

SHARNBROOK ACADEMY FEDERATION ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

The Sharnbrook Academy Federation exists to provide an outstanding education for all our students putting their progress and welfare at the heart of everything we do. That means that we will always pursue excellence and shall focus upon achieving outstanding results by:

- ensuring that the curriculum offered is wholly focused upon the needs and requirements of our students;
- challenging every students to better themselves personally, spiritually and academically
- regularly measuring student progress and achievement so that their learning experience may be adapted to their needs;
- making available high quality support to our staff so that they deliver good and outstanding lessons for students.

If students are to achieve their potential, good attendance and punctuality are critical. The link between attendance and achievement is well documented.

This Policy sets out the Federation's approach to ensure that maximum attendance is achieved.

2. Legal framework

Parents/ carers are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full –time education.

Other than for illness or religious observance, parents/ carers do not have a legal right to take their child out of school during term time. Schools can allow parents and carers to take their child out of school in **exceptional circumstances**, applied for through the SAF Leave of Application (LOA) form. This is available from the schools or on their websites. The school has a discretion whether to authorise any requests received. Please see paragraph 5 below. If a student is taken out of school without the school's consent, this could lead to parents/ carers being issued with a Penalty Notice.

The Federation takes account of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 when considering any requests to take a child out of school.

3. How the schools will approach attendance – general principles

Each of the Federation's schools expect, encourage and reward good attendance by students.

Each of the Federation's schools monitors attendance at school. School attendance is measured in half days; attendance is monitored in every lesson and action is taken as appropriate if a student is, for example, absent from a lesson but marked as being in school that day.

Attendance data for each student is analysed frequently and included in a student's annual report.

A parent/ carer will be contacted by a school on the first day of absence unless notification as to the reason for absence has been received by the school. Should the absence continue, further contact may be made as appropriate.

Department for Education guidelines indicate that attendance of 90% or less is considered 'persistent absence'. Therefore, if a student's attendance falls below 92% the school will review this closely with the parent/ carer and, where appropriate, strategies and interventions will be put in place. This may include a letter posted home, close monitoring, formal meetings and referral to an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if necessary.

The Federation retains an Educational Welfare Service (operated by the Local Authority) to support the improvement of attendance and where necessary to take enforcement measures where there is unauthorised absence and this could result in fixed penalty notices being issued to parents by the Local Authority.

4. Responsibility of parents/ carers

If a student is having difficulty in attending school for any reason, the parent/ carer should contact the school at the earliest opportunity. The relevant contact details are:

Lincroft School – 01234 822147 or admin@lincroft.beds.sch.uk
Harrold Priory Middle – 01234 720346 admin@harroldmiddle.beds.sch.uk
Margaret Beaufort Middle – 01234 708213 admin@margaretbeaufort.beds.sch.uk
Sharnbrook Upper School – 01234 782211 mhutchings@sharnbrook.beds.sch.uk (Years 9-11);
nyoung@sharnbrook.beds.sch.uk (Years 12-13)

The following Attendance Officers can also be contacted directly:

Lincroft School – Louisa Dahl ldahl@lincroft.beds.sch.uk
Harrold Priory Middle – Hannah Just hjust@harroldmiddle.beds.sch.uk
Margaret Beaufort Middle – Suzanne Sharpe ssharpe@margaretbeaufort.beds.sch.uk
Senior Leadership Contact (Middles) – Paul Ives pives@margaretbeaufort.beds.sch.uk
Sharnbrook Upper School – Melanie Hutchings mhutchings@sharnbrook.beds.sch.uk (Years 9-11); nyoung@sharnbrook.beds.sch.uk (Years 12-13)

All schools have to maintain attendance data for all students. Requests for references from other educational institutions or potential employers can include questions about attendance.

5. Requests to take students out of school during term time

As mentioned in section 2 above a parent has no legal right to take their child out of school. If a parent/ carer wishes do this **they must apply to the school for permission in advance**. Permission will only be given if the school is satisfied that there are **exceptional** circumstances to justify any absence from school. Permission cannot be given after the event.

Parents/ carers can access the *Leave of Absence Request Form* via the following links:

<http://www.lincroftschool.co.uk/attendance/91.html>
<http://www.harroldpriory.co.uk/attendance/91.html>
<http://www.margaretbeaufort.org.uk/attendance/91.html>
<http://www.sharnbrook.beds.sch.uk/leave-of-absence-request-form/15693.html>

Alternatively, they can be obtained from the school reception (middle schools) or the house office (Sharnbrook Upper).

The law changed in September 2013, and schools can no longer give permission for holidays during term time unless exceptional circumstances can be shown. The occasions where permission will be given for holidays during term time will therefore be very limited. The schools will confirm the outcome of the request in writing and if permission is granted, the letter will state the number of days for which the student is allowed to be absent.

In the event that permission is granted, students, supported where appropriate by their parents/ carers, are expected to make up any work missed.

Students in years 9, 10 and 11 and in the Sixth Form will need to contact each of their subject teachers before permission is applied for to ascertain any particular impact on their GCSE or A-level programme.

If a parent/ carer takes a student out of school without seeking permission or where permission has not been granted, this will be unauthorised absence and sanctions may well apply as explained in section 10 below.

6. Illness and medical appointments

If a student is not well enough to attend school then the parent/ carer needs to contact the school on the first day of absence and give an indication of how long the absence is likely to be. Where there is frequent absence due to illness either the School or the Educational Welfare Officer may ask for medical evidence to support the absence.

The Federation expects medical and dental appointments to take place outside the school day or during school holidays. Where this is not possible, parents/ carers must notify the school in advance (using the form mentioned in 5 above) or in the case of emergencies as soon as possible thereafter. Where possible, there is an expectation that a student attends school prior to the appointment and or/ returns to school after the appointment.

If a student is, or is expected to be, regularly absent from school (eg in the case of chronic illness, a scheduled operation, injury as a result of an accident), the school may consider a referral to the Grey's medical needs team.

7. Sixth form

This policy also applies to sixth form students

8. Students living at more than one address/non-resident parents

Where parents/ carers no longer live together or the student only lives with one parent/ carer, and contact details for both parents/ carers have been provided to the school, any parent/ carer seeking permission to take their child out of school will be asked if they have notified the other parent/ carer of this request as part of the application process.

9. Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive on time for each lesson with appropriate materials. If students are late for lessons then the sanctions in the school's behaviour policy may be applied.

Where students arrive late or have permission to leave before the end of the school day, they will need to follow the signing in and signing out procedures for the relevant school.

10. Sanctions for unauthorised absence

If permission has not been given to take a student out of school, the absence will be unauthorised. The school can pursue a Penalty Notice in accordance with the Code of Conduct drawn up by the Local Authority where students are of compulsory school age. The Penalty Notice is £60 per child per parent, if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If a Penalty Notice is not paid then the parent may be prosecuted in court.

Where attendance is poor the Local Authority does have powers to take action to enforce school attendance. Periods of unauthorised absence where the student is not known to be ill and the parents cannot be contacted can lead to a student being removed from the school roll. For sixth form students the sanctions for unauthorised or poor attendance are set out in the *Sixth Form Learning Agreement*.

11. Information and contact details

Parents are referred to the further information about attendance to school from the Local Authority which is available on line at:

https://www.bedford.gov.uk/education_and_learning/education_welfare_service.aspx

In addition, the Federation has produced an information sheet, *Attendance Guidelines for Parents*. This will be on the schools' websites.

Parents with questions about attendance and registration can use the contacts shown in paragraph 4 above.

12. Review of policy

The attendance policy is monitored by the Governing Body and reviewed regularly.

Legal Status	Statutory
Approved by	Risk & Audit
Date	September 2016
Next review	September 2019
Further information	Tracy McDonagh, Clerk to the Governors.
