

Attendance Policy

1. Rationale

The JCB Academy strives to create an environment which enables and encourages all learners to reach their full potential. For our learners to achieve in accordance with their potential and to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. All learners should attend the academy, on time for every day during term time unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. This Policy sets out how we will work together to achieve this.

2. Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a learner's education and regular absence will seriously impact on their learning and attainment. In addition, learner absence can disrupt teaching and learning routines so can adversely affect the learning of other learners in the same lesson, house or challenge team.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is a parent¹ legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law which can result in prosecution.

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 amended section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to allow parents to be issued with a penalty where they failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16) and school registered, regular attendance.

A penalty notice for each parent, per child is initially for £60. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If, after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the council will prosecute the parent/s under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to a hearing in the Magistrates Court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000.

¹ Within this document, the term *parent* refers to those with parental responsibility for a learner

3. Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, learners and all members of academy staff.

In order to enable this the academy will:

- Provide parents with information relating to their son's/daughter's attendance on a regular basis and through the following methods:
 - Publication of term dates via the academy website and parent newsletters so there is no confusion regarding the dates that learners should attend
 - Regular Interim Reports will detail a learner's attendance percentage and provide information relating to authorised and unauthorised absences.
 - At Parents' Evenings, mentors will discuss a learner's attendance with his/her parents.
 - If a learner's attendance falls below 95%, the academy will communicate with parents via the mentoring process and the learner will be set an attendance related target to maximise attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing attendance certificates and sending congratulatory letters home as well as awarding additional House points at the end of each challenge to learners who achieve an attendance percentage of 100% during each half term.
- Run promotional events and provide literature to parents which raises the awareness of the importance of attendance and how we can work together to raise attendance levels across the academy.

4. Understanding types of absence

Each learner receives two register marks each day, an 'am mark' at 8.30am and a 'pm mark' at 1.30pm; absences are therefore recorded in half days as two sessions.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the academy (not by parents) as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information relating to the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for good reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the academy day, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no prior permission has been given. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents keeping a learner off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Learners who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the register.
- Reasons given which include activities such as shopping, looking after other children or birthday celebrations, etc.
- Day trips and holidays taken in term time which have not been agreed by the Principal in advance.

Whilst any learner may, at times, not be able to attend the academy because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend for other reasons. Any problems relating to attendance are best resolved between the academy, the parents and the learner, at the earliest opportunity. If a learner is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable for parents 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 can make the situation harder to manage in the long term.

The academy asks that parents always share concerns that they have regarding a learner's reluctance to attend the academy. In the first instance, this information should be shared with the academy's Learner Support Team Leader or Attendance Officer and the learner's mentor.

5. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A learner becomes a 'persistent absentee' when s/he misses 10% or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will considerably damage a learner's educational prospects and the academy needs parents fullest support and co-operation to address this.

The academy monitors all absence thoroughly, and implements the following procedure in order to avoid any learner becoming a 'PA' (Persistent Absentee):

Whilst the below is our standard timings any learner may require intervention at any point.

- If a learner is absent from the academy, staff will telephone parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them or if there is a specific need to do so.

- The mentor will include an attendance comment and the current attendance percentage on each mentor report sent home every 4 weeks. This should be a positive comment for high attendance or a constructive comment if attendance is a concern.
- Attendance below 95%. The mentor will target the learner with an attendance related target - to both highlight a concern and to improve attendance
- Attendance below 93% and of concern. The Attendance Officer will contact parents offering support. The Attendance Officer/mentor will discuss attendance concerns with the learner via a Return to School / Attendance concern form. Contacting home will be done by either or both of the following:
 - Introductory email home stating we have some concerns with attendance: the aim of this is to open communication.
 - Initial letter: Highlight our concerns formally and offer help if required.
- Attendance below 90% and of concern. The Attendance Officer will consider arranging a meeting with the parents; either at the academy or via a home visit. At the discretion of the academy the home visit could either be planned or unannounced.
- Attendance below 90% and at least 20 unauthorised absences. The case will be referred to the Local Support Team for possible penalty notice action.
- Attendance below 90% and of concern or once the learner has 20 sessions (10 days) absent due to medical or illness reasons. The Attendance Officer will send a formal letter requesting medical evidence to authorise ANY future absence. Future absences would then only be authorised if appropriate medical evidence is provided.
- Over 3 days concurrent absence for illness (6 sessions) : For the academy to authorise a learner absence above 3 days we will require medical evidence on the 4th day; this is both for an educational reason (attainment) and a pastoral reason (concern for learner welfare).

After twenty sessions of unauthorised absence (10 days of school) the academy will apply for a penalty notice to be issued to parents with an active role in overseeing the education of that learner.

The period for calculating the sessions will be based on the previous 12 school weeks (this could span over two academic years).

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 amended section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to allow parents to be issued with a penalty where they failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16) and school registered, regular attendance.

A penalty notice for each parent, per child is initially for £60. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If, after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the council will prosecute the parent/s under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to a hearing in the Magistrates Court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000.

6. Absence Procedures

If a learner is absent, parents must:

- Contact the academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence, ideally before 9:15 am, either by telephoning and speaking to a member of the admin team or by email to office@jcbacademy.com.
- Send a note in on the first day that the learner returns with an explanation of the absence; parents are required to do this even if they have already made telephone contact on the first day.
- Medical evidence will be required to authorise an absence If a learner is going to absent for illness for period of over three days.

We would class the following as medical evidence, however, some of them can be deemed too lenient by local government and not appropriate in certain circumstances: a copy of a prescription, slip with date, learner's name and surgery stamp signed by Receptionist, medical appointment card with an appointment entered, letters concerning a hospital appointment, print screen of medical notes, doctor's medical certificate, doctor's letter, medication prescribed by a Doctor, a letter signed by a professional.

If a learner is absent from the academy, staff will:

- Telephone parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them: usually by 9:30 am.
- Implement the above detailed persistent absence procedure if a learner's attendance becomes a cause for concern.

7. Contact details

There are times when the academy needs to contact parents about many different matters, including learner absence; as such, an accurate and up to date record of parents' contact details is crucial. The academy requests that parents advise the Attendance Officer or learner's mentor of any changes to their contact details.

8. Role of the Local Support Team

Parents are expected to contact the academy at an early stage and to work with both the Learner Support Team Leader/Attendance Officer and their son's/daughter's mentor in resolving any attendance issues together; this is nearly always successful as a method of addressing such problems.

If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, and the learner's attendance falls below 90% and the learner has 20 unauthorised absences, the academy will refer the learner to the Local Support Team. The Local Support Team will use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from Staffordshire County Council.

Any period of leave of absence taken without the agreement of the Principal, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice through the Local Support Team.

9. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable at the academy. If learners miss the start of the academy day they can miss valuable work or instructions which can adversely affect the remainder of their day's lessons. In addition, learners who arrive late can disrupt lessons.

All learners who arrive late to the academy must sign in at Learner Reception detailing their time of arrival and the reason for their lateness.

The academy manages lateness in the following way:

- The academy day starts at 8:30 am and all learners are expected to be in their first lesson of the day at that time.
- Registers are taken by 9:15 am and learners will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

- At 9:30 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulations, learners arriving after that time will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as an ‘am’ present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time whenever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable a “present” mark may still be awarded if the learner attends for as much of the session as possible.

Parents of learners with unauthorised absences could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists. If a learner has a persistent late record, his/her parents will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and the Learner Support Team Leader to resolve the problem. However, parents can approach the academy at any time if they are experiencing problems getting their son/daughter to the academy on time.

Learners who are persistently late to lessons may be placed on Timekeeping Report for a period to support them in addressing their lateness; if a learner is placed on Timekeeping Report, his/her parents will be notified by his/her mentor, and they will be asked to initial that they have seen the report card each day.

Ten persistent late attendances, arriving after the register has closed (09:30), can result in a penalty notice being issued. These late attendances do not have to be consecutive and will be based on the previous twelve school weeks and could span over two academic years.

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10. Holidays in term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect a learner’s education as much as any other absence.

If a parent requires the academy to consider a leave of absence from school they should apply to the Principal, giving as much notice as possible. They can do this by using a Learner Leave of Absence application form which can be requested via Learner Support or direct via the academy website.

The Department for Education makes it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Requests should be made well before the desired period of absence. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.

In making a decision the Principal will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including previous patterns of leave in term time. Other considerations will include:

- If a learner has recently joined the academy. This is very important because it is important that learners are given every opportunity to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods or examinations.
- When a learner's attendance record already includes a level of unauthorised absence.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the Principal, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice.

Should the academy decide not to grant a leave of absence and a learner is taken out of the academy or an absence is not requested the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, which may result in a penalty notice fine.

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11. Responsible Staff

Academy staff who have specific responsibility for attendance are:

- Learner Support Team Leader
- Attendance Officer (KS4)
- Administrative Assistant (Registers)
- Director of Finance & Operations (census)

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