WIGSTON ACADEMIES TRUST

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Original Policy date:

Next Review Date:

Date Approved by Directors: 19 September 2016

Signed by Chair of Directors:

1.   Introduction

1.1   Wigston Academies Trust is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

1.2   The whole school community – students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.3   The policy has been drawn up based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The Academy/College will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it. This policy informs and is supported by other Trust policies. All are seen as important contributors to the Trust's provision for attendance and take account of students' needs as appropriate.

1.4   Principles: We believe that regular punctual attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. Research demonstrates that there is a clear link between school attendance and academic achievement.

We believe that regular punctual attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the learning opportunities available to them and to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential, belong, achieve and make a positive contribution to their community.

Wigston Academies Trust values every student. We will work with families and other agencies to identify reasons for poor attendance and attempt to resolve any difficulties.

Wigston Academies Trust Pastoral team works in partnership with all students, parents/carers, staff, outside agencies, stakeholders to maintain excellent levels of attendance and to support students who may be having difficulties in school which may lead to absences.

The Trust considers good regular attendance to be 96+%.

2.   Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a duty to provide education and a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the student was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The absence codes (2014) are outlined in Appendix 1.

3. Academy/College roles and responsibilities

3.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Wigston Academies Trust have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

3.2 Staff Roles

The Tutor
At Wigston Academies Trust the Tutor is seen as a key figure in promoting regular punctual attendance. The Tutor should:-
- provide a good example by always being punctual to registration;
- carry out registration in the prescribed manner;
- alert the appropriate person when there is a concern;
- offer praise to students whose attendance and/or punctuality improves.

The Subject Teacher
Subject Teachers should:-
- take a register every lesson (and ensure that the students know that a register is being taken);
- follow up any suspected internal truancy by checking with the Attendance Officer immediately;
- provide relevant work for students who have been detected internally truanting to do in detention.

The Directors of Learning/Safe Workers
The Directors of Learning/Safe Workers are responsible for monitoring the attendance of their year group. They should:-
- promote good attendance and punctuality through assemblies, rewards etc.;
- monitor attendance on a regular basis;
- monitor the performance of individual tutor groups, following up with individual Tutors instances where patterns of absenteeism are not being effectively addressed;
- meet with the Attendance Improvement Officer on a fortnightly basis in order to discuss students who have not responded to the school's strategies and when necessary to make referrals;
- regularly put attendance onto the agenda of Pastoral Meetings;
- review attendance fortnightly and punctuality figures on a weekly basis;
- ensure that contact is made with parents of poor attenders, supporting the Tutor and the Attendance Officer where appropriate in dealing with parents directly;
- follow up internal truancy with appropriate punishments.

The Attendance Officer
The Attendance Officer is responsible for ensuring the effective administration of the school's student attendance monitoring system. He/she should:-

- liaise daily with staff, students and parents to maintain student attendance data on the school's SIMS attendance module;
- produce daily list of student absences and contact parent/guardian on the first day of student absence; seek and record explanation for non-attendance and notify relevant tutors/pastoral leaders;
- notify relevant tutors and pastoral leaders of concerns over unauthorised student absences;
- complete and maintain record of student lates, inform relevant staff as appropriate;
- produce various reports regarding student attendance for tutors, pastoral leaders, SLT and the Attendance Improvement Service as required;
- print and distribute weekly registers and absence reports;
- produce and send termly DfE absence reports;
- complete and maintain records of student holiday request forms.

The Attendance Leader

The Attendance Leader is the SLT member with responsibility for attendance. He/she will oversee and co-ordinate the academies work in promoting regular and improved attendance and:

- ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school;
- ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with SLT and up to date attendance data is made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents/carers (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance);
- ensure the Governing body is fully aware of attendance data and targets;
- ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

4.   **Procedures**

4.1   Registration

i)   The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Tutors/subject teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers. The attendance officer completes the registers using the prescribed codes (Appendix 1).

ii)   The register will be called promptly at 8.25/8.35 am and 1.00 pm by each tutor/subject teacher and a mark will be made in respect of each student.

iii)   The registers will close at 9.00 am and 1.15pm. Any student who arrives after the closing of the register will be marked as absent. Any student arriving late but before the closing of the register will be marked as late.

4.2   Categorising absence

i)   A mark will be made in respect of each student following the close of the registers. Any student who is not present will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the person responsible for attendance.

ii)   Wigston Academies Trust recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence

can be as damaging to a student's education as authorised absence and will potentially send a message to parents/carers that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children and young people extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a student is clearly unwell, staff at Wigston Academies Trust will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

iii) Absences without explanation will remain unauthorised.

iv)   Term time leave of absence will be authorised in exceptional circumstances, which are defined as:

      (a) being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the student which outweighs to loss of teaching time;

      (b) where the school is satisfied that the child/young person is too ill to attend;

      (c) where the student has a medical appointment (although parents/carers should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand;

      (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;

      (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents/carers belong;

      (f) the student is of no fixed abode, his/her parent/carer is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;

It is important for parents/carers to be aware that while decisions will be made on a case by case basis requests will normally be refused. Requests must be made in writing and applied for in advance for any term-time leave of absence to be considered.

v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

      (a) no explanation has been given by the parent/carer;

      (b) the school is not satisfied with the explanation;

      (c) the student or parents/carers are staying at home to mind the house;

      (d) the student or parents/carers are shopping during school hours;

      (e) the student is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday;

      (f) the student is absent from school on a family holiday;

(g) the student has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

4.3   Approved educational activity
Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, including work placements, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

4.4   Absences after close of class registers
Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up by the subject teacher and reported to the Attendance Officer.

4.5   Staff Training
The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

5.   Children Missing Education

The Trust follows the Leicestershire County Council Children Missing Education Policy and Procedures. If a student left for school, fails to arrive and parents/carers state they do not know where their child is, parents/carers and the school report the student missing to the police, unless the student has a recent history of truanting and parents report that they know where the student is likely to be and locates them. If a parent/carer reports their child to be missing from home beyond that school session or day, the parent/carer should be informed that they must report their child missing to the police. The school (or other professional who has ascertained from the parent that their child is missing) must know that the parent has done this by following up the parent/carer's action with a call to the police themselves.

Pupils who have been out of school for a total of 15 days or more and who fall within one of the designated PME categories would be considered a pupil missing out on education. The Trust completes the LA PME data collection regularly.

6.   Collection and analysis of data

6.1   Attendance data is completed, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents/carers and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the Academy's/College's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

6.2   Attendance is monitored by year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils/students with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged to poor attendance e.g. Pupil Premium.

6.3   Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE (via the Local Authority and SIMS) within the stipulated time frame.

6.4   Persistent absence

A child/young person is defined as persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of school time by the Department for Education. It is necessary to monitor pa students at regular intervals throughout the academic year. Students with attendance below 90% will be clearly identified and the reasons for their absences addressed using the range of support and statutory interventions available.

Disadvantaged groups e.g. students on Pupil Premium within this range will be differentiated for additional monitoring and action.

7. **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

7.1   Attendance has a very high profile at both academies with the Trust. Parents/carers are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

7.2   Rewards
The Trust has a range of rewards to celebrate attendance, e.g. any student, who has achieved 100% attendance throughout the year, is awarded a special certificate in assembly.

7.3   Wigston Academies Trust has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. The attendance officer will contact the families for an explanation of absence and refer to the person responsible for attendance.

7.4   First-day calling
The Academy/College have a system of first-day calling in place. This means that parents/carers will be contacted on the first day if a student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents'/carers' knowledge.

7.5   Meetings with parents/carers
Where there is an emerging pattern to a student's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the Academy/College will invite parents/carers to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents/carers and student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 4 weeks. It will be explained to parents/carers that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

7.6   Follow up of unauthorised absence
If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the student is failing to attend school at all), there will be follow up action which could result in legal action by the Local Authority.

7.7   Lateness and punctuality
Students are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Students who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the student to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, follow up action will be taken which could result in legal action by the Local Authority.

7.8   Students who arrive late for school but before the register closes must report to reception, where they will be recorded and marked as late. An appropriate consequence will be applied.

7.9   For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Students arriving late should therefore report to reception. It is important that all students arriving late follow this procedure.

7.10 For the same reason it is important that parents/carers of students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day inform reception of the reason. The reception will record that the student has left the school site and will mark them back in when they return.

7.11 Post-registration truancy
Post-registration truancy occurs when a student goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the student will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. The Academy/College take this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents/carers immediately.

8. **Unauthorised Term-time Holidays**

8.1 Government guidelines prevent Headteachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. A family holiday during term-time therefore does not fall under the category of 'exceptional circumstances'.

8.2 Where any student has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday, we are required to inform Leicestershire County Council who may issue penalty notices as set out below. This applies to any unauthorized leave of absence taken reaching a total of 5 days or more in any school year.

8.3 The parent(s)/carer(s) of any child who has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday will each be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21 day period. Failure to pay the fine(s) within this timescale, will result in the fines being doubled to £120 which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

8.4 The Academy/College will consider every application individually; its policy is not to grant leave of absence other than in the most exceptional circumstances. An application must be made in writing using the appropriate form (see appendix), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the absence.

   i) Authorised leave of absence may be considered in the following circumstance:

      (a) service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;

      (b) when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;

      (c) parents/carers who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

   ii) Requests for term-time holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

      (a) cheaper cost of holiday;

      (b) availability of the desired accommodation;

        (c) poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;

        (d) overlap with beginning or end of term.

    iii) A response to all requests for term-time leave of absence will be made giving the reasons for the decision. Please note: It is important for parents/carers to be aware that while decisions will be made on a case by case basis requests will normally be refused.

    iv) Leave of absence during periods of national tests, i.e. GCSE, AS/A2 examinations will not be authorised.

9. Parents'/carers' responsibilities

9.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Wigston Academies Trust.

    i) It is expected that parents/carers will:

        (a) ensure their children attend the school regularly and punctually;

        (b) support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;

        (c) not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

    ii) Parents/carers will also be expected to:

        (a) Notify school on the first day of absence using the schools absence telephone line or reporting to the reception;

        (b) ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;

        (c) work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents'/carers' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;

        (d) contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives and the Academy/College will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.

10. Students' responsibilities

10.1 All students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to any member of the academy/college staff.

10.2 Students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their tutor a note from their parents/carers to explain the absence. Students should not leave the academy without permission. Students also have a responsibility for reporting to the school office if they arrive late.

11.   Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2)
The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

12.   Reviewing the policy

The Wigston Academies Trust will review this policy as and when required.

Appendix 1

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Authorised leave of absence	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances