

Attendance Policy

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September 2015

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Verified: Vice Principal

September 2015

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Approved: CEO/Principal

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## **Thomas Deacon Academy**

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **Introduction**

Thomas Deacon Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending the Academy regularly and punctually young people are able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High achievement depends on good attendance.

The whole Academy community – students, parents and carers, staff and The Board of Directors at Thomas Deacon Academy have a responsibility for ensuring good attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

Ours is a successful Academy and every learner plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to achieve excellence. For students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at the Academy, on time, every day, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

#### **Attendance Leader**

A member of our staff will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the Academy's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the Academy. The person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with a member the Deputy Vice Principal for Well Being and are made regularly available to all staff, students, parents and carers (who will be regularly be reminded about the importance of good attendance). The Attendance Leader, along with the House Pastoral Team will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

#### **Why regular attendance is so important:**

##### **Learning**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others.

Ensuring regular attendance at The Academy is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and permitting absence from the Academy without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

##### **Safeguarding**

A learner may be at risk of harm if they do not attend the Academy regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this Academy, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for learners encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management

- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend the Academy on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents and carers, students and all members of school staff.

### **The Law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states the “the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) To age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) To any special educational needs he / she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”

#### *The Law relating to safeguarding*

*Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.*

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from the Academy is classified as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

**Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the Academy day, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised** absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been authorised. This includes:-

- Parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the Academy day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Students who arrive at the Academy too late to get an attendance mark;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term time not authorised as an exceptional circumstance.

This type of absence can lead to Peterborough City Council Attendance Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

A student becomes a “persistent absentee” when they miss **10%** or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

At Thomas Deacon Academy we monitor all absences rigorously. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our House pastoral system and we may also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects achievement.

All PA, or potential PA cases are automatically referred to our link Peterborough City Council Attendance Officer.

Parents/Carers of PA students will need to provide additional medical evidence in the forms of:

- Medical prescriptions / Medication
- A letter from a Medical Professional

For students who have a long term medical condition, parents/carers will need to keep the Academy updated with regular medical guidance.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **Parents**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- contact the Academy as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

### **The Academy**

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- invite you in to discuss the situation with us;
- refer the matter to the Peterborough City Council Attendance Service if the attendance falls below **95%**. Peterborough City Council may consider issuing a Penalty Notice for Non School Attendance.

## **Managing Lateness – Guidance for parents**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable.

The Academy day starts at 8.45am and we expect all students to be in lesson at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.00am and students will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Students should arrive at 8.35am to ensure they arrive for lesson on time.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a student has a persistent late record parents will be asked to meet with the Academy to resolve the problem, but parents can approach the Academy at any time if they are having problems getting a student to the Academy on time.

## **Leave of Absence – Guidance for parents**

Taking leave of absence without exceptional circumstances in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not allowing absence in Academy time.

Request of absence forms for leave are available from the student's respective House Administrators.

The Academy will consider the request and respond in writing with a decision.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law for time off in school time, to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence must be made 4 weeks in advance. In making a decision about whether to authorise this leave, the Academy will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of absence.

It is important that parents/carers understand that we will **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional circumstances**.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the Academy and/or different from that agreed by the Academy, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions, such as a Penalty Notice.

Parents/Carers of a child with 3 or more consecutive days (or 6 consecutive sessions) of unauthorised leave of absence, risk Thomas Deacon Academy considering sanctions such as a Penalty Notice (monetary fine).

### **Procedures relating to absences during Academy Term Time.**

1. If the period of absence is recorded as unauthorised the Academy may request the Local Authority Attendance Service to issue a Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent/carers. Penalty Notice fines are £60 per child per parent/carers, if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice, rising to £120 per child per parent/carers if paid after 21 days but with 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority must either prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice.
2. If the period of absence is authorised, it will be recorded as having been so on the students' attendance record. However, failure to travel on the given dates, i.e. further absences before and/or after the dates given will deem the entire period to be unauthorised. In the event of any such occurrence, parents/carers will be requested to provide evidence such as delayed/cancelled travel arrangements or supporting medical documentation. If such a request is not met the Academy may then request the Local Authority Attendance Service to issue a Penalty Notice. The decision to prosecute ultimately lies with Peterborough City Council Legal Services.
3. Following the receipt of all required documentation the Local Authority will issue the requested Penalty Notice(s).
4. Parents/Carers may discharge potential liability for conviction of any offence under the Education Act 1996 – Section 444 by paying a penalty with the allotted time frame. Failure to

do so will result in the Local Authority either prosecuting for the offence to which the notice applies to i.e. Education Act 1996 Section 444(1).

5. Parents/Carers should be made aware that if a student has not returned to the Academy within 10 Academy days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time they can legally be removed from the Academy roll.
6. Where it is believed that a student has left the area and enquires have failed to establish the whereabouts of the student, the Academy will inform the Local Authority and the student could be removed off roll after 20 days.
7. Upon the return of a student to the Academy following a period of unauthorised absence the Academy will request the Local Authority Attendance Service to issue a Penalty Notice(s).