

# **Darwen Aldridge Community Academy Student Attendance Policy**

This policy sets out the expectations of attendance and punctuality at DACA and the Academy's approach in ensuring that all students are able to learn, achieve and gain the best outcomes possible through the formal curriculum which we offer and the range of entrepreneurial attributes which they acquire whilst they are with us.

Outstanding attendance is a priority at DACA. We believe that by gaining the best possible attendance at school it contributes not only to their attainment at KS3, KS4 and KS5, it also promotes resilience which will stay with a student throughout their life. At DACA, we believe that all students should attempt to strive to achieving 100% attendance, every week, every term and every year whilst with us, as school absence is one of the greatest risks to academic success.

**This policy has been developed in keeping with the following legislation:**

- Education Act 1996
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Education Registration 2006 (amended 2013)
- Education Act 2011
- This policy also acknowledges the school's legal duties under the Equality Act 2012, in respect of safeguarding and in respect of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2014
- School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures January 2015

**Aims:**

- To provide an environment where every child feels safe and their well-being is paramount.
- To provide a culture where maximum effort and attendance ensures academic success.
- To work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that school attendance remains as close to 100% as possible.
- To provide an inclusive ethos that allows every student to reach their potential.
- To ensure that every member of staff at DACA staff has the same and consistent approach to attendance.
- To promote the benefits and ensure the legal requirements of attendance within DACA.
- To monitor attendance of all pupils and act appropriately and within agreed timescales, where intervention or support is appropriate.
- To work with all agencies to ensure that attendance is never a barrier to learning.
- To celebrate the success of every student when they attend every day, every week, every term and every year.

**To achieve these aims we will:**

- Contact home via MyEd and our attendance team will make telephone calls to seek an explanation for any absence/ poor punctuality of which we have not been notified from the first day.
- Provide details of every student's attendance in each PEP report.

- Celebrate good attendance with rewards, prize draws and certificates for individuals and tutor groups.
- Call parents or speak to them in person as soon as we have a concern.
- Communicate with parents through meetings and attendance contracts if we continue to be concerned about the attendance of a child.
- Contact parents in writing if attendance continues to be a cause for concern and/or if a student's attendance continues to fall, parents will receive a second letter outlining that the student has 2 weeks to improve their attendance and that evidence is being collated regarding persistent absenteeism. You will also be informed that any future absences will not be authorised.
- Ensure a visit by our Education Welfare Officer to discuss ways in which we can work together to improve student's attendance.
- Issue Education Penalty Notices to parents of students who have at least 10 unauthorised absences, this would include unauthorised holidays.
- Gather evidence for a possible prosecution case file, where parents consistently fail to fulfil their legal obligation in sending students to school.
- Refer the student and family to Blackburn with Darwen Local Education Authority.
- Work with any appropriate outside agencies or make appropriate referrals to support students in improving good attendance at school.

### **Why regular attendance is so important?**

**Learning:** all absences affects a child's education and persistent absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

**Safeguarding:** We have a duty of care to ensure that all children attend school regularly.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child is a joint responsibility between the school and parents and carers. Failing to attend school, on a regular basis, will be considered as a safeguarding matter and dealt with appropriately.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. The Vice Principal for Pastoral Care will make a decision on absences on a weekly basis and if you have asked permission in writing a formal response will be provided. Only the Vice Principal and Principal can authorise absence. Unauthorised absence can lead to the Academy using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes, but is by no means exhaustive:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

### **Holidays in term time:**

From the 1st September 2013, the government has amended the Education Regulations 2006, which removes the Head teacher's (Principal's) right to authorise holidays in term time. Therefore, holidays

will not be authorised except under very exceptional circumstances. All holidays and appointments should be made outside of school time and should not impact on attendance.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

With effect from September 2015 a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any cause that is seen to have reached PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark will be dealt with immediately. PA pupils are tackled and monitored carefully through our pastoral system if their attendance falls below this required 90%.

If an absence is likely to be prolonged, the Pastoral Manager can make arrangements so that work can be sent home.

### **Persistent Lateness**

The school day begins at 8.40am and all students are expected to arrive in school by 8.30am.

Lateness is closely monitored at the student entrance every morning and at reception. If a student is late they will receive a 20 minute detention at lunchtime which will escalate to a whole school detention after school.

If a student is persistently late, as a parent you will be informed and encouraged to enable your child to arrive at school at the requested time. If the lateness does not improve and your child continually misses the register, as a parent you will be at risk of an Educational Penalty Notice for lateness.

### **Sixth Form Attendance**

The Sixth Form policy is only to authorise absence for Sixth Form related activities e.g. university visits, field trips, work experience, examinations and official study leave. However, the Academy recognises that some religious festivals fall outside of our main holiday pattern. If this is the case, students must complete a pro-forma requesting authorised absence in advance and hand this in to the Sixth Form Manager in advance. The Academy takes guidance on what is an appropriate period of absence and will advise students accordingly. A maximum of three days will be allowed in one academic year.

If students are in receipt of an EMA\bursary their weekly payment will be stopped if they do not telephone the Academy and complete the absence authorisation procedures when they return. Students in receipt of an Educational Maintenance Allowance\bursary must maintain full attendance each week to receive payments and must follow the Academy's authorised absence procedure. Attendance percentage will be monitored by Personal Progress Tutors and intervention will be put into place if appropriate.

### **Responsibilities – Local Governing Committee**

The Local Governing Committee has a responsibility to challenge the leadership team with regards to action taken to maximise student attendance/ punctuality.

The Local Governing Committee should request attendance data at regular intervals and hold senior pastoral staff to account if attendance is a cause for concern.

### **Responsibilities – Senior Leadership Team/ All Staff**

Plan to ensure that the whole Academy keeps abreast of new legislation and guidance in relation to attendance.

The senior leadership team will ensure pastoral staff/ attendance teams have access to appropriate support and training which will enable them to fulfil their role.

The pastoral teams will support all students in ensuring best attendance through a system of appropriate and rigorous challenge and reward.

The pastoral/ attendance team will ensure regular and purposeful meetings in order to monitor the attendance of all students and take appropriate action.

The Education Welfare Officer will liaise with the Local Authority regarding any student who is cause for concern and follow the correct procedures to ensure maximum attendance.

All staff will work to ensure that excellent attendance and punctuality remains a focus and a high priority for all students attending the Academy.

Registers and supporting documents are kept securely, for documents kept electronically computers are password protected.

### **Responsibilities – Students/Parents**

All students of compulsory school age are legally required to receive an education. From September 2015 a child will remain in compulsory Education or training until their 18th birthday.

Parents/carers are therefore legally responsible for ensuring that their child receives an education. Parents risk criminal prosecution if their child fails to attend regularly, and punctually, at the school where s/he is registered.

If it is felt that a student's attendance is a concern a referral will be made to the Local Authority and a Parent Contract put in place.

A Parenting Contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and either the Local Authority or the LGC of a school and should contain the following:

A statement by the parents/carers and student that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract; and

A statement by the Local Authority or LGC agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

If it is deemed there is no improvement after the agreed specified period the case will be referred to court.

We ask that parents/carers (or students in the case of Sixth Form) telephone the Academy as early as possible, but no later than 8.30am. On the rare occasion a student is absent, the parent/carer must explain why the student is absent from the Academy. The Academy should be contacted every day thereafter until the student returns. If no contact is made a letter will be sent home on the first day of absence requesting contact, if a student has more than 2 days absence the Education Welfare Officer will carry out a home visit.

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Parents/carers are expected to avoid making dental, medical or opticians appointments during the Academy day as these are readily available after hours and in holiday periods.

Should an appointment in school hours be unavoidable, students are expected to be out of the Academy during the appointment time only and under no circumstances, should a student be absent for a whole day. Evidence for such appointments should be provided no later than 24 hours before.

On the first day a student returns from a period of absence they must bring a note from their parent/carer explaining the reason for the absence and where possible provide evidence. A decision will then be made whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

**Agreed by Darwen Aldridge Community Academy LGC on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

**Signed by Chair of LGC**

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**Anthony Lockley (Chair)**

**Date: 29.11.18**

**Signed by Principal**

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**Lisa Dolan (Principal)**

**Date: 29.11.18**

**Review date: November 2019**