

John Port Spencer Academy



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Team

Attendance Welfare Officers: Mrs A Allen and Ms C Walsh
Attendance Officers for Sixth Form: Mrs G Barnett and Mrs C Stevenson

Safeguarding Team

Please see the safeguarding page on our website for the latest information about our Safeguarding Staff Team

Included in this policy

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APPENDIX - Student Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances

Revised: September 2020. Updated September 2021.

To be reviewed: December 2021 or before

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, expect schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the student was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

CATEGORISING ABSENCE

Parents/guardians have a legal duty under the Education Act 2011 to ensure that children who are of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis. Every half day absence has to be classified by the academy as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those that the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been granted, such as truancy or unexplained absences.

Parents/guardians **cannot** authorise an absence, only the academy can do this. Parents/guardians are required to contact the academy on the first day of absence before 8.45am and then daily on attendance@johnport.derbyshire.sch.uk for Years 7-11 or sixthform@johnport.derbyshire.sch.uk for Years 12 and 13. This provides evidence of absence for our records. Alternatively, a voicemail can be left on 01283 735181 for Years 7-11. Please include your child's name, form group and reason for absence (with symptoms if ill). If you are able, please also provide the academy with an expected date of return. This information will be recorded on the attendance system. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation and or evidence for the student's absence has been received.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness

In most cases an email or telephone call from the parent/carer informing the academy that their son/daughter is ill is acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. or in some cases a doctor's note. Where attendance \leq 90% it is likely we will request such evidence.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the academy day. Where this is not possible, students should attend the academy for part of the day. Parents/carers should show the appointment card to the academy. If your child needs to leave the academy for a medical appointment during the academy day, students should sign out at Ashbourne Student Reception at the appropriate time where they must be

met by a parent/guardian (this is a strict safeguarding requirement for Years 7-11). Parents may park in the bus park to collect students during the academy day, but not at the beginning or end of the academy day.

Other Authorised Circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement.

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending the academy is counted as an authorised absence. The student's Head of Year/Pastoral Manager will arrange for work to be sent home.

Religious Observance

John Port Spencer Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside academy holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to request their children not to attend the academy on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's/carer's religious body. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice and complete a leave of absence request form if they intend their son/daughter to be absent from the academy.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the academy and limiting the authorised absence rate of the academy, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents/carers have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the academy. It should be noted that the academy is responsible for authorising absence not parents. Attendance interventions begin when attendance falls below 96%. If a student's absence falls to below 90% this will be of great concern and the academy will discuss the issue with the Attendance Welfare Officers and Parents. At this stage a student is regarded as persistently absent. John Port Spencer Academy will not be able to authorise absence under this level. If the absence is due to an illness/medical issue then we will request you obtain a medical note from a GP/hospital.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A student's/family member's birthday
- Shopping
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for teacher training (or other) purposes
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend the academy
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the academy

CONTACT WITH PARENTS

John Port Spencer Academy runs a first day absence texting/calling system if students are not in lessons by 10.30am. A parent mail message will be sent to parents asking them to provide a reason for absence. Safeguarding our students is of utmost importance to us. The attendance welfare officer may decide a telephone call is also required if there is no contact made following a parent mail message. We require an explanation for all absences and will authorise if appropriate.

DELETIONS FROM THE REGISTER

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, students will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age

- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a student
- Transfer between schools
- Student withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the academy and the local authority have tried to locate the student
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- A student is deemed as missing in education and all appropriate steps have taken place by the academy and local authority to locate them

John Port Spencer Academy will follow Derbyshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a student's whereabouts is unknown. Monthly returns are made to the local authority through the South Derbyshire Inclusion Panel meetings.

OFF-ROLLING

Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll (often without using a permanent exclusion), when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. Parents do have a right to withdraw their child from a school in favour of home education (Elective Home Education/EHE). The child must not be removed from the school roll until the parent has given written notification of their decision to educate the child at home. No student at John Port Spencer Academy will be removed from the academy roll to serve the academy's interests. If a parent does request to remove their child from the academy roll, all of the supportive alternatives are discussed first. If a parent still wishes to remove their child from the academy roll then the local authority will be informed and an EHE notification form will be completed. In many cases the academy will also complete an early help referral (Early Help Assessment/EHA) to see if more support can be offered to the child and their parents.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

At John Port Spencer Academy, we understand that attendance is directly linked to achievement. We work to ensure all students reach their potential therefore intervention regarding concerns about attendance is integral to the work of the Pastoral Team.

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. Regular school attendance is essential if young people are to achieve their full potential. John Port Spencer Academy believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. We believe they are all entitled to an excellent education.

John Port Spencer Academy values all students and believes they are entitled to an excellent education. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Early intervention will be a priority. John Port Spencer Academy define our key levels of attendance as:

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
98 – 100%	Excellent	0 to 4	Less than 1
96 – 98%	Good	4 to 8	1 to 1 ½
93 – 96%	Of concern	8 to 13	1 ½ to 2
90 – 93%	Unsatisfactory	13 to 19	2 to 3
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19	More than 3

PRINCIPLES

John Port Spencer Academy believe the following important principles underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Students and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- All academy staff, including governors, administrative and support staff understand the issues and procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality
- Clear procedures for supporting students to come to school
- Attendance issues are a shared responsibility between tutors, pastoral staff and teachers who all highlight the need for excellent attendance
- Parents/carers and students having the opportunity to raise concerns and share in addressing those concerns
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to support the policy including our dedicated attendance officers
- Rewarding students who have good attendance and those who strive to improve their attendance
- Identifying patterns of absence and intervening early. Research shows patterns of attendance are established early in a school career
- Sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance and authorising attendance is fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers

The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with students and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with for example School Attendance – Departmental advice Oct 2014
- Have a named member of the Senior Leadership Team to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource. This is Lee Shepherd, Assistant Vice Principal
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and DfE as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly standards review meetings to the Trust Board
- Ensure systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site, are implemented
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Collate and analyse punctuality data frequently
- Interpret the data to develop solutions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

The Attendance Officer/Pastoral Staff/Form Tutors and Faculty Leaders will:

- Inform parents/carers on the first day of absence via a text message/and or a phone call by 10:30am
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with students and parents/carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve. A positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of academy strategies and interventions
- Work with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

The Attendance Welfare Officers in addition will have the following responsibilities:

- Ongoing monitoring of the attendance of students in Years 7–13
- Undertake daily absence checks and contact home for targeted students
- Identify students requiring support with their attendance
- Raise attendance related issues with parents to support improvement
- Arrange and attend meetings and liaise with relevant staff and outside agencies
- Provide regular updates on attendance issues to Assistant Vice Principal, Pastoral Staff and SENDCo as required
- Participate in the development of academy reward systems in relation to attendance
- Establish appropriate recording measurements and produce reports/statistics
- Undertake home visits to establish relationships with parents/carers based on respect and trust
- To include (on occasion) transporting a student to the academy using an agreed form of transport
- Liaise with Faculty staff to raise awareness of student needs

Parents/Carers will:

- Talk to their son/daughter about school and their experiences whilst there. Take a positive interest in their son/daughter's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home
- Encourage their son/daughter to look to the future and aspire
- Contact the academy before 8.45am if their son/daughter is absent (on each day of absence) letting the academy know the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. Parents/carers will follow this up with an email where possible
- Understand that it is the academy who will authorise absence or not as appropriate and not the parent/carer
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of academy hours
- Ask the academy for help if their son/daughter is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the academy of any change in circumstances that may impact on their son/daughter's attendance
- Support the academy; take every opportunity to get involved in their son/daughter's education, form a positive relationship with the academy and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both the academy and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, going to bed at an appropriate time, doing homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not to keep their son/daughter off school to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their son/daughter on holiday during term-time. This will always be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances (determined by the academy)

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Where there are any attendance issues, the Attendance Team (which is made up of two Attendance Welfare Officers [AWO] and an Attendance Officer [AO] for Sixth Form) will contact parents to discuss/resolve these. If a student's absence falls below 96%, the Attendance Team will talk to the student and endeavour to contact the parent/guardian to see how we can help encourage regular, consistent attendance - crucial to the child's learning.

If a student's attendance drops below 90% (Persistent Absentee), the student, parent/guardian will be invited into the academy to meet with a member of the Attendance Team to discuss matters in more detail and any further action that may be required. These meetings are part of the Improving Attendance Programme (IAP). This meeting may also include the Head of Year (HOY)/Pastoral Manager (PM) and in some cases the Assistant Vice Principal responsible for Attendance. If appropriate, outside agencies may also be asked to attend. In cases of continual, persistent absence [or absence with no cooperation], legal proceedings may begin.

Improving Attendance Programme (IAP)

The Improving Attendance Programme is a 'plan of action' designed to closely monitor a student's attendance to support that student in making the necessary changes in order to improve their attendance. It will always involve a member of the Attendance team and student, but will often involve the parents for greater effectiveness. If the IAP fails to have an impact it will also involve the Head of Year/Pastoral Manager and then the Assistant Vice Principal in charge of

attendance. In these meetings, short-term targets are set and monitored closely. Positive phone calls home and praise are both central to maintaining positive improvements in attendance in this programme.

Attendance Procedures

1. In the event of your child being absent from the academy, please report the absence by email to attendance@johnport.derbyshire.sch.uk, or by telephoning the absence line on 01283 735181.
2. Please state your child's name, form group and reason (with symptoms if ill) and an expected date of return.
3. This should be reported daily before 8.45am.
4. If a student is not present in the academy and the Attendance Team has not been informed, a text will be sent to the parent/guardian alerting him/her to the fact that their child is absent.
5. In all cases, the Attendance Team will enter absences onto the attendance system.

Illness and other acceptable reasons

For longer term illnesses or other long-term authorised absence, the Head of Year/Pastoral Manager will arrange for work to be sent home, following consultation with parents/guardians. For illnesses longer than five days, medical evidence **may** be requested to further back up an absence. Regular contact is required between the parent/guardian and the Attendance Team.

If a student has been absent in excess of five days, it is likely that the Attendance Team will want to meet with them to encourage their progression and future attendance. This may lead to a student being part of the improving Attendance Programme (IAP)

Holidays / Other Absence / Exceptional Circumstances

The academy will not authorise absences for holidays, shopping days, birthdays, day trips etc.

If leave of absence is required, the parent/guardian should complete an **Exceptional Circumstances Leave of Absence Form** [refer to Appendix]. This form should also be completed if absence is required for sporting, musical, drama events etc. The academy will continue to look favourably on and, support where appropriate, extra-curricular / enrichment activities that students may need to request leave of absence for [sport release days/music exams/cadets/ college taster days etc.].

It will be at the Principal's discretion to grant leave in exceptional circumstances, however the Principal can delegate responsibility to the Attendance Team, authorising them to grant leave in most cases. If leave of absence is not authorised and parents/guardians disregard this, then unauthorised absence will be recorded and a penalty given in the form of a fine. This could then lead to further legal proceedings against the parent/guardian.

For emergency situations, for example family bereavement or necessary medical appointments (not a requirement on a leave of absence form), appropriate consideration and authorisation will be given. The leave of absence form can be located on the academy website under the policies/attendance heading.

Lateness

Lateness is monitored during registration and for every lesson. Lateness and attendance are monitored very closely at the start of the day in registration. All student must arrive to the academy prior to 8.55am when the academy gates close. If students arrive after this time they will need to sign in at student reception where their lateness is recorded, which also allows lateness to be monitored carefully and acted upon. If a student fails to attend registration and then also fails to register in period 1 then a message is sent home to notify parents that their child is absent. Late arrival after period 1 without a valid reason will be recorded as truancy. We also expect students to be punctual for every lesson. If a student turns up to a lesson more than 5 minutes late or after the majority of the class turn up, then they will be recorded as late. Lateness to lesson is also monitored carefully and acted upon.

Heads of Year/Pastoral Mangers will monitor punctuality. If students are frequently late then appropriate sanctions will be implemented. The 'Inventry programme' will be used to monitor punctuality to the academy. If a student is late to

the academy more than once in any given week parents are contacted by the attendance welfare officer in student reception and this information is passed on to their Head of Year/Pastoral Manager, where relevant sanctions will be put in place.

Persistent Absence

We try to work with students and parents in every situation, but where a student's absence is below 90% we place them on the Improving Attendance Programme. If a student's attendance continues to decline, we may be forced into a decision to prosecute after reasonable steps have been taken to improve a student's attendance.

Support Systems

John Port Spencer Academy recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make the academy aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the academy identify any additional support that may be required.

John Port Spencer Academy also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs and looked after children. Data will be analysed for trends with specific groups of students.

The academy will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and students
- Attendance meetings with Attendance Welfare Officer(s)
- Attendance meetings with pastoral staff
- Referrals to support agencies e.g. school nurse, safespeak, action for children etc.
- Attendance Officer 1:1 meetings/small group work
- Student Voice activities
- Working with friendship groups
- PSHE lessons
- Assemblies
- Working with parents
- Reward systems e.g. postcards home, assembly, raffles
- Time limited part time time-tables (if it is a longer-term intervention the local authority is informed)
- Alternative Provision in the Learning Support Centre (behaviour) or the emotional well-being hub (emotional well-being and mental health)
- Additional learning support through the Student Support faculty
- Reintegration support packages e.g. hybrid timetables
- Early help referral
- An application for Out of School tuition (OOST) if health/medical needs means that a student cannot attend school.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and students. Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, John Port Spencer Academy will refer legal sanctions will be considered

Children with health needs that cannot access school

As already raised in the last bullet point above, there may be times when a child cannot access school due to health and medical needs. If every support strategy has been offered, but a child still cannot access school then an application for OOST (Out of School Tuition) for Derbyshire Students and Kingsmead for Derby City Students could be looked into to ensure the child continues to engage with the academy. Initially, this would be a temporary measure, but can be extended beyond the initial 12 weeks based on medical evidence.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

The academy puts in place measures to safeguard children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Every child should be accounted for, their whereabouts should be known, or we will make a referral to the relevant service. We will not remove a child from our roll unless we can evidence an agreement with the local authority to do so.

Where a pupil who fails to attend our academy regularly, or has been absent without the Academy's permission for a continuous period of 10 academy days or more we will follow our Local Authority procedures.

The academy tries, wherever possible, to hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. This provides the academy with additional options for contacting a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

LEGAL SANCTIONS

Prosecution

Where intervention by school and the Attendance Welfare Officer fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The academy will provide Education Welfare/Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered student at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months. Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice gives the parent/carer the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60* fine is paid within 21 days or £120* if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. *These fines are set by the LEA and are subject to change.

SUMMARY

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote good attendance. If a student is not in regular attendance, he or she is being deprived of their right to a full-time education. It is a proven fact that attenders are achievers. Equally, parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends. The academy is committed to working with students, parents/guardians in the best way possible to ensure a high level of attendance.

People Responsible for Attendance

- Academy Governors
- Principal
- Attendance Team [Attendance Welfare Officers and Attendance Officer]
- Assistant Vice Principal with responsibility for attendance
- Director of Sixth Form
- Heads of Year / Pastoral Managers
- Parents/Guardians
- Students



[Appendix 1]

Student Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances

Please use for all leave **other than medical and illness**. Email a signed and completed form directly to attendance@johnport.derbyshire.sch.uk or hand in at Student Reception. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 state that Principals should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Student Name: Form:

Absence from: To: (incl)

Please consider leave of absence for the following **Exceptional Circumstances**:

Supporting evidence attached - please tick Use overleaf if necessary

Parent/Guardian making the application – Where leave is denied and you proceed to take your child out of school unauthorised absence will be recorded. This may result in a Penalty Notice.

Name:

Signature: Date:

Email address and contact number:
Where no email address is available, a response will be forwarded to the home address.

Separated Parent Details (if applicable) – please note in such cases both parties are informed of the academy decision. **Both parties may be subject to penalty.**

Name:

Is Separated Parent **in agreement** to application Yes/No (please delete as necessary)

Email address and contact number:

Where no email address is available, a response will be forwarded to the home address.

Sibling at another School: Yes/No Name of School:

OFFICE USE ONLY: Date request received:

Comment:

Request Approved Request Denied Signed: Date:

Date parent notified: Sep. parent notified: