CITY OF LONDON ACADEMIES TRUST

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Responsibility:	COLAT Education Team
Reviewed/Updated:	August 2024
Next Review Date:	September 2025

Introduction

City of London Academy (Southwark) is committed to ensuring that all of our pupils reach their full educational potential. 100% attendance at school is a fundamental part of ensuring that all students achieve their potential. As such, achieving full attendance from all students is a priority for the school. This means all students attending school, on time, in full uniform, equipped, and ready to learn, every day. This policy incorporates the updated DfE statutory guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance', effective as of 19th August 2024.

Legal Framework

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. A child is of compulsory school attendance age until the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of sixteen. Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents who do not ensure a child's regular attendance are guilty of an offence under the law. This also applies to parents who know that a child is not attending school regularly and fail to ensure that they do. The definition of parents includes all natural parents, whether they are married or not, or any person who has parental or day to day responsibility for the child.

Expectations of Parents and Pupils

Parents should:

- Ensure their child attends on each day that the school is open.
- Provide an emergency contact number for more than one person.
- Maintain stable routines at home to support with attendance and punctuality.
- Contact the school as soon as possible when a child must be absent from school.
- Avoid unnecessary absences, such as non-emergency medical or dental appointments during school hours.
- Inform the school of any changes in circumstances which may impact on a child's attendance
- Work directly with the school to address any barriers to the child's attendance.
- Request leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances.

The expectation is that pupils attend school on time, every day, and within this:

- Attend all lessons at school on time, every day.
- Speak to a member of staff if they are experiencing any difficulties which may impact their attendance.

Requests for absences due to appointments must be made at least 48 hours in advance of the date of the requested date of absence. Requests for any other leave of absence, including to attend family events or any other exceptional leave, should be made in writing to the Principal one month in advance.

Responsibilities of Schools

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school every day. The governing body supports the school with discharging its responsibilities by way of attendance. The governing body does this by 1) Ensuring that the policy is applied consistently and fairly, 2) Meeting regularly and reviewing attendance figures with senior staff, and 3) Checking that school leaders fulfill their statutory duties and adhere to all attendance related school policies.

Within this framework, the school will:

- Upload the attendance policy on the school website.
- Complete daily admission and attendance registers.

- Develop a whole school culture which promotes the benefit of full attendance.
- Devise and embed a robust daily process to follow-up any absence.
- Designate a senior leader to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Work with the local authority to support children and families in cases where attendance is a concern.
- Engage with children's social care in cases where low attendance is a safeguarding concern.
- Implement any SEND supportive requirements.
- Monitor each child's attendance and intervene as appropriate where attendance may be a concern.

Absence Management

If a child is absent from school, the parent must contact the school by using the Edulink app, by email at attendance@cityacademy.co.uk**,** by phone on 020 7394 5100, or by visiting the school Reception in person. Unless a reason for absence is given within five days of the missed session it will be recorded as 'Unexplained', Code N. If a child is absent, and there has been no contact between home and the school, the school will follow the process below.

Absence Day	**School Action**
Day 1 and 2	School will send a text message to Priority 1 parent. School will then follow up with a phone call to the parent if there is no response to this message.
Day 3	School will text and call the Priority 1 parent. School will then follow up by contacting all contacts. The absence will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer, and a home visit will take place.
Day 4	School will text, phone and email all contacts. A welfare check may be made by a social worker or other external agency.
Day 5	School will text, phone and email all contacts. The Local Authority will be informed so that joint enquiries can be made to establish the whereabouts of the child via the Child Missing in Education protocol.

Absence from school can only be 'Authorised' or 'Unauthorised'. Unauthorised absences are those which are unexplained, or that the school does not consider acceptable, and for which no leave has been granted. This will usually be marked by 'G', 'N', 'O', 'U'. This absence can lead to a school initiating formalised attendance actions under the terms of the Education Act. Authorised absences are those which the school has approved, in line with the absence request protocol.

The following additions apply to the absence management process, in line with provision made within the updated statutory guidance, effective as of 19th August 2024.

- The threshold for issuing penalty notices is **10 sessions in a 10-week** period. This is equivalent to **5 school days in a 10-week period.** This threshold is applicable across all schools, in all counties, nationwide.
- The penalty fine is **£160** per child, per parent, and **£80** if paid within 21 days. If a second penalty fine is issued to the parent within a 3-year period, the fine will remain at **£160**, with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
- If a parent commits a third offence within a 3-year period, the Local Authority will consider other available enforcement options.
- Schools are empowered to act, via the Local Authority when it appears that parents may be gaming the threshold criteria. An example of this would be a scenario whereby a child regularly misses 9 sessions, but not 10 sessions, within a 10-week period.

The school will close registers within 30 minutes of them opening. Children who are not present on-site by the time that registers close are automatically recorded with a U-code, which is classified as **'Unauthorised Absent'.**

In addition to the above, there are other circumstances in which absence will not be authorised without medical evidence. These include:

- The first month of the school year.
- During mock and official examinations.
- During the first and last week of a half-term.
- When a pupil's previous attendance in the academic year was 95% or below.
- Two of more days of illness related absence.

Medical and dental appointments should not be booked during the school day. If, in exceptional circumstances, absence for a medical appointment has been approved, you should collect your child as close to the time of the appointment as possible and return them to school for the rest of the school day. The student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day of school for an appointment. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school without parental confirmation. Please note that medical appointments for students whose attendance is below 96% will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
City of London Academy (Southwark) recognises the importance of authorising absence for family bereavements and religious observance days. These must be agreed in advance, with the school.

Attendance Monitoring

All schools are required to monitor the attendance of all pupils. When a pupil's attendance figure starts to fall, the school will take appropriate action to improve a child's attendance. This may include:

- A visit to the home of the pupil.
- Asking parents to sign an attendance contract.
- Referring the child to Early Help or other external agencies.
- Further referral to the Local Authority for referring penalty notices or to consider prosecution.

In some specific cases, to improve a child's attendance, the school may consider implementing a reduced timetable. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil, and it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family. This strategy will not be used to manage a child's behaviour.

Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

-The Education Act (1996) and (2002)
-The Children Act (1989)
-Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)
-Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE (September 2024).

Appendix 1

Designated Staff at [**SCHOOL NAME**]

Role	**Name**
Senior Attendance Champion	
Attendance Officer	
Named Governor/Trustee for Attendance	

Appendix 2

Timings of the school day.

Gates open	
Gates close	
AM Register Opens	
AM Register Closes	
PM Register Opens	
PM Register Closes	