case will be escalated to the Local Authority Attendance team which may result in a prosecution.

Should there be any concern or suspicion around the student's welfare and are unable to reach the parent/guardian, we will visit the home. If there's any evidence or we believe that the student is being caused harm or in any danger, we will notify social care or the emergency services.

3.1 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval of term-time absence. The Academy will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school considers each application for termtime absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request should be submitted in writing as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. The Academy may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. DfE statutory guidance may still require absence for which a request has been made to be classified as unauthorised. Valid reasons for authorised absence can include, for example, bereavement.

SECTION 4 - PUNCTUALITY

Good time-keeping is a vital life skill. Being on time helps a student to be calm, relaxed and happy in the academy. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and with the new regulations put in place, it is crucial that each student arrives promptly.

If a student misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. Late-arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence.

In order to reduce any potential disruptions, late arriving students will not be allowed to enter the classroom if they are later than 5 minutes. Students will be given the same work as their peers in the lesson missed and will be expected to complete this in a separate room.

Start and end times may differ according to the academy site your student attends. Timings are made exceptionally clear to families and local authority transport teams.

The register is a statutory document and is taken every lesson. Each day is broken up into 2 sessions of attendance (am and pm).

All students sign in and out via the inventory electronic system and this forms part of our electronical recording system. If a student arrives after the registration period but before register is closed, he/she will be formally noted as late. Students are expected to arrive promptly at an 8:50am start for morning registration and the register will close at 9am. Students will be deemed late should they arrive after 8:50am. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark to note that they are on site, but this will not count as a ‘present’ mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

The afternoon register is taken at the start of the first lesson after lunch.

It is essential that students arriving and leaving the academy with a parent outside normal hours are signed in and out from the academy offices. These records are used in the case of fire/emergency.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Principal to resolve the problem. **However, parents & carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to academy on time**. We will also, where appropriate, involve attendance teams at the local authority.

We encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our students and celebrating good individual and class punctuality.

If students are late, they receive a 30-minute detention on set days and if they are late twice for the week, they receive an hour’s detention.

SECTION 5 - ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of academy hours. The academy should be notified of these appointments in advance. If it is necessary for a student to be out of academy for this reason, the student should be returned to academy directly after the appointment, where applicable, and evidence of the appointment provided.

Long-term standing medical conditions need to be reviewed and monitored with evidence with a senior leader.

If your child is absent the parent must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 8.30am. This can be via phone: 0203 189 1193 / 07570 011173 (Welfare Officer) Sakeelah Bangura

- For medical appointments during the academy day – phone us or email in advance of the appointment.

If your child is absent Arco Academy will:

Text and follow -up telephone call the parent or carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you

- Arrange a meeting with the parent or carer to discuss the situation with a senior leader or school attendance champion if absences persist

- Arrange a meeting with the parent school of the student if the attendance moves below 90%/ agreed target or if punctuality deteriorates.

SECTION 6 - HOLIDAYS DURING THE TERM

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during term time to go on holiday. It is not permitted by the government, local authorities and Arco Academy, as set out in the DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.

In line with the DfE guidelines, Headteachers and Principals are no longer able to allow term time leave and any term time leave will be reported as a matter of course to the school where the student is on roll and the Education Welfare Service where appropriate.

It is the parent's or carer's obligation to apply to the academy (in writing or at a meeting arranged with the Principal) for a leave of absence. It must be made by the parent or carer with whom the child normally resides. All applications for leave must be made in advance and are at the final discretion of the Principal. In making a decision, the academy will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time, as well as the attendance an

punctuality record of the student. This will be discussed with students' parent school and considered against the requirements of the DfE statutory guidance.

We strongly recommend that parents & carers discuss with the Principal/ Attendance Champion any holiday in term time before booking the holiday. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the academy the student is on roll at, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

SECTION 7 - ARRANGEMENTS FOR ABSENCE IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

Sudden serious circumstances do rarely occur, when it is impossible for a family to bring their child to the academy. It is essential that the academy is informed by the parent or carer of the circumstances immediately so that the appropriate code can be noted in the register.

SECTION 8 - MONITORING ABSENCE

- All academy staff are committed to working with parents & carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible
- Attendance is reviewed regularly.
- Arco Academy also keeps commissioning local authorities (who are responsible for pupil placements) informed about the attendance of their residents. We are obliged to inform placing authorities when a student is absent for 10 consecutive academy days or more. We are also obliged to report to the local authorities when a student is absent for 15 days or more through illness, whether consecutive or not.
- Attendance data for all students is gathered, analysed and shared with the local authority so that the academy, the local authority, early help and other relevant bodies can work together to improve pupils' attendance.
- All pupils who have 95% attendance and punctuality over a term will receive a special certificate in our final reward assembly of the term and at our end of year award ceremony. Pupils are equally rewarded for improvements in attendance and punctuality.
- The Principal, Attendance Champion or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) meets with parents & carers of students whose absence or punctuality are causing concern.

Note on Compliance (DfE 2024/25): - Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%. - Severe absence is defined as attendance below 50%. - All unexplained absences will be followed up in line with Children Missing Education (2024) guidance.