



# STEP Academy Trust

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date of Policy: Summer 2018

Review: Spring 2020

### INTRODUCTION

**This policy has been agreed by STEP Academy Trust Board of Trustees and applies to all member Academies.**

STEP Academies convey the importance for excellent attendance and punctuality to parents, pupils and teachers. Children quickly pick up the message that their education is important, and that their presence is essential. As part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), it clearly states that every child has a right to an education. The twice-daily requirement to register pupils can and should be perceived as an opportunity for the Academy to receive children formally from home, and serve as an introduction to the session.

At STEP Academy Trust we recognise that statistically pupils whose attendance falls below 97% achieve significantly less well than their peers and for that reason emphasise the need for pupil attendance to be maximised. Children are expected to attend for the full time of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the Academy approves pupil absence eg absence due to sickness, religious observance, funerals);
- Unauthorised (where the Academy will not approve absence eg holidays during term time, taking children out of school without permission ie birthdays, parents or siblings attending medical appointments).

This policy applies to all pupils across the Trust, including children of non-statutory school age.

### **Procedures**

If a child is absent, parents should call the Academy office by 9.30am on the first day of absence stating a reason. Parents must contact the Academy daily to update on the medical condition and the anticipated length of time of any continued absence. On the child's return to school, a note explaining the reason for the absence and/or medical evidence must be provided.

Pupil absence rates are carefully monitored. The Academy is keen to work with parents to increase the amount of time a child spends in school. In such cases, the Attendance Officer and/or the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will invite parents in to discuss the reasons for the absences and consider possible solutions. Where there is little or no improvement, a penalty notice may be issued and/or court proceedings instigated.

### Leave of absence during Term Time

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are absent, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which the Academy and parents must seek to avoid.

Under guidance given by the Department of Education, schools are not able to authorise family holidays during term time. School term dates are published a year in advance; therefore, the Academy does not see any reason for parents to take their child(ren) out of the Academy during term time.

In exceptional circumstances the Academy may choose to grant leave of absence. The Headteacher will consider each case on an individual basis.

Parents wishing to request leave of absence must:

- Request a copy of the STEP Academy Trust Attendance Policy and Request for Leave of Absence Form (Appendix 1) from the Academy Office;
- Complete a Request for Leave of Absence Form.

Applications must be made in advance and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave of absence, the Academy will consider each case individually. Parents will be notified in writing of the Academy's decision on exceptional leave.

Parents who take their child(ren) on a leave of absence without the Academy's permission will be referred to the EWO for consideration to issue a Penalty Notice. In cases where there is more than one pupil in the family, a Penalty Notice will be issued for each parent of each child.

Where leave of absence has been granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the leave of absence is not applied for in advance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Religious Observance**

STEP Academies will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. Following DfE guidance, the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, Academy staff will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. The Academy will expect to be notified by parents in advance if their child(ren) will be absent for religious observance.

### **Interviews at other educational institutions**

Following DfE guidance, Academies should be satisfied that the interview and/or test is linked to transfer to another educational institution. Absence should be limited to the time taken to complete the test and travel to and from the educational institution. Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence of appointments in advance.

### **Lateness**

Pupils who are consistently late disrupt not only their own education but also that of others. Please refer to the Appendices for specific timings of the Academy day.

In cases of persistent lateness, the parent/carer(s) will be invited to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, Attendance Officer or EWO to seek a resolution.

### **Absence for Medical Reasons**

Parents must make every effort to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment. The Attendance Officer may request medical evidence for longer periods of absence and for children who are absent for a week or longer.

### **Rewards**

Children will be rewarded for consistently excellent attendance and most improved attendance. Rewards are given out in assemblies and the children are encouraged to achieve consistently good attendance.

### **What can parents do to help?**

- Follow the Attendance policy guidelines for reporting absence.
- Send a note when your child returns to school after absence.
- Make non-emergency appointments outside school time.

### **If you are worried about your child's attendance at school what can you do?**

- Talk to your child about concerns they may have about school; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the Attendance Officer, Class teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team at the Academy.
- You may contact the EWO, who will work with you and the Academy to resolve the situation (number available from the Academy Office).

## **APPENDIX 1 – TIMES OF THE ACADEMY**

At Breakwater Academy, the school day begins at 9am and all pupils are expected to be settled and ready for registration at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after 9am are marked as late. Any child arriving later than 9am is required to enter the building via the Academy Office. If accompanied, a parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness, which will be added to the register. The child will then be sent or escorted to their classroom.

The register will be closed at 9.15. Pupils arriving after 9am but before the close of registration will be marked as late (L).

After 9.15am pupils will be marked with a (U) and recorded as absent for the AM session. Parents must give a reason for the AM absence or lateness.

Appendix 2

# Request for Leave of Absence Form

For a request for Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances, please complete the form below.

If agreed, the period of absence will be considered as authorised absence. Any time taken out of school for a holiday will be deemed unauthorised absence and a Penalty Notice (PN) of £60 may be issued for each child and to each parent (£120 if not paid within 28 days).

Where leave of absence has been granted by the Headteacher, the pupil must return no later than the agreed date of return. Penalty Notices (one for each child and each parent) may be issued where children return to the Academy after the agreed date.

Name of Child:  Date of Birth:

Class:

Leave of absence requested from:  To:

Number of School Days Absence:  days

Reason for the request: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Carer:

Telephone Number:

Signature:  Date:

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Office Use Only  
Authorised  Unauthorised

## Appendix 3: Exemplar letter declining leave



# Academy letter declining leave

Date:

Dear

Thank you for your request for a Leave of Absence for \_\_\_\_\_. Having reviewed your request, I am unable to authorise your child(ren)'s absence.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will **not** be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

As detailed in our Attendance Policy:

### **Leave of absence during Term Time**

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which the Academy and parents must seek to avoid.

School term dates are published a year in advance; therefore, the Academy does not see any reason for parents to take their child(ren) out of the Academy during term time.

The Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave.

[I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take «Name» out of school I will make a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.]

**Or**

[You failed to apply in advance for permission for «Name» to be absent from school. As stated above, I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.]

Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent of each child** and the amount of the penalty will be £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher