



School Attendance Policy

(Appendix to GAET Attendance Policy)

Great Academies Trust

2020-2021

Rationale:

For students to achieve their full potential it is vital that they maintain high levels of attendance. All students should be aiming for 100% attendance (**380 sessions**) within each academic year.

Any student with attendance below 97% (missing **10 sessions** / 5 days) will have their progress impeded, which will ultimately affect examinations, future GCSE results and will decrease the Post-16 options available to them (see Appendix 1 for further details).

The support of parents / carers in ensuring that their child attends school is essential. At Great Academy Ashton we will aim to work in partnership with parents / carers to ensure that attendance is not a barrier to learning and progress.

Roles & Responsibilities

Parents / Carers are legally responsible for ensuring the regular attendance of their child to school. At Great Academy Ashton we recognise that there are sometimes external factors which affect a child's attendance and we will work proactively with parents / carers in order to promote high levels of attendance. To support us to do this efficiently and effectively we would ask that if your child is absent from school you follow the procedures outlined below.

Parents and Carers:

Illness: (Please note, Minor ailments such as but not exclusive e.g. colds, headaches, tummy aches are no longer being authorised).

We understand that there are times when a student has to miss school due to illness. Please keep these occasions as brief and as infrequent as possible. In these circumstances, we would request that:

- 1.) Parents / carers contact school by phone on **0161 241 9555** or **TEXT** on **0161 850 9053** (**This is the School Comms Number**). Alternatively, school email address for absence is: attendance@gaa.org.uk and inform us of the circumstances of the illness. (This number will not take incoming calls). Please do this by 8.30 am on **each day** of absence. Please state your child's full name, date of absence, tutor group and reason for absence.

If no contact has been made to confirm absence, then the school will follow the 'Unexplained / Unexpected Absences' procedures that are highlighted within this document.

- 2.) **Provide supporting medical evidence:** We will only authorise 5 days (10 sessions) of illness before all absences will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. e.g. doctor's appointment card; medical appointment letter; copy of prescription etc. **School are not requesting a letter from your doctor.**

Medical Appointments:

Medical / dental appointments should be made out of school hours to prevent disruption to learning. Where this is not possible please provide a letter / note along with appropriate documentation e.g. appointment letter or card. This should be handed to either a student's form tutor or the main office.

We will require this in order to authorise a student's absence.

If a medical / dental appointment is arranged for during the school day, your child will need to be signed out at reception by a responsible adult; **they will not be allowed to sign themselves out.** This person should be a parent / carer or one of the additional contacts, which you have provided to us.

Holidays:

Holidays must not be taken during term time. **The Principal will not grant leave of absence for holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Parents needing leave of absence for exceptional circumstances should apply to the Principal. The exceptional reason should be outlined in detail and evidenced.

SEE APPENDIX 2- Leave of Absence/Holiday Request Form.

Please Refer To The School Website For Term Dates 2020-21

Other Requests for Absences:

Requests for absence for engagements resulting from personal sporting or other commitments / interests should be submitted in writing to the Principal and will be considered on a case by case basis. **(See Appendix 2)**

The Principal will take into account the following factors when making his / her decision:

- The nature of the activity and how it contributes to the student's personal development.
- The student's attendance record.
- The student's current academic progress.
- The potential impact that the absence may have on academic progress.
- The potential impact that the absence could have on student wellbeing/welfare.

Religious Observance:

Requests for absence for religious observance should be made in writing to the Principal. These will only be granted where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which parents belong.

Inclement Weather:

We understand that there are times that it may be difficult for students to attend school due to inclement weather. Despite this, we will always endeavour to keep the school open for the students that can attend.

In these circumstances we would request that:

- 1.) Parents / carers contact school by phone on **0161 241 9555** TEXT on **0161 850 9053 (This is the School Comms Number)** alternatively the school email address which is: attendance@gaa.org.uk and simply state **"Absent due to Weather"**. Please do this by 9.00 am on **each day** of absence.

If you receive a text message stating that your child is absent, having already sent school a text message, please don't text again. This will have taken place whilst the messages are being processed by our Attendance Team and will lead to a further back log in processing.

Students' Responsibilities

Aim for 100% attendance.

It is important that we help our young people to get into the good habits that they will need in the work place. Excellent attendance and punctuality are essential in their future employment and we regularly receive requests from potential employers for references regarding attendance and punctuality.

As a parent, you are legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly and is punctual. If you fail to ensure this, you are committing an offence under the Education Act (1996) which may lead to a fine of up to £2500 and /or a prison sentence. You may also find yourself issued with a penalty notice.

Persistent Absence (PA) is classed as any absence that equates to over 10% of the academic year at any given time. Any students that appears on the PA list may be monitored formally by the Education Welfare Service. The thresholds for PA are set out below:

Close of 1st half term: <u>3.5 days in total</u>	Close of 2nd half term: <u>7 days in total</u>
Close of 3rd half term: <u>10 days in total</u>	Close of 4th half term: <u>12.5 days in total</u>
Close of 5th half term: <u>15.5 days in total</u>	Close of 6th half term: <u>19 days in total</u>

What can parents do to help?

It is important that you inform us of any medical or emotional issues that may be affecting your child's attendance to enable us to offer the appropriate support. If you suspect that your son or daughter is experiencing any problems or issues at school that may be affecting their attendance, please make contact with us as soon as possible via their Form Tutor. This will alert us to any problems and help us to work with you towards resolving any issues. It is important that your son or daughter understands that you are working with the school to ensure that there are no barriers to learning and that you do not condone absence.

It is important that you endorse the school's rules on punctuality, attendance and dress code with your children. Late arrival to school on 2 or more times in a week or 3 or more occasions in any half term will result in your son/daughter being placed on form tutor report and 1 day in Internal Isolation. Should punctuality not improve this will be escalated to a more senior level meeting. Please ensure that your child is dressed to learn and follow the school rules regarding appearance and make up.

The School:

At Great Academy Ashton, we will monitor attendance closely so that we can support our students and their parents in maintaining excellent levels of attendance. To do this we will monitor and track attendance in the following ways.

Unexplained / Unexpected Absences:

If we have not had contact from parents / carers to inform us of a student's absence by 8.30am on the first day of absence the following steps will be taken:

Day 1: Our Attendance Team will contact parents / carers by **text message** to follow up this absence. This will take place between 9.00am and 10.00am.

Parents / carers should respond with a Phone call to confirm absence immediately if they have sent their child to school that morning.

Day 2: If a student is still absent, our Attendance Team will contact parents / carers by **phone to follow up this absence**. This will take place between 9.30am and 10.30am.

Day 3: If a student's absence has continued, our Attendance Team will contact parents / carers by **phone to follow** up this absence. This will take place between 9.30am and 11.00am.

Our Education Welfare Officer will then conduct a home visit in order to ascertain the nature of the absence. **If there are concerns about a student's welfare at this stage, or any of the stages above, the police will be contacted and a request for a welfare check will be made.**

At any point during an absence the school Education Welfare Officer may visit in order to satisfy safeguarding regulation and offer support where necessary.

Penalty Notices

If your child exceeds 10 sessions (which equates to 5 days) of unauthorised absence during the school year they may be issued with a penalty notice. The penalty notice is £60 per child or each parent. If the fine remains unpaid after 21 days, the penalty increases to £120. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority may commence proceedings under section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act in the magistrates Court.

If a parent reports that a child is absent from school due to illness and subsequently it becomes apparent that the child has not been attending school for the purpose of a term time holiday, the school will advise the Local Authority and the parent will be issued with a Penalty Notice.

There are many stories about parents choosing to simply decide to pay the Penalty Notice as a cheaper alternative to an expensive holiday. However, if a parent does this once, the next time they take leave of absence without authorisation it could be seen to be an “aggravated offence” and therefore they could incur a prosecution, which could result in a higher level of court disposal.

Research indicates that fewer than 40% of pupils in secondary schools with an average of 15 days or more absence per year get a 5 good GCSE passes.

Punctuality to School:

Poor punctuality to school will affect student’s attendance and have a significant impact on their learning throughout the year (see Appendix 3).

If students fail to attend school on time, they will receive the following consequences based upon their arrival time:

8:30AM to 8.50AM: If a student is late to registration, they enter school through the Attendance Student Entrance, they will spend registration in Green Room 2 and will receive a 15 min Same Day Break Time Correction. You will be notified on Class Charts/Text Message.

8.50 AM Onwards: If a student arrives after registration they will receive a 30 min Correction the following school day. You will be notified on Class Charts/Text Message.

Failure to attend any of the above Corrections will result in the Correction being rolled over, up scaled, and may ultimately result in your child being placed in Internal Isolation.

If arriving after 9.30 am this is when Registers close and your child will be marked as (U) Unauthorised absence. This can contribute to a Fixed Penalty Notice Warning as outlined above.

Working with Parents where there is an Attendance Concern:

Our Attendance Team & Pastoral Team at Great Academy Ashton track and analyse student attendance regularly. This allows them to identify any attendance concerns quickly and to put appropriate support in place. We use a staged approach to improving attendance as outlined below.

See Appendix 4 for full overview of stages, Appendix 5 for Attendance Improvement Agreement.

Appendix 6 for Stage 1,2,3 Letters.

Appendix 7- Attend To Achieve- Impact of poor Attendance on results.

Improving Attendance: Stages:

Stage 1:

The threshold for Stage 1 is:

Stage	Total Missed Per Half Term		
	Sessions	Days	
1	4	2	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 1, having already been at Stage 1 within that academic year, they will move to Stage 2.

The support this will trigger is:

- A letter from the Attendance Improvement Team/Head of Year informing you that your child has reached Stage 1 and an invitation to discuss this further with the Attendance Team/ Year Manager.
- A message from the Pastoral Team inviting a discussion regarding the current absence from school.
- Close monitoring of attendance.

Stage 2:

The threshold for Stage 2 is:

Stage	Total Missed Per Half Term		
	Sessions	Days	
2	7	3.5	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 2, having already been at Stage 2 within that academic year, they will move to Stage 3.

The support this will trigger is:

- A letter from the Attendance Improvement Team informing you that your child has reached Stage 2.
- A phone call from the Year Manager to discuss strategies to improve your child's attendance.
- A meeting between your child and the Year Manager.

In addition, we must ask that all future absences in respect of illnesses and medical appointments are supported by medical evidence [i.e. Doctors note/appointment letters/cards etc.].

Stage 3:

The threshold for Stage 3 is:

Stage	Total Missed Per Half Term		
	Sessions	Days	
3	10	5	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 3, having already been at Stage 3 within that academic year, they will move to Stage 4.

The support this will trigger is:

- A letter from the Attendance Improvement Team informing you that your child has reached Stage 3.
- A phone call from the Attendance Improvement Team to arrange an Attendance Panel that will include your child's Head of Year or Pastoral Year Manager.
- A Contract of Attendance to be created (See Appendix 5).

We have also been required to contact the Local Education Authority and at this stage, further absence from school could result in legal action being taken by the Local Education Authority.

Stage 4:

The threshold for Stage 3 is:

Stage	Total Missed Per Half Term		
	Sessions	Days	
4	14	7	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 4, having already been at Stage 4 within that academic year, the school will notify the Local Authority.

The support this will trigger is:

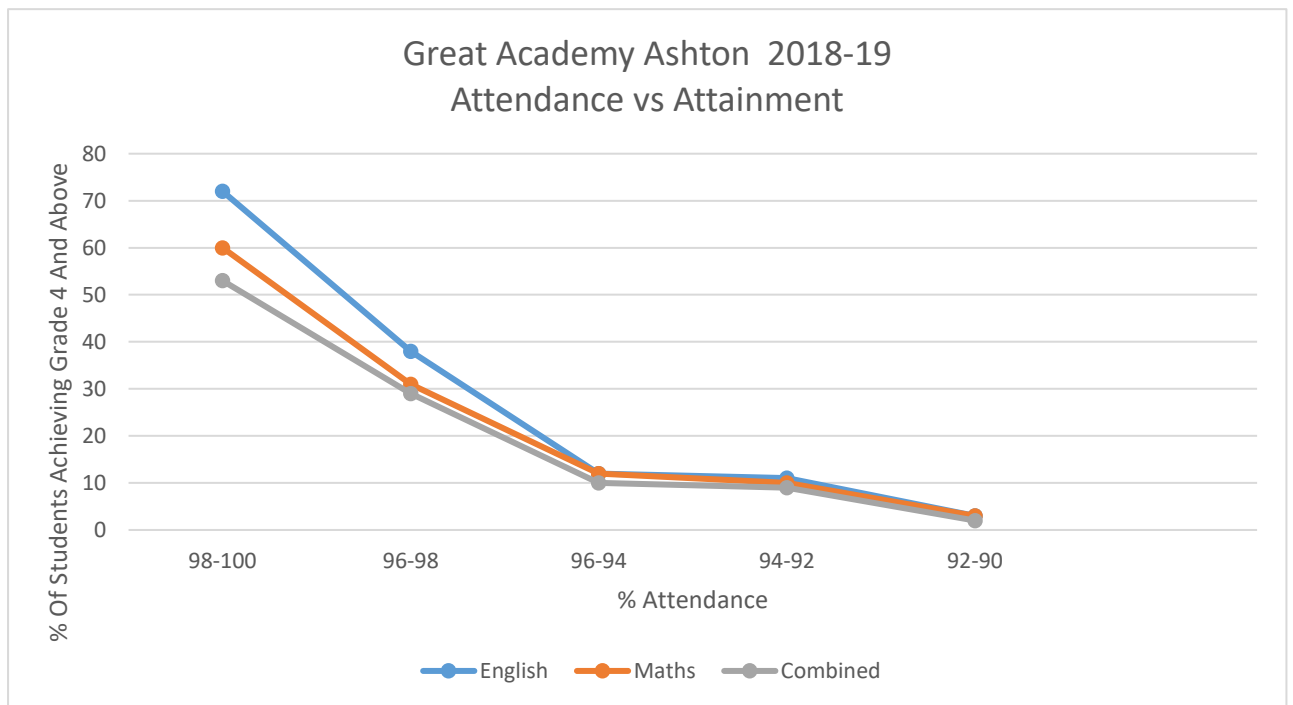
- Contact from the Local Education Authority, who will explore legal methods of enforcing attendance at school. Fast Track prosecution Process begins.

Closure of School at Short Notice:

In the event of inclement weather the Principal (or SLT) will liaise with the Site Team, assess the situation on site, check with the Met Office website and make a decision as to whether the school is to close. The decision will be communicated to colleagues, students and parents via the school website.

Our aim will be to make a decision as early as possible and at least one hour prior to the scheduled opening time. Decisions will often take place on the day of closure to enable a decision that will result in students missing learning to be as informed as possible

APPENDIX 1



Appendix 2 Leave of Absence/Holiday Request Form

GREAT ACADEMY ASHTON

APPLICATION FORM – LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Please complete your child's attendance percentage _____. 9 days' absence throughout the year equates to 95% attendance.

The governing body of Great Academy Ashton has a discretionary power to allow pupils to be absent during term time. **This can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Parents/Carers must contact school with a reason.** Parents are reminded that leave of absence during term time is not a right, and will only be granted with the greatest reluctance, as any absence has a detrimental effect on a pupil's academic progress and overall attendance level.

Section 444 (A) of the Education Act 2004 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. Parents or Carers, who take their children out of school in term time without school's permission, may receive a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent per child which must be paid within 21 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.

Where a request for extended leave is made, Parents/Carers must contact school before any leave is booked to discuss the associated implications. If extended leave is unauthorised and still taken, this may lead to pupils being removed from the school roll.

As the Governing Body must consider the request for absence, please ensure that the application is submitted to school well before the proposed period of absence.

Please complete the following

Pupils name-----Form-----

Home Address-----

First day of absence-----

Returning to school on-----

Reason why leave cannot be taken during school holidays-----

Declaration

I confirm that the details given on this form are correct and that it is necessary for the leave of absence to be taken during term time for the reason stated.

Signed-----Date-----

Parent/Guardian

Surname-----First Name-----

(Block capitals please)

Appendix 3- Impact of Poor Punctuality

<i>Minutes Late Per day</i>	<i>Days of Learning Lost</i>
5 Minutes	3.4 Days (98.4% Attendance)
10 Minutes	6.9 Days (97.6% Attendance)
15 Minutes	10.3 Days / 2 Weeks (94.7% Attendance)
20 Minutes	13.8 Days (92.9% Attendance)
30 Minutes	20.7 Days / 4 weeks (89.2% Attendance)

Appendix 4- Attendance Intervention Thresholds.

Stage	Total Missed Per Half Term		
	Sessions	Days	
1	4	2	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 1, having already been at Stage 1 within that academic year, they will move to Stage 2.
2	7	3.5	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 2, having already been at Stage 2 within that academic year, they will move to Stage 3.
3	10	5	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 3, having already been at Stage 3 within that academic year, they will move to Stage 4.
4	14	7	If a student reaches the threshold for Stage 4, having already been at Stage 4 within that academic year, the school will notify the Local Authority & may result in Fast Track Prosecution.

Appendix 5- Attendance Improvement Contract

Date:

Attendance Improvement Agreement



Pupil			Attendance %	Current %	At Review
D.O.B.			Review date		
School			School Signature & DATE		
EWO			Parent(s) Signature(s) & DATE		

TARGET	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIMESCALE	TASK	COMMENTS(TO BE COMPLETED AT REVIEW)

Appendix 6- Staged Warning Letters

Stage 1 Letter



Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you that at our last Attendance meeting (Name) attendance is currently _____. This means (Name) has been absent for 5 or more sessions, this equates to 2 and a half school days absence. This Places (Name) at **Stage 1** of our Attendance Intervention.

At GREAT Academy Ashton we set our standards extremely high and have a minimum target of 98% attendance. As a reward student with attendance above 98% will be entered for cash prize draws, rewards trips, end of term prizes.

We will not be authorising absences unless there is extreme circumstances. I am looking forward to seeing a significant improvement during this half term in (Name's) attendance and we will monitor and track (Name's) attendance so that (Name) does not reach Stage 2.

Should attendance fall below 90%, this will trigger persistent absence intervention and could involve legal action. More importantly, the education of your child is being hindered by this current poor attendance.

We aim to ensure (Name) can benefit from all of the rewards we have on offer here at GREAT Academy Ashton, more importantly they are in school to receive the outstanding education we strive to provide.

Kind regards

(HOY Name here)

Stage 2 Letter- Medical Evidence Required



20 January 2020

Address>>>

Dear

Re: Attendance Notification – Name & Form

At GREAT Academy Ashton we place great importance on good attendance at school; without attending school students cannot learn, fulfil their potential or benefit from the extensive opportunities available to them both inside and outside the classroom. At GREAT Academy Ashton we expect all students' attendance to be **98% or above**.

Name's absences from school has resulted in a current attendance level of (insert %). They are now on Stage 2 of our Attendance Intervention this academic year.

At this stage we will not be authorising any more absences without medical evidence. Without this evidence any further absences will be unauthorised which could lead to a Stage 3 Attendance Panel. In addition, please be aware that any further unauthorised absence may result in an Educational Penalty Notice which will include a fine per parent/carer issued by a Local Education Authority.

Section 444A of the Education Act 1996 empowers the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. In accordance with Tameside Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, this means that when a pupil has an unauthorised absence (this includes late after the close of the register) of 10 sessions (5 days) or more in any 12-week period (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) their parents or carers may receive a Penalty Notice Fine of £60 which must be paid within 21 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor, who will instigate criminal proceedings.

At GREAT Academy Ashton we have a number of strategies and support mechanisms in order to ensure that students' attendance remains high. If you have any concerns or would like to discuss (Name's) attendance, and ways in which we can work together to increase their percentage attendance at school and more importantly their life chances, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0161 241 9555 Option 1

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs J Pleva
Attendance Manager
Great Academy Ashton Attendance Team

Stage 3- Attendance Panel Intervention



06 February 2020

Name and Address

Dear Parent Name **Re: Attendance Visit Name & Form**

As stated in the previous letter. We have supported your child by monitoring their attendance, reminding (him/her) the importance of attending regularly and being available should she/he wish to discuss any issues which may impact on his/her wellbeing.

However, (Name's) attendance has continued to decline. The importance of this can be seen below.

At the date of the previous letter your child's attendance was (Insert%).

Your child's current attendance is (Insert%).

There is clearly no improvement which is causing us concern and as stated in the previous letter we are no longer authorising (Name's) absences without supporting medical evidence.

You have reached the next level of our attendance intervention programme Stage 3. At this level it is our duty of care to discuss this matter in person. You and your child will be invited to attend our Attendance Panel. At the Attendance Panel you will meet key members (Name's) Pastoral Team, where a Contract of Attendance will be formulated and agreed by all parties in order to improve (Name's) attendance. A Home Visit may also take place to establish ways in which we can assist in helping (Name) raise their attendance.

Yours sincerely

Miss Kennedy
Education Welfare Officer

School headed paper

Dear

Warning –Education Act 1996, SECTION 444 – Attendance at Great Academy Ashton
Re:

I am writing to you to express the concern of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council over the poor school attendance of your child xxxx.

At the date of writing, xxxx has attended school on only xxx occasions out of a possible xxx when the school was open for instruction.

All children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at a school must attend that school regularly and punctually. It is your responsibility as a parent to ensure this. Failure to do so may result in Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council taking legal action against you in the Magistrates Court.

Should your child fail to attend school regularly and punctually we will refer the matter to the Borough Solicitor for consideration in relation to prosecuting you for an offence under the Education Act 1996.

The Borough Solicitor may consider an offence under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 which carries a maximum fine of £1000.

If the Borough Solicitor determines that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute you for an offence under section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996 for knowingly allowing your child to fail to regularly attend school, this would carry a sentence of a maximum 3 months imprisonment and or a fine of £2,500.

Education Welfare Officers are available to offer support and advice about your responsibilities regarding school attendance and may be contacted by telephone on the number printed above.

I trust you will give this matter your urgent attention.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S Kennedy
Education Welfare Officer
Great Academy Ashton

Attend to Achieve! - A 2 A

Attendance Percentages As Missed Days And Lessons From School

Children are required to attend school for 190 days each year

Attendance During One School Year -	Equals Days Absent -	Which is Approximately Weeks Absent	Which Means This Number of Lessons Missed	Absence Over 5 Years
95%	9 Days	2 Weeks	60 Lessons	1/4 Year
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	120 Lessons	1/2 Year
80%	38 Days	8 Weeks	240 Lessons	1 Year
70%	57 Days	11.5 Weeks	345 Lessons	1 1/2 Years
60%	80 Days	16 Weeks	480 Lessons	2 Years
50%	100 Days	20 Weeks	600 Lessons	2 1/2 Years

Government (DfE) research suggests that 16 days absence or 92% attendance in any one year equals a full G.C.S.E. grade drop in attainment

How does your child's attendance compare with this target?