

October 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

City of London Academies Trust is working in partnership with the Education Welfare Service to raise attendance in all our schools. We realise that most children in our schools have very high or perfect attendance and this letter will not apply to them, however it is important for us to clarify our expectations to everyone as we start the new academic year.

There is uncontested evidence between high attendance and high achievement. Developing children to become independent confident, resilient, and successful, is a high priority within our academies. This requires parents to support our schools in all respects, but crucially by ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

The Trust expects 100% attendance from its students, however we understand that circumstances may arise which make this difficult and therefore the overall attendance target for 2023-24 in all our academies is 97%.

Impact of days missed per year

The table below shows that absence from school is a serious issue. Missed days and lessons create disadvantages and gaps in learning which ultimately impact children's GCSE outcomes. Formal tests and examinations may be very close or a long way off for you and your child, but all absence at any stage leads to gaps in your child's learning.

Attendance during the year	Days Missed	Lessons Missed
95%	9 days	54 lessons
90%	19 days	114 lessons
85%	29 days	174 lessons

How we will be approaching absences

Every absence is classified as authorised or unauthorised. Only the academy can decide if an absence will be authorised within the context; absence cannot legally be authorised by parents/carers. Authorised absences include severe illness and emergency treatment during school hours.

It is important that parents/carers understand the circumstances when absence will not be authorised:

- The first month of the school year - absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school. Therefore, absences in the first month will not be authorised without medical evidence.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods, SATs, GCSE, or any other public examinations.
- During the first and last week of a half-term.
- When a pupil's attendance in the previous academic year was below 96%. Attendance will be monitored closely this academic year.
- Term-time leave absences that have not been authorised by the Principal.

If your child's attendance drops below 96%

- You will receive a letter informing you that we are concerned.
- If there are further absences, you will receive a second letter inviting you to meet with your child's head of year and/or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss any concerns.
- Following these actions, if there is no recognised underlying health issue and attendance is still a concern, the school will apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices to address poor attendance

- A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school.
- PCNs will be issued to each parent of each child whose attendance is poor, and whose child was taken on an unauthorised term time holiday or term time leave.

Like all schools and local authorities, the Trust wishes to avoid legal action, and every attempt to resolve parents' and carers' concerns and improve a child's attendance will be made before any formal action is considered.

How you can help support school attendance

There are things you can do to improve your child's attendance and avoid falling into the persistent absence category:

- If your child is unwell and you are unsure whether to send them to school, contact your school office to seek advice.
- Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the child to miss school for emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members.
- Read any communications from the school regarding attendance and punctuality expectations.
- Avoid taking any holiday during term times.
- Keep up to date with your child's attendance rate so that you know if they are at risk of persistent absence.
- If you are worried about your child attending school, the first step is to discuss your concerns with school staff.

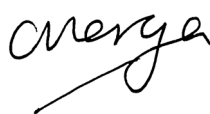
We can assure you that your child will be best placed to take the opportunities our schools offer if they attend every day. We know that you share our and our schools' ambitions to see your child develop into an independent and confident young person equipped to be successful in their adult life. Ultimately, this can only be done if gaps in learning do not develop or widen, and your child can take advantage of all the extracurricular opportunities our schools have to offer.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Emmerson
Chief Executive Officer, City of London
Academies Trust



Clare Verga
Chief Standards Officer, City of London
Academies Trust