



## **POLICY DOCUMENT FRONT PAGE**

**POLICY NAME: Attendance Policy**

**DATE ADOPTED: March 2017**

**DATE GOVERNORS AGREED POLICY: 15 March 2017**

**REVIEW PERIOD: Annual**

**REVIEW RECORD: Next review due March 2018**



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy applies to all students registered at Alec Hunter Academy and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of students who are registered at our school.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve students' achievements by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all students.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a student's education.
- Work in partnership with students, parents, staff and the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure and valued and encourage a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Alec Hunter Academy is committed to providing a positive learning environment, which values, challenges and supports every student through providing opportunities for them to achieve as their own individuals. Staff at Alec Hunter Academy recognise that regular and punctual school attendance is essential for all students if they are to succeed both academically and socially.

It is the responsibility of all staff to promote good attendance, firstly, by attending regularly themselves. Positive action should be taken to encourage good attendance by ensuring lessons are challenging, stimulating and rewarding for students, thereby leading to students wishing to attend. The environment of the school should be welcoming and attention paid by staff to the relationships between themselves and students, and between students.

Good and improved attendance should be celebrated. Tutors, Student Support Leaders, Progress and Standards Leaders, the Home-School Attendance Officer and Leadership Group all have a key role to play in striving towards good attendance. Alec Hunter Academy will give a high priority to conveying to parents and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns surrounding attendance.

As a school we will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all students. Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set targets. The school will regularly review its system for improving attendance and punctuality and take account of changes in the Education Law. Attendance at 90% or below means that a student has fallen into what is called the Persistent Absentee (PA) Category, a criterion set by the Government. Staff at Alec Hunter Academy will endeavour to reduce the number of students with persistent absence, (10% or above), as required by the Department for Education (DfE). The school will actively work with parents/carers and students, along with outside agencies and professionals to achieve the school targets in this regard. The Home-School Attendance Officer will also monitor the attendance of all students on the registers, including vulnerable groups, identify patterns in absence and intervene appropriately to address concerns.

We will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Although we recognise that parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance and punctuality, staff at Alec Hunter Academy work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures mentioned within this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Students who are regularly late or absent fall behind with and develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all students. If there are problems which affect a student's attendance, we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents to resolve those problems as efficiently as possible. Alec Hunter Academy works in partnership with the MECES to address issues relating to attendance.

Parents/carers should be clear of the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence. Students are expected to be in school, on time, every day the school is open or that the student is timetabled to be present, unless the reasons for the absence is unavoidable.

## **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

### **Authorised absence**

This is when a student has been away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable causes and the school have received notification from parents/carers. For example, if a student has been unwell and the parent telephones the school on the morning of the absence to explain the reason. Only the school have the power to make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.

Absence for the following reasons could be authorised and it is anticipated that parents will confirm their child's expected return day to school.

- Illness

- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement
- If permission for the absence has been granted in advance by the Headteacher e.g. authorised holiday
- Transport arranged by the Local Authority (LA) has failed to arrive where the student lives beyond statutory walking distance
- A traveller family are travelling

### **Unauthorised absence**

This is when the school does not consider the absence to be reasonable and for which an unauthorised mark is given. These include parents keeping their child off school unnecessarily, absences which have never been explained and students who arrive to school after 9.30am when the registers have closed and it is too late to give them a late mark. Parents/carers are required to contact the school on every morning their child is going to be absent unless told otherwise.

Absence will be recorded as unauthorised when the school consider the reason for absence to be unacceptable. This could include the following, though this is by no means an exhaustive list:

- No uniform
- Shopping
- Overslept
- Looking after siblings
- Missed transport
- Birthdays
- Holidays not granted by the Headteacher (unauthorised holiday)
- Not enjoying a certain subject

The decision on whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised rests with the school.

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that parents/carers are aware of this and to support them in adhering to it. It is also the school's responsibility to keep parents/carers informed of issues relating to attendance and it is expected that parents will not seek to take holidays during term time and in particular, they will avoid examination and assessment periods. Every half day absence has to be identified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

It may be necessary for the school or Home-School Attendance Officer to ask the parents/carers to provide the school with medical evidence for absences, in the form of either of the following:

- Appointment card/letter
- Photocopy of prescription from GP or pharmacy
- Letter from GP

If there is an extensive period of absence due to medical reasons, the Home-School Attendance Office may ask for the permission of the parent to contact the student's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the student from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the student.

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with members of staff, including the Student Support Leaders and the Home-School Attendance Officer in resolving any issues together. If difficulties cannot be worked out in this way and attendance continues to drop due to unauthorised absences, the school may refer the student to the MECES. The Investigation Officer (IO) will then work with parents/carers and students to try and resolve any issues by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the student. The maximum penalty of conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or three months imprisonment.

### **ROLE OF THE INVESTIGATION OFFICER (IO)**

Students who are identified as needing MECES intervention are selected using the following criteria by the panel which consists of the Assistant Headteacher, Student Support Leaders and the Home-School Attendance Officer:

1. Students with 10% absence or more
2. The school have already implemented the following routine procedures:
  - First day call procedures
  - Telephone conversations with parents
  - Letters to parents
  - School based meetings with the Home-School Attendance Officer and Student Support Leader
3. There must be written evidence of the above actions.
4. The school must provide information to the IO regarding what actions the school has already put in place; the background to the situation and the family and what action the school would like the IO to take.

The IO is available to give advice by telephone in the earlier stages of attendance issues and issues relating to child protection. The IO is also well placed to call inter-agency meetings. If necessary, the IO can instigate legal proceedings. In addition, the Home-School Attendance Officer offers support and advice to families regarding attendance issues.

### **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **The school**

- Alec Hunter Academy expects all students to attend school regularly, on time and properly equipped to learn.
- Alec Hunter Academy will encourage good attendance and will communicate with parents as soon as possible if there is a concern regarding attendance or punctuality.
- Alec Hunter Academy will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absences and lateness.
- Alec Hunter Academy will include student attendance data in reports and progress checks to parents. The school uses Go 4 Schools as an interface with parents/carers and students, so they are able to access and view attendance information at any time.
- Alec Hunter Academy has the following responsibilities

- Contacting parents/carers of absent students where contact has not been made by 9.30am.
- Recording details of students who are absent, arrive late to school or go home early.
- Sending out letters regarding poor attendance and punctuality.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Making referrals to MECES when all routine procedures have failed and attendance continues to be a concern
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### Students

- Students will ensure that they attend school, on time, every day they are timetabled to do so.
- Students will attend all lessons punctually.
- Students can be expected to be welcomed and receive assistance following periods of absence in order to catch up.

### Parents/carers

- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child/children regularly and punctually attends school, properly dressed, equipped and in an appropriate condition to learn.
- Parents/carers are responsible for informing the school of the reason for any absence before 9.30am each day by telephone call to the 24 hours absence line (01376 559356), 24 hours text service (07598 393348) or absences email – [Jjackson@alechunter.com](mailto:Jjackson@alechunter.com). (Consideration will be given to procedures where parents have difficulty with written communication, or where English is not the first language)
- Parents/carers are expected to work actively with school staff and the Home-School Attendance Officer to solve any problems which develop regarding attendance or punctuality.
- Parents/carers are expected to work actively with school staff and the Home-School Attendance Officer to solve any problems which develop regarding attendance or punctuality.
- Parents/carers have the responsibility of providing the school with medical evidence when the school requires it due to their child/children being ill/having treatment e.g. appointment card, prescription, letter from a doctor, which the school will photocopy for their records. The school may usually only request medical evidence when the student's attendance percentage falls at 90% or below.
- Parents **do not** have the right to take their child/children on leave of absence in term time. Leave of absence must be granted at least two weeks in advance by the school via the "Application for Leave of Absence from school during Term Time" form for each student and

this will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. No leave of absence will be granted to a student during, or immediately before, any examination period regardless of the student's attendance record or year group. It is, therefore, essential that parents/carers check with the school before planning or booking **any** Leave of Absence during term time. Any Leave of Absence taken without completing the appropriate application in advance or taken when permission has been refused by the school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

- Parents must be aware that under regulations updated by Essex County Council on 1 September 2013 any "unauthorised" Leave of Absence may be referred to the MECES who may issue a penalty notice of £60 to each parent for each student taken out of school. If this is not paid within 28 days of receipt, the fine will double to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. The payment must be paid directly to the Local Authority. Parents/carers can only be prosecuted if 42 days have expired and full payment has not been made. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days period the local authority will decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice.

## **REGISTRATION**

- At Alec Hunter Academy an electronic registration system is used. School staff will complete accurate registers at the beginning of each lesson and tutorial within ten minutes. Morning registration begins at 8.40am each school day and Period 4 is used as PM registration, starting at 12.05pm; registers close 30 minutes after these times.
- If a student arrives after the bell has rung at 8.40pm, they should report to student entrance where the Home-School Attendance Officer and Office Manager will sign them in. Discretion will be used and detention slips will be issued to students where a valid reason for lateness has not been provided.
- If a student arrives after 8.50am, they must sign in at visitor's reception. If parents/carers have not informed the school that their child/ren will arrive late, students arriving after 8.50am without a valid reason will be marked as an "unauthorised" late. Detentions for lateness will be held during break the same day.
- If a student arrives after the classroom doors are closed at 8.50am they should report to reception to be entered into the late record book. The office staff will then enter them into the electronic registration system. Students arriving after the register has closed, without an acceptable reason, will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for that session.
- Any student who arrives late to school three times in one school week will subsequently be expected to attend a Headteacher's detention the following week.

## Registration Code

The following symbols are used in registers.

- /** Present AM
- \** Present PM
- B** Off-site educational activity (NOT dual registration)
- C** Authorised absence – Personal reasons approved by school
- D** Dual registered at another educational establishment
- E** Excluded but no alternative provision made
- F** Extended family holiday authorised by school
- G** Unauthorised absence – Holiday not agreed by school
- H** Authorised absence – Holiday agreed by school
- I** Authorised absence – Illness (not medical/dental appointments)
- J** Educational activity – interview
- L** Present – Late before registers have closed
- M** Authorised absence – Medical/dental appointment
- N** Unauthorised absence – No reason provided for this absence
  - Unauthorised absence – School have unauthorised this absence
  -
- P** Educational Activity – Approved sporting activity
- R** Authorised religious observance
- S** Authorised absence – Study leave
- T** Authorised absence – Traveller absence
- U** Unauthorised absence – Late after registers have closed
- V** Educational activity – Approved school trip or visit
- W** Educational activity – Work experience

- X Not required to be in school – Non-compulsory school aged children**
- Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**
- Z Student not on admission register**
- # Planned whole or partial school closure**

Approved Educational Activity is recorded as present. Staff can only register a student as /- present, N – absent or L – late. Staff can only overwrite a code if the student is physically present in their classroom. **Registers are a legal document** and staff need to be aware of their legal responsibility. The Headteacher has legal responsibility for the registers and in the absence of the Headteacher, the Attendance Officer will be required in a court of law to explain changes to the registration marks.

### **MONITORING ABSENCE**

The Home-School Attendance Officer will monitor each student's attendance and punctuality very closely. Students with 10% persistent absence (PA) or more will be highlighted and the school will work closely with the Home-School Attendance Officer and parents to ensure actions are put in place so that students are taken out of the PA category.

The Home-School Attendance Officer will hold weekly meetings with the Student Support Leaders where information will be shared and letters sent home will be agreed on. The Home-School Attendance Officer and the Student Support Leaders will also agree to invite parents in for a school-based meeting for students in the PA category, or close to falling into this category, prior to making a referral to the MECES.

### **REWARDS**

- VIVO's are awarded to students for consistent and improved attendance and in Year 11 these VIVO's can be converted to Prom Points.
- A selected group of students who fall into the Pupil Premium category are entered into a draw to be rewarded with a £10 Amazon voucher if they meet individual attendance targets each term.
- Tutor groups which achieve 100% attendance for a full week are rewarded with hot chocolate and cookies at tutor time the following week.
- Students who achieve 100% attendance each term receive a certificate in Celebration Assembly
- Students who achieve 100% attendance for the 5 years at Alec Hunter is rewarded with a special prize at Presentation Evening.

### **LONG TERM ABSENCE AND RETURN TO SCHOOL**

Where appropriate, teachers may arrange for work to be sent home during the absence period. This will be organised by the Progress and Standards Leader. Students who have enforced long periods of absence from school, for whatever reason, need careful handling on their return. A re-integration period may be required and the Student Support Leader may meet with parents and the student before the student returns to discuss any worries they may have about returning to school.

### **REMOVAL FROM THE SCHOOL ROLL**

This should be instigated by the Attendance Officer, with the Headteacher's approval, in the following circumstances:

1. The school has received confirmation from another school that the student has transferred to them.
2. The student's parents have advised in writing that they are withdrawing their child from the school roll in order to home educate them.
3. The student has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives or boards within travelling distance of the school.
4. A certified Medical Officer has confirmed that the student's health means they will not return to the school before reaching the end of their compulsory school age.
5. Permanent Exclusion – current practice of informing student support should be continued.

An Attendance Officer must complete an "Intention to Remove Student from School Roll" form and sent it to the IO prior to the student being removed from roll.

***This policy will be reviewed as to its effectiveness on an annual basis and updated as appropriate when attendance law changes***