

Ashcroft Technology Academy Attendance & Punctuality



A Guide for Parents



Dear Parent/Guardian

Excellent attendance is crucial for students to achieve their full potential. We expect students to aim for 100% attendance, taking no time away from studies for illness. We rely on parents to support us in achieving this.

Where students have an attendance rate that is poorer than 96%, we will actively address the matter, as this is a serious cause for concern.

Research shows that failure to attend school regularly can have a significant negative impact on a young person's education, their future and their life chances. In cases where absence is an issue, a student's GCSE results invariably fall by one or two grades from predictions based on Key Stage 2 results. Furthermore, young people who are absent from school without permission are easily drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour, and are more likely to be unemployed after leaving school.

For this reason, **we do not authorise** leave to be taken during term-time. The priority for Ashcroft Technology Academy and for parents must be excellent learning, and students must be present in lessons in order to learn.

Punctuality is also a priority at the Academy. Excellent punctuality is part of having a good routine, and arriving on time helps students recognise the importance of education and develops a sense of personal responsibility. It sets standards students will need to maintain in which ever career path they choose. For academic and employment references we will use SIMs data and nothing else. Therefore, from the point of view of future employability, excellent attendance is vital.

The Academy is an 'outstanding' school and I hope your son/daughter will enjoy being a part of it.

Yours sincerely

Katie Salisbury
Educational Welfare and Attendance Officer

1. Why is full attendance so important?

Students with excellent attendance records benefit in the following ways:-

- Continuity of learning which makes progress easier
- Improved progress in regular class and home work
- Enhanced performance in examinations
- Continuity of relationships and friendships
- Excellent references for higher/further education and employment

Our teachers are expert in designing inter-dependent lessons that develop a student's knowledge, skills and understanding in a highly structured way. They start by providing students with a foundation and then build on that foundation introducing more complex content as the student's competence develops.

In order to sustain student motivation and progress, lessons must have good pace, ensuring that effective use is made of lesson time. Learning is also a collaborative process. Teachers will question students, pose conundrums and challenge thinking in the classroom. Often students will work in pairs and small groups to explore their ideas together. Through a rich mix of teaching strategies learning is maximised. Poor attendance disrupts the learning of all students in the class and is wasteful of administrative resources.

Our students thrive within this stimulating and challenging environment.

When students are absent they miss key 'stepping stones' in their learning. They miss the opportunity to collaborate with their peers and this can affect the learning of others. In subjects such as Drama, they can be part of the cast for a play and are relied upon by their peers to be present and participating. In subjects that have a practical element such as Science, Design & Technology, PE, Art and Music there may not be an opportunity for students to gain experience in a specific area that a student has missed because the rest of the class will have moved on.

Students who lose the thread of learning can become disenchanted and disengaged, feeling awkward in the classroom as they are out-of-step with their peers because they are unable to understand a new topic that builds on prior-learning from lessons that have been missed.

Absence will put your child at a serious disadvantage and will have a long-term impact on their achievements.

2. What constitutes good attendance?

Attendance percentages are not like examination results: an attendance percentage needs to be in the very high nineties before it can be considered good.

- An attendance record of 90% is equal to 1 day missed per fortnight. If this continues from Years 7 to 11, a total of six months' education will be lost.
- An attendance record of 80% is equal to 1 day missed per week. If this continues from Years 7 to 11, a total of one year's education will be lost.
- In order for an attendance record to be deemed satisfactory it must be 96% or above.
- 100% = excellent attendance
- 98% = very good attendance
- 97% = good attendance

- 96% and below attendance is poor. Check your child's Primary School record or their most recent year in secondary school. Which category do they fit into? Were any absences from school absolutely necessary?

Each year a significant number of students in every year group achieve 100% attendance records, showing that this is an achievable target. In addition, a number of students have achieved this level of attendance in successive years throughout their time with us.

3. What can parents do to support their child in achieving full attendance?

Parents play a very important role in ensuring their son or daughter is present at the Academy every day. **It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their child attends.** To this end, we encourage parents to do the following things:

- Stress the importance of 100% attendance to your child
- Do not allow your child to have time off for minor complaints or illnesses; if they are well enough to be up and about they are well enough to attend school
- Send your child in to school even when they appear unwell, unless the illness is more serious. We will contact you to collect him or her if necessary, but better your child is in school feeling unwell than at home
- Monitor your child's attendance report carefully
- Attend all parents' evenings
- Book medical or dental appointments for out of school hours
- Ensure your child leaves home in sufficient time to be punctual for school
- Do not request any term-time leave for your son or daughter
- If your child seems unwilling to attend, contact the Academy as soon as possible and bring your child to school. Do not let your child stay at home as this could set a precedent for the future

The law changed in 2013 so that schools are no longer able to authorise up to two weeks of annual leave for the purpose of taking a holiday. As a matter of course, the Academy checks absences each side of official holiday breaks very carefully to ensure that no student is taking unauthorised leave and will require a doctor's note where suspicious about any absence.

Authorised annual leave will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances, and evidence of those circumstances will always be required. Holidays will not qualify as 'exceptional circumstances'.

When applying for authorised annual leave the following must be noted:

- An authorised annual leave form must be completed at least two weeks before the date requested, although the application may be made many weeks prior to the date requested
- Travel **must not be booked** prior to authorisation granted.
- The Principal is the only person who can grant authorisation
- A covering letter can be included with the application
- The completed application form must be returned to the Academy reception for the attention of the Attendance Officer.

If the application is successful, the student will have to complete catch-up time (during which they can complete the work that they missed while absent). The catch-up time takes place at the end of the Academy day in our Learning Resource Centre. Catch-up time is calculated as 5 hours per day missed. Where any student takes unauthorised leave, the Academy sanctions the student upon return and always seeks to enforce a penalty notice on parents.

Religious Observance

The Academy acknowledges such occasions but will only authorise **one day** per academic year for religious observance. No extra days will be granted and any additional days taken will be recorded as truancy. Students will be sanctioned for absence unless illness is confirmed by a medical certificate. Students will be required to attend catch-up for five hours for the day missed as with any other similar absence (see catch-up section for further information).

We would prefer and we recommend that students do not ask to take a day of religious observance because it interrupts their learning and the learning of their peers as explained on page 2.

4. How does the Academy encourage and support students in achieving full attendance, and celebrate excellent and improving attendance?

We consider excellent attendance to be of such importance that we place a great deal of emphasis on it and put considerable resources into promoting it.

- Individual rewards for students with good and excellent attendance records
- Academy, year group and tutor group targets are set for attendance and individual targets where necessary
- Weekly attendance updates in form time
- Regular promotion of good attendance in assemblies, House assemblies, the student bulletin, Newsround and at parents' evenings
- Detailed analysis of attendance figures and trends for individuals, year groups and the whole Academy
- Computerised registration system which allows every lesson to be monitored
- A member of the office staff dedicated to the administration of attendance
- Contact with parents on the first day of absence through a computerised system
- Support for students and parents where attendance difficulties are emerging through our Welfare Officer and Education Welfare and Attendance Officer
- Procedures to identify students who truant or who are missing after the morning register has been taken

We very much value the commitment that students and parents show by attending 100% of the time and we take great pleasure in rewarding that commitment. Prize draws take place each term and students who meet the criteria and who are picked from these draws receive prizes. These prizes range from vouchers for the cinema and shopping, Chelsea football tickets, bikes, day trips to the Chelsea or Arsenal stadia and trips to Hampton Court and Battersea Dog and Cat home. At the Christmas break and at the end of the academic year the draws include prizes of up to £100. The only rule for any of our reward schemes is that students must be present when the draw takes place so that they can receive their prize. Mr Chadda presents the prizes to the students and the winners have their photograph taken with him for a poster that is displayed on the attendance notice board. On the spot 'improver' prizes are given to encourage students who have made a marked improvement in either their attendance or punctuality.

5. "Catch-up" and "Study Hall"

The Academy has invested in staffing a full "catch-up" provision. This takes two forms – "catch-up" in the Learning Resources Centre and "Study Hall" which usually operates in one or two computer rooms but also in subject areas (particularly for Year 11). Students who are absent from the Academy are required to "catch-up" and we apply a policy of five hours of catch-up per day of curriculum time. Students will be permitted to serve one of these hours in morning fitness and they can decide whether they "catch-up" before school (in morning study hall) or after school (in the main study hall).

- The Academy places such high value on learning that significant investment is now made so that students can keep up with their studies and their homework on site. The LRC is open from 07:30 each day and every evening for one hour. Many students take advantage of this facility by choosing to attend in order to pursue their studies. Where students are absent for illness, for medical reasons, for authorised or unauthorised absences or for religious observance they will be required to attend catch-up and / or Study Hall in the evening. Whilst this is mandatory, this is always treated as a highly positive intervention as whatever their reason for absence they will have missed valuable learning. Catch-up on site, rather than at home, is always required so that staff can be certain that students are completing appropriate work and there is thus a consistent message to students. This also takes the pressure off parents as they are not being asked to supervise their child for time missed from studies.
- As students reach Years 10 and 11, more of them will voluntarily attend catch-up in subject areas and many will find that they are referred to “Study Hall” as a positive intervention for their studies. This may well include students on very high attendance percentages, as the purpose is to augment their ability to secure their best grades at GCSE.

6. Education Welfare and Attendance Officer and Student Welfare Officer

Our **Education Welfare and Attendance Officer** works with students, parents, staff and outside agencies. Much of her time is spent looking at strategies to help long-term or persistent poor attendees, and she looks into what support the Academy can provide. Often, working with parents to help them put both structure and boundaries in place for their children, can greatly improve students’ attendance. At the Academy we are clear that the priority is always for the student to attend school.

Contact Details: Katie Salisbury, Education Welfare Officer – 020 8812 3511

The **Welfare Officer** works very closely with all Heads of Year, but particularly with the Head of Year 7 to assist in making the transition from primary school to secondary education as smooth as possible.

The Welfare Officer is located near to the reception and any student who becomes unwell or has an accident will be sent or taken to her for treatment. The Welfare Officer will contact parents when necessary. If a student has an accident, he or she will be given a copy of the accident report which will include the details of the accident and any treatment given.

Sometimes students do need to take prescribed medicines during the Academy day. The Welfare Officer is happy to administer any medication providing an ‘Administration of Medicines’ consent form has been completed and returned to the Academy detailing the name of the medication, dosage and frequency. The medication should be provided in its original packaging. If a student has to carry medication with him or her, i.e. epi-pen or inhaler, it is important that a spare is given to the Welfare Officer. The spare must be labelled with the name of the student clearly written on the packet.

Students may experience a medical condition that necessitates them to use the lifts or leave classes a few minutes prior to the end of the lesson to benefit from moving through near-empty corridors; or the student may need to use the toilet more regularly than other students. Once the Welfare Officer has been informed of these medical needs a pass will be issued to the student which will guarantee that his or her need will be met. Where necessary, members of staff will be informed of the student’s medical/ health issue. The Welfare Officer works closely with the School Nurse who visits the Academy once a week.

Contact Details: Lisa Shadbolt, Welfare Officer – 020 8812 3538

7. Daily Procedures

Reporting absence

- Parents **must** call each day of their child's absence unless a doctor's certificate is obtained. Students cannot report their own absence.
- The Academy operates a 24-hour telephone line to report students' absences. The number is 020 8812 3531. Student absence **must be reported by 9:00am**.
- If a child is absent for longer than 3 days, medical evidence will be asked for.
- Long-term absence **must** be discussed with Education Welfare Officer in order that measures can be put in place to help and support the reintegration of the student.
- The law provides that only the Principal is permitted to authorise absence. Parents may, of course, give reasons for absence and these are usually accepted and the absence authorised. However, where there is doubt, an absence may be deemed unauthorised and in such circumstances the sanctions described below for truancy will be applied.

Reporting Late Arrivals

- Parents **must** call the Academy to report a student's late arrival. Please ensure a reason for the late arrival is given.
- The Academy's 24-hour telephone line should be used to report a late arrival, if a cause is known in advance – emergency medical appointment, for example. A student's late arrival **must be reported by 9:00am**.
- Only medical appointments **reported by parents** will not incur a late sanction.
- Students **must** register at the late desk when arriving late before 9:00am, or at our reception on arrival thereafter.

Reporting Medical/ Dental Appointments

- Parents **must** telephone to report a student's attendance at a medical/dental appointment.
- Students will be asked to provide appointment cards/letters of appointments on arrival or when they sign out, if leaving the Academy early to attend an appointment.
- Students leaving early for appointments need to seek authorisation from their Head of Year before being allowed to leave the site.
- The Academy will only release students for up to half a day for a medical appointment, unless authorisation has been given beforehand.
- **Routine appointments must, where possible, be made after the Academy day finishes or in holiday periods.**

- Students attending a Medical/Dental appointment mid-morning (e.g 11:30am) are expected to attend the Academy beforehand and **must** return after the appointment.

Truancy Call

- Truancy Call is a call alert system and has been in use at the Academy for a number of years. It has proved to be a good way of reducing truancy, reducing unauthorised absences and informing parents of poor punctuality. The Academy's policy is that both parents and students are responsible for ensuring they arrive on time each day and they therefore need to be in form class for registration.
- Truancy Call sends a text message to parents of students who have been marked as being 'absent' in morning registration. The system gives options on how to respond to the message received. The recipient can text, send a voice message or call into the Academy. All responses are handled by the Attendance Office on a dedicated line. The Attendance Officer aims to deal with responses quickly and efficiently. The Academy understands that sometimes receiving such calls can cause anxiety and does its utmost to ensure that the information sent out is correct. To minimise calls in error, students have a responsibility for ensuring that they are registered in the morning by a member of staff.

8. What measures does the Academy instigate to address students whose attendance is a concern?

The Academy expects a commitment from parents and students to ensure they arrive on time. The Academy is an Inner London school and commuting will have all the normal challenges associated with a London based school. It is the responsibility of the student and parents to ensure sufficient journey time is planned, taking all aspects of travel i.e. traffic, transport delays, accidents into account.

The Academy day starts at 8:35am and students must be on the premises prior to 08:30am.

We recommend that students arrive for 08:00am so that they can meet their friends and prepare themselves for the day without rushing, perhaps by taking breakfast in the Academy's restaurant where a wide range of high quality food, including vegetarian and Halal options, is available.

Students may arrive anytime from 07:30

- the Academy's library is available for students to read or do school work
- a staffed fitness club is available for students
- the restaurant area is open with service commencing at 07:45
- students may play football, table tennis or other games outside

Sanctions and Support:

- Students who arrive late will receive a 30-minute detention at lunchtime.
- Students who arrive after 9:00am will receive a 1-hour detention after school on the same day.
- Students who arrive late on Assembly Days will receive a 1-hour detention after school on the same day regardless of their time of arrival.

- Students are classed as being “persistently late” if they are late on 3 occasions within a 5-day period (excludes weekends) or are late 5 times within a 28-day period.
- Students who are “persistently late” will receive a 1-hour detention after school each time they are late after they pass the thresholds outlined in the bullet point above. This will take place on the day they start being persistently late.
- Late records are set to zero at the end of each term. However, any outstanding sanctions accrued before a holiday will have to be completed on the student’s return after the break.
- Students who do not attend their late detentions will be given 1 day in the Internal Care and Support Unit (ICAS) + 1 hour after school + the original detention to serve.
- For sound educational reasons, **ALL** absence cannot be ignored. The result is that students who are absent will have to complete ‘catch up’ for the number of hours missed. Catch up takes place in a class room or the LRC, where students can be supported while they catch up on the work they missed when absent.

9. What is the legal position regarding attendance?

The law requires that parents ensure their child has the benefit of regular education. Recorded unauthorised absences show that parents are in breach of this law. Recent changes to the law have given local authorities the power to serve parents with a Fixed Penalty Notice if a child has ten or more unauthorised absences (i.e. 5 days) in one term. Please see below for further information on Fixed Penalty Notices.

Unauthorised absences, including truancy, are all recorded on the register using the same code. Thus, future employers, colleges or universities will not be able to differentiate between different unauthorised absences and may decide that the attendance record shows a lack of commitment to education and authority.

Only the Academy can authorise an absence. An explanation given by a parent is not, necessarily, sufficient for the Academy to authorise an absence.

Truancy is unacceptable and any student who truants will be sanctioned. A courtesy call is made to parents to advise them that their child did not arrive or has left the site. Truancy is recorded on a student’s personal record and remains on file until they leave the Academy. Sanctions for truancy are time in ICAS alongside a requirement to ‘catch-up’ on the time they have missed in the form of after Academy catch-up time in our Learning Resource Centre. This time is “hour for hour”, so one day missed will accrue five hours of catch-up as well as the ICAS hour as sanction.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN fine)

As a parent or carer, you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly and punctually, even if they are missing without your knowledge.

By law, compulsory education for all children in England ends on the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child reaches 16 (18 for those students starting secondary education from 2010). The Academy is responsible by law for reporting poor attendance to the Local Authority. If your child does not attend regularly and punctually, our Education Welfare Officer will visit or write to you.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) takes action through the Magistrates Courts against parents or carers whose children are absent from school without good reason. They issue fines of up to £2500, and repeated offences or failure to pay the fine can result in imprisonment.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 allows the issue of fixed penalty notices, an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court.

A notice will be served to parents that are capable of securing their child's attendance but are failing to do so. Each parent can and will be fined. The notice imposes a fine of £60 if paid within 28 days, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but before 42 days. If the fine is not paid, the parent will be prosecuted for the original offence of failing to secure attendance. Fixed Penalty Charges can and will be issued to parents taking students on unauthorised annual leave from the Academy.

If attendance problems do develop, the Academy will expect parents or carers to work actively with staff and the EWS to solve them. The EWS can be contacted on 0208 871 8306 for advice.