

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **JUNE 2014**

**This policy has been agreed by the STEP Academy Trust Board of Directors 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 the STEP Academy Trust we recognise that statistically pupils whose attendance falls below 95% 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 e.g. absence due to sickness, religious observance, funerals)
- Unauthorised (where the Academy will not approve absence e.g. holidays during term time, taking children out of school without permission i.e. birthdays, parents or siblings attending medical appointments)

**This policy applies to all pupils across the STEP Academy 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 the absence stating a reason. On the child's return to school, a note is essential for authorisation of absence and/or medical evidence. If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents or carers, then the Attendance Officer/Office Staff would contact the home by telephone/text message on the initial day. Parents should recall on the third day of absence to update the school on the medical condition and the length of time of any continued absence.

Pupil absence rates are carefully monitored. When attendance rates fall below 95%, or there are regular periods of unexplained absence, 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) 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.

### **Completing the AM and PM register is a legal requirement**

Registration can sometimes become so routine that its importance is lost. However, incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents that may be required in a court of law, for example

as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance. They may also contribute to pupils' end of term reports and to records of achievement.

Where pupil registration is completed electronically, teachers/teacher assistants are required to log into the school management system (SIMS.net) and save attendance information twice each day – before the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. If registers are completed manually, the data is then entered into SIMS.net by the Attendance Officer as soon as possible.

### **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.

**Under new guidance given by the Department of Education, schools will not authorise family holidays during term time. Holiday 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 Head teacher will consider each case on an individual basis.

Parents wishing to request leave of absence should:

- 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;

In considering whether or not to authorise leave of absence, the Academy will consider each case individually, taking into account a child's overall attendance and the reason for the leave. The school will not authorise a leave of absence where the requested period of absence covers a statutory assessment e.g. KS1 and KS2 SATs. Parents will be notified in writing of the Academy's decision on exceptional leave.

Where leave of absence has been granted, the pupil must return no later than the agreed date of return. **Penalty Notices (PN) could be issued where a child returns to the Academy after the agreed date, whatever the reason for the late return. In cases where there is more than one pupil in the family, a PN will be issued for each child and each parent.**

**Parents who take their child(ren) out on holiday without the Academy's permission will be issued with a PN and the matter will be referred to the EWO. In cases where there is more than one pupil in the family, a PN will be issued for each child.**

### **Lateness**

Pupils who are consistently late disrupt not only their own education but also that of others.

The Academy day begins at 8.30am and all pupils are expected to be settled and ready for registration at 8:35am. Pupils arriving after 8.35am are marked as late. Any child arriving later than 8.35am 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 9.00am. Pupils arriving after 8.35am but before the close of registration will be marked as late (L).

After 9.00am 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.

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.

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

- Follow the Attendance policy guidelines for reporting absence
- Send a note when your child returns to after an 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; 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).

### **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.

## Appendix 1: Request for Leave of Absence Form

**The Academy will not authorise parents to take their children on holiday during term time** but for exceptional circumstances please complete the form below.

Exceptional circumstances will only be considered when:

- The child's aggregate attendance for the previous two academic years is 95% or above (where a child has been at the Academy for less than two years, the aggregate percentage of the time leading up to the request will be measured); and
- The period of absence does not coincide with the administration of statutory assessments e.g. KS1 and KS2 SATs.
- The child has not previously taken any leave of absence for holiday or exceptional circumstances

Once agreed, the period of absence will be considered as authorised absence. **Any time taken out of school for a holiday will be considered unauthorised absence and a Penalty Notice (PN) of £60 could 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 Head teacher, the pupil must return no later than the agreed date of return. **Penalty Notices (one for each child and each parent) could be issued where children return to the Academy after the agreed date.**

Name of Child:  Date of Birth:

Class:  Percentage of prior attendance  
(To be completed by the Attendance Officer)

Leave of absence requested from:  To:

Number of School Days Absence:  days

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

Name of Parent/Carer:

Signature:  Date:

\* This figure can be obtained from the Academy Office

Appendix 2: Exemplar letter declining leave

Date:

Dear

Thank you for your request for a Leave of Absence for \_\_\_\_\_. As per DfE and STEP guidelines, I am unable to authorise a Leave of Absence for a family holiday/exceptional circumstances:

**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.*

***Schools will not authorise leave of absence during term time. Holiday 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.***

I must also draw your attention to the fact the taking your child(ren) out of school may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

Yours sincerely