



CITY OF LONDON ACADEMY
ISLINGTON
WHERE STUDENTS SUCCEED

Attendance & Punctuality Policy



**CITY OF LONDON
ACADEMIES TRUST**

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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| Responsibility: | COLAT Education Team |
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Introduction

The **City of London Academy Islington**, through the City of London Academies Trust (CoLAT), is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our pupils. We recognise that there is a strong relationship between good school attendance and achieving positive outcomes for children. The National Curriculum is designed to be delivered in a way that offers good continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Absence from school, either with long-term absence or frequent occasional absences, will cause a pupil's attainment to suffer through missed lessons and experiences. Therefore, encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a priority for our school. We expect all students to attend school on time, in full uniform, equipped and ready to learn. In addition, we expect all students to aim for 100% attendance, and at least achieve 97% attendance for any given academic year.

Research commissioned by the Department of Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a negative effect on their life chances. On average, pupils with higher absence over key stage 4 (Year 10 and Year 11) have lower GCSE attainment. In 2019, pupils who did not achieve grades 4-9 in English and Maths GCSEs had an absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% for pupils who did achieve these grades.

As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

This policy is written with reference to DfE's Statutory Guidance effective on 19 August 2024, with the aim of giving clear guidance to parents, pupils, staff and governors.

The **City of London Academy Islington** aims to raise the achievement of all its students and to ensure that it meets the following aims:

- To improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and governors.
- To have a robust behaviour management system based on clear boundaries and a balance of sanctions and rewards, so our school is calm, orderly, safe and supportive.
- To create a framework which defines roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students.
- To develop a systematic approach to monitoring and analysing attendance related data, so that parents/carers can be quickly informed of any attendance and punctuality issues.
- To recognise the needs of individual students.
- To develop positive communication between home and school.
- To maintain a system of rewards and sanctions.
- To work effectively with Local Authority and other services and agencies.
- To monitor and review the policy.

Legal Framework

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age received efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision, or by 'education otherwise' (such as elective home education). A child is of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

When a child is registered at school, parents are responsible for securing their child's regular attendance at that school. Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents who fail to secure a child's regular attendance are guilty of an offence, as are parents who know that a child is failing to attend school regularly and fail to ensure that they do so.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines parents as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority (LA) to ensure that parents are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary work with the LA to use legal measures.

Role and Responsibilities

At the **City of London Academy Islington**, we believe that attending school, on time, is key to enabling children and young people to make the most of the opportunities we offer to prepare them for their future. School attendance is a shared responsibility by governors/trustees, all school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body recognises the importance of school attendance and takes an active role in attendance improvement, supporting the school to prioritise attendance and working together with leaders to set whole school culture. They:

- Ensure that this policy is applied consistently and fairly.
- Meet regularly and review attendance figures and monitor progress against national targets.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

The City of London Academy Islington will:

- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website, which all staff, pupils, and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture promoting the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have a robust daily process to follow up absence.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Signpost and support access to any required services where out of school barriers are identified.
- Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners and where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
- Put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers where absence becomes persistent.
- Hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future where there is a lack of engagement.
- Work with the local authority on legal intervention where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.
- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils with SEND and/or medical conditions and their parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure join up with pastoral support and, where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partner, making timely referrals for children with SEND and medical conditions.
- Regularly monitor data for children with SEND and medical conditions, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.
- Inform the pupil's social worker or youth offending team worker, where there is one, if there are any unexplained absences and if the child's name is to be deleted from the register.

Our expectations

The City of London Academy Islington expects all parents to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open.
- Provide an emergency contact number for more than one person.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Contact the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent.
- Avoid unnecessary absences. For example, non-emergency medical/dental appointments should take place outside of school hours.
- Inform us of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Work with us to address any barriers to attendance for their child including attending all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.
- Proactively engage with formal support offered, including any attendance contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.

Leave of absence

Parents must apply for a leave of absence in advance of taking it. Failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised absence code 'O'.

- Requests for absence due to **appointments**, must be made in advance of the date of absence, by at least 48 hours. Parent must complete a daily leave of absence request for the attention of the attendance officer.
- Requests for **leave of absence** for a student to attend a holiday, family event, or exceptional leave during term-time must be made in advance to the principal. The principal has the final say over whether to approve the request and for how long your child can be absent.

The City of London Academy Islington expects that all pupils will:

- Be aware that they must attend every school day, and their attendance is maintained at the highest level (97% to 100%).
- Be aware that they must attend school punctually.
- Attend school and all of their lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn.
- Follow the correct procedure when arriving late to school before or after the close of registers.
- Speak to a member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.

Daily Routines:

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at the City of London Academy Islington are:

- Gates open: 8.20am
- Registration closes: 9.15am
- End of school day: 3.10pm

Registration

By law, all schools are required to keep an electronic register. The attendance register is taken at the start of the first morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session.

- Students must go to line up each morning.
- The subject teacher (or cover teacher) will take an electronic registration, recording a mark for each student present.
- Any student who is absent when the register is taken and arrives up to 30 minutes of the start of the school day, will be coded L, and receives a sanction.
- If a student arrives after the register has closed, they will be coded U, as unauthorised absence; and will receive a sanction.
- In the afternoon, the formal registration will be at the start of Period 5.

Attendance targets

Attendance targets are set annually and the **City of London Academy Islington** will ensure that absence and punctuality is monitored regularly. Our attendance target is 97%.

Understanding Types of Absence

School absence is the time your child/ren spend away from the **City of London Academy Islington** when they are scheduled to attend. Missing lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and children with poor attendance tend to achieve less than they are capable of achieving. Whilst we understand sometimes absences are necessary, the vast majority of absences can be planned outside the school day as there are 170 non-school days per year.

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, as only the school can decide if an absence will be authorised. **Parents cannot authorise absence; only the school can.**

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school in which the school has either given approval in advance for your child to be away from school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification.

An authorised absence is still classed as an absence from school as the child was not in attendance. Authorised absence includes severe illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised); and appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (parent must complete a leave of absence request in advance).

There are 170 non-school days per year, therefore we always strongly encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. On your child's registration certificate, an authorised absence is usually marked as (I/M) – Illness or Medical.

If you are asked to provide medical evidence this does not need to be a letter from your doctor, as usually doctors will not provide such letters. It can be prescriptions or notes of the consultation.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school initiating formalised attendance actions if the absences meet the national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions in a 10-week period. Unauthorised absence may constitute educational neglect under safeguarding. On your child's registration certificate, unauthorised absence will be marked by G, N, O or U.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive too late after the close of registration.
- Shopping trips.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Looking after brothers or sisters or ill relatives.
- Caring for a disabled parent.
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed for exceptional purposes by the head teacher.
- Day trips.
- Other leave of absence in term-time, which has not been agreed.
- Truancy.

It is important that parents/carers understand the circumstances when absence will not be authorised without medical evidence:

- During 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 two to four days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school over the academic year. Therefore, absences in the first month will not be authorised without medical evidence.
- We will not authorise absences during mock and official exams without medical evidence or official documents.
- During the first and last week of a half-term.
- When a pupil's attendance in the previous academic year was 95% and below. Attendance will be monitored closely in the new academic year.
- Two or more days of illness related absence. We would normally expect parents/carers to seek medical advice from the second day of absence.

Reporting absence by parents

If a child is absent from the school the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before **8.30am**. The school has an answer phone – 020 7226 8611 option 1 - available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call. Or you may email Attendance@colai.org.uk. Or you may call into the school personally and speak to office staff.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before **8.30am**.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence.

Where the absence is recorded as unexplained (code N), a reason for the absence must be obtained, by no later than 5 days after the session.

If a child is absent, and we have had no contact from the parent to provide a reason for the absence, we will follow the actions outlined in the table below.

| Absence day | Action to take |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | School will send a text message to priority 1 parent. School will likely call home, to speak to parent/leave message if no response, if they have not contacted the school after the text message was sent. |
| 2 | School will text, and call all contacts, if priority 1 parent doesn't pick up. Leave messages if necessary. |
| 3 | Text, phone and email to all contacts again. Absence referred to EWO. |
| 4 | Text, phone and email all contacts. Likelihood of a home visit. Send formal attendance letter home. Request a welfare check to be made by social worker/school safety police officer. |
| 5 | If we have been unable to contact the parent/carer and have not seen the pupil we will inform the LA informed so that joint enquiries can be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing in Education procedures. |

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Illness

If a student is absent due to illness, the absence will be authorised if the school accept the reason as valid, and the student's attendance is 96% or more. This needs to be confirmed by a parent/carer on the day of absence by a call/email to the academy office. In line with Department of Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we will ask parent to provide medical evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

For students with a long-term medical condition – either physical or mental – we will work jointly with other services including the LA and health services to create an individual healthcare plan.

Please be aware that if your child has high levels of illness - 15 school days – the school must inform the LA.

Medical and Dental Appointments

To avoid disruption to your child's attendance, medical and dental appointments should NOT be booked during the school day. If a medical or dental appointment has to be made during the school day, advance notice is required. Parents and carers must complete a leave of absence request, at least 48 hours in advance for the absence to be authorised. You must provide evidence of the appointment.

You should collect your child as close to the time of the appointment as possible and return them to school for the rest of the school day afterwards. The student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstance, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school without parental confirmation.

If you've booked an emergency appointment, you must still complete a leave of absence request.

Please note that medical appointments for students whose attendance is below 96% will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

All students must sign out before they leave school to attend appointments and sign in again when they return. Students will be issued with permission to be excused from their lesson if necessary. Parents/carers may be contacted to verify appointments.

Family Bereavements

The school recognises that the death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event and the academy has the discretion to authorise such absences.

Day of Religious Observance

Absence for participation in a day exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong, will be authorised. This permission is not given on two consecutive days. Advance notice is appreciated.

Leave during term time

Absences during term-time can only be authorised by the principal. The principal may not grant leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The principal will determine whether an absence in term-time should be authorised or not and each application would be considered separately. Absences for social occasions such as birthdays and family outings will be unauthorised. If parents/carers take their child out of school for family holidays, these absences will be recorded as unauthorised, and the parents/carers may receive a penalty notice. **Staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.**

School refusal

If your child is struggling to attend, the first step is to speak to us about why your child is missing school, so together we can agree the right support and/or make reasonable adjustments to help your child attend. You should still do everything you can to help your child attend as much as possible. Depending on the reason, the support we offer may take the form of pastoral support in school, an early help plan or an attendance contract. In exchange, you are expected to agree and take part in accessing the support once it has been put in place.

Lateness

All parents must contact the school with the reason for their child's late arrival before they arrived to school, or the student will be sanctioned.

- Students are expected to be registered at their official start time in the morning and at the start of their afternoon lesson.
- Students arriving after these times must sign in at the academy office. They will be recorded as late and marked in the register as such if they arrive before registration closes. Failure/refusal to sign in will result in an additional sanction.
- Truancy from school is treated seriously and parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- **If student arrive after the close of register, this will be coded U as unauthorised absence.**

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at the level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more of schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Absence at 90% and below is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

Fixed penalty notices will be issued to parents or carers if your child is absent from school for the following reasons:

- Holiday / leave of absence during term time.
- Irregular attendance which equates to 10 or more sessions within a 10-week period. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years (for example, 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in Summer term and a further 8 sessions within the Autumn term).
- Late arrival to school (after registration has closed) is also classified as unauthorised absence (for example, a parent can be referred if their child had 6 sessions of absence and 4 sessions of arriving late after the register closes within 10 weeks).

Penalty Notices will be issued by post to your home address to each parent or carer by the LA at the request of the school.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid in full within 21 days
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first.

- In a case where the national threshold is met for the third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken. This will often include result in prosecution, an Education Supervision Order, a Parenting Order and/or safeguarding referral for parental educational neglect.

Attendance monitoring

Regular and punctual attendance of students at school is expected and is strictly enforced; it is both a legal requirement and essential in order for students to maximise their learning. We will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance.

At the **City of London Academy Islington** we start to monitor attendance when a pupil's attendance falls below 97%, this is so we can make parents aware at an early stage that attendance is falling below a good level.

If attendance continues to decline, we will invite parent/s to a school meeting to ensure we are putting support in place, to overcome any barriers to attendance or punctuality. Support offered to family, if necessary, both internally and externally (such as Early Help).

If your child is persistently absent or late (coded U), we will look to increase contact with parents/carers and formalise the attendance process.

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Ask parents to sign an attendance contract or offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate.
- Discuss the pupil at the termly Targeted Support Meetings to seek advice and guidance on additional support strategies.
- Refer to Early Help and/or other external agencies to offer support, guidance, and advice.
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.

Tailored Support

At the **City of London Academy Islington** we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered will be child-

centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. This may include a referral to Early Help or an Attendance Contract.

In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, reduced timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs and only where it is safe to do so.

We will not use a reduced timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour. A reduced timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision where applicable. We will never put a reduced timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family. We will notify the LA of all reduced timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

Persistent Absence Pathway

Actions taken

- **Below 97%** - Stage 1 attendance concern letter sent to parents/carers. Medical evidence required for further absences.
- **Attendance continues to decline between 95% and 91%** – a parental meeting with student's HOY and/or Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- **Attendance continues to decline** – EWO meeting arranged. Use of attendance contract.
- **Continued irregular attendance** – Application to the Local Authority for statutory action to be considered. If educational neglect is suspected, a social care referral.

Where parents consistently fail to cooperate with the school, by not explaining absences, attending meetings, or providing medical evidence, a discussion and referral will be made to the Local Authority.

Please note

- At any point in the process, a one-to-one conversation with the student concerned about their absence and/or a home visit will take place.

The **City of London Academy Islington** would like to stress:

1. There is no 'right' to leave of absence during term time.
2. Schools and academies have a duty in law to keep pupil absence to a minimum.
3. Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools and academies to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term time holidays, and schools and academies are expected to adopt a much more challenging response to such requests.
4. For all of the above reasons, requests from parents and carers for children to be allowed to take holidays during term-time at the **City of London Academy Islington** will be refused.
5. Even in exceptional circumstances leave of absence will not normally be granted if a child's attendance is below 97% for the current academic year; and if the period of absence coincides with official exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- The Education Act (1996).
- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, (August 2024)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE (January 2015)
- Children missing education, DfE (September 2016)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2022)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (July 2018)