



# Attendance Policy

*This policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees with reference to the academy's Equality Policy. The aims of the Equality Policy are to ensure that Plume Academy meets the needs of all, taking account of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, disability and social circumstances. It is important that in this academy we meet the diverse needs of students to ensure inclusion for all and that all students are prepared for full participation in a multi-ethnic society.*

**Reviewed: April 2022**

**Next full review due: April 2023**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Department for Education – Attendance Guidance**

*School Attendance central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind.*

*Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in secondary school.*

*The government expects:*

*7. Schools and local authorities to:*

- a. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;*
- b. Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,*
- c. act early to address patterns of absence.*

*8. Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.*

*9. All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.*

### ***School Attendance Guidance, Department for Education (August 2000)***

Plume, Maldon's Community Academy's – Maximising School Attendance Programme

Being absent from education means a lost learning opportunity. It is vital that all stakeholders of the academy recognise the importance that good attendance plays in the life of all students. Without a high level of attendance, a student's level of progress and attainment is likely to stagnate and decline.

If there are problems which affect a student's attendance, we will investigate, identify and, in partnership with the respective parent/carer and student, attempt to resolve those problems as quickly as possible. Meetings are an essential form of support and parents/carers are expected to attend meetings with the academy or our associated partner's, Aquinas, where attendance is of real concern.

Intervention letters will also be sent to parents/carers when attendance falls below 95% as part of Plume Academy's attendance procedure.

### **Attendance Targets**

Plume Academy has an annual attendance target set by the Board of Trustees. It is expected that the whole academy community will work together to achieve this target. The current attendance target is **95.5%**. Plume Academy also continually aims to reduce the number of students who are Persistently Absent (below 90% attendance).

### **Application for Leave of Absence**

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during term time.**

A leave of absence is not a legal right. Plume Academy strongly discourages parents/carers from taking their children out of the academy during term time. If, under 'Exceptional Circumstances' parents/carers wish to request a leave of absence, they should write to the Executive Principal at **least four school weeks** in advance of the proposed date, stating the exact circumstances relating to the request.

Whilst the Executive Principal can authorise requests which are deemed 'exceptional', please be aware that the vast majority of time taken out of the academy will be classified as **unauthorised**. Should a parent/carer wilfully remove their child after the Executive Principal declines the leave of absence request, the Executive Principal will refer the case to Aquinas and Essex Local Authority Attendance Compliance Team, who will decide whether to issue a Penalty Notice of £60 for each parent/carer. If the leave is then taken with disregard to the outcome of the application, the academy will seek to apply for a Penalty Notice in accordance with Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004.

### **Procedures - Parents/Carers**

- If a student is unwell and unable to attend the academy, parents/carers should contact our Attendance Team and explain the reason for absence – reasons such as 'unwell', 'poorly' etc. will result in an unauthorised absence. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, contact should be made with our Attendance Team on a daily basis to keep us informed of the absence. Failure to contact the academy to report absences may result in a Children Missing Education referral being made to the Local Authority and/or the academy requesting a Police welfare check to be undertaken.
- Campus First Aid Areas – Students must report to the respective campus First Aid area and follow what is asked of them if they are feeling ill.

The procedure is as follows:

- If a student feels ill, they must get an 'exeat' from the classroom teacher they are registered within for that period.
- They must then report to the First Aid area of the respective campus they are on.
- The First Aid Administrator will assess them and if they deem it necessary, will contact a parent/carer to collect the student.

Students must not call parents/carers to come and collect them. A parent/carer can only collect the student if a member of staff has contacted them to do so. Otherwise the absence, as a result of collection, will be deemed as unauthorised.

- Medical Appointments - Please note that for medical appointments, we will authorise a morning or an afternoon session, if the correct supporting medical paperwork is submitted to the academy's Attendance Team. If circumstances dictate that a whole day is required, please provide evidence to support this. If there are any further problems, please contact the Attendance Officer in the first instance. It is expected that students attend the academy around medical appointments.

### **Absence due to Illness**

- Where there are persistent absence concerns, Plume Academy will require supporting evidence of medical intervention. This may take the form of:
  - ✓ A note from the Practice Nurse.
  - ✓ Proof of prescription.
  - ✓ Packaging for prescribed medication.
  - ✓ Medical card stamped at the Doctor's Practice – this will only authorise the day of the appointment.
- There is an expectation that parents/carers provide Plume Academy with regularly updated medical evidence to support those students with long term medical conditions.

## Punctuality

- Students should arrive by 8:25am and registration will commence at 8:30am. Registration closes at 8:35 am. Any student who arrives after 8:35 am will be required to sign in at the student reception on their respective campus. If a student does not sign in they will be marked on the register as 'U'. This code means 'Late (After registration closes)' and is an unauthorised absence.
- The academy operates a 'late gate' system. Students who are late without an authorised reason will be processed by our Internal Exclusion Supervisor, who will take a four stepped approach to a student's punctuality:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> late – documented and invited to an informal discussion with the Internal Exclusion supervisor.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> late – documented and parents/carers are notified of the two lates recorded.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> late – documented and a lunchtime detention is issued.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> late – documented and an Internal Exclusion is issued.
  - 5<sup>th</sup> late and further lates – documented and an Internal Exclusion is issued per late.
  - The late cycle will be restarted half termly, however, depending on the individual circumstances of students and with authorised and agreed input from all stakeholders, for some, it will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Parents/carers should be aware that Penalty Notices could also be issued if punctuality does not improve and continues to be a persistent issue.

## Examples of Authorised or Unauthorised Absences

Absences can <u>only be authorised</u> by the academy. Legitimate reasons for absence:	The following absences will <u>not be authorised</u> by the academy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sickness – if this is going to be for an extended period of time, the academy will request support from a medical professional.</li> <li>• Medical or dental appointments*</li> <li>• Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement</li> <li>• Days of religious observance</li> <li>• Agreed study leave</li> </ul> <p><i>* Wherever possible, these should be arranged outside of school hours.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking after the house</li> <li>• Looking after brothers and sisters or sick relatives</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Birthdays</li> <li>• Translating</li> <li>• Attending relatives' medical appointments</li> </ul>

## Missed Work due to Absence

When students are unable to attend Plume Academy as a result of illness, it is acknowledged that students are unlikely to be able to complete work and may be unable to do so as a result of missing crucial aspects of a lesson.

Plume Academy expects that students who have missed work to catch up upon their return. This includes copying up missed notes and asking the teacher if there is anything that they do not understand.

### Authorised absence due to sickness for 1 or 2 days

If a student is absent due to sickness for up to 2 consecutive days, it is his/her responsibility to liaise with subject teachers on his/her return to catch up on any missed work.

### **Authorised absence due to sickness for 3 days or more**

If a student is sick for more than 3 days, his/her parent/carer must contact the relevant timetabled teaching staff to request the missed work. They will endeavour to reply within 48 hours. If a student is sick for more than five days, his/her parent/carer must contact the relevant pastoral team who will work with the attendance team to discuss the specific requirements of their return.

### **All other authorised Absences**

If a student knows that he/she will be missing one or more days of education, he/she must collect his/her work from the subject teachers prior to the absence.

### **Unauthorised absence**

Staff will not provide any work missed in cases of unauthorised absences.

### **Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be Issued**

Penalty Notices apply to students of statutory school age (which ends at the end of Year 11). Aquinas and the Local Authority have agreed to use Penalty Notices for the following circumstances:

#### **Penalty Notices for Truancy**

Penalty Notices may be issued where there has been unauthorised absence. Parent/carers will receive a warning letter at least 10 days prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice.

If the law continues to be broken around school attendance, the legal intervention process will be used. The penalty for each parent/carer is £60 for each child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the Notice.

Failure to ensure that the child attends school punctually and regularly could lead to legal action being taken against the respective parent/carer. This could result in **each** parent/carer receiving a fine of up to £2,500 for each time or up to 3 months' imprisonment.

### **Rewards**

Various reward systems exist to recognise and encourage good attendance.

### **Summary**

Plume Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. An up to date attendance figure for each student can be found upon Satchel One and will enable all students, parents and carers to ensure they are aware of the attendance figure and try, where possible, to keep attendance above 95.5%.



Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend the academy. All members of staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as this is the best way to ensure the highest level of attendance for our academy community.

## Review of the Attendance Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually but may be subject to changes due to local and/or national policy.

## Appendix 1 – Roles

The Department for Education (DfE) has set out clear expectations for both schools/academies and parents/carers<sup>1</sup> -

*Schools/academies are expected to:*

1. *Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;*
2. *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,*
3. *Act early to address patterns of absence.*
4. *Promote children's welfare and safeguarding*

*Parents/carers are expected to:*

1. *Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.*

## All Staff

At Plume Academy, members of staff are responsible for promoting good levels of attendance and reducing absence. SIMS is used to accurately maintain attendance records for both registration periods and lessons. All members of staff are required to take registration of their lessons and form times. Staff who may be asked to cover for colleagues either at registration or in lessons should also register the class using SIMS.

## Attendance Officer

Plume Academy has an Attendance Officer. This role involves managing the first day call back process, identifying students with attendance issues and liaising with Heads/Assistant Heads of Year, Aquinas and Local Authority. The Attendance Officer will also track and monitor students, particularly those in the category of Persistently Absent (below 90%).

## Maximising School Attendance Programme Co-ordinators

**Education Act 1996 (Section 19) and in the DfE Guidance: *Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs which states:***

*“Local Authorities must: Arrange suitable full-time education (or as much education as the child's health condition allows) for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would otherwise not receive suitable education.*

*Local authorities should:*

- *Provide such education as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. They should liaise with appropriate medical professionals to ensure minimal delay in arranging appropriate provision for the child.”*

Plume Academy has a Maximising School Attendance Programme Co-ordinators (MSAP Coordinators) to ensure that any such student that cannot attend the academy for a cumulative or consecutive period of 15 academy days, as a result of a diagnosed medical condition, are supported and referred to the Local Authority in the correct manner. This

is to seek support and input with regards to their education and their ability and rights to access an education that is befitting of their attendance and personal circumstances.

Part time timetables, in the first instance, may well be issued and implemented as a strategy by the pastoral teams, to aid a student's return to the academy after a period of illness or absence and this will be reviewed continually over a 6-week period. All part time timetables will be logged, processed in line with Local Authority guidance and come with a bespoke risk assessment with a fortnightly review.

The MSAP Coordinator will work with all stakeholders of the academy to ensure that this intervention is timely and that all parents/carers are kept informed continually throughout the process with the referral to Education Access Team (EAT) and the Local Authority.

The MSAP Coordinator will often need medical input from a doctor or relevant medical professional to support with any such referral to EAT or the Local Authority. This will involve both a letter to originally support the absence from the academy but furthermore, the completion of an Annexe A document which will be attached to the academy's referral to the EAT. All documentation that is submitted by the MSAP Coordinator will be signed and agreed by the parent/carer so that they are aware of the recommended steps and process that the academy's attendance staff are taking to ensure their child can access the education provided by the academy.

Any medical documentation or letter received by the academy from a medical professional, if to support a referral or authorise absence, should state the medical reason a student is unable to attend the academy and give a recommendation of how long that the non-attendance may well last for, even if it were to state, 'ongoing' or 'long term absence more than 15 days'. This will only further support the student being given a bespoke education that the EAT and Local Authority can implement, once in receipt of the referral.

As with any student who is on roll at the academy, the academy's primary intention is to support and seek support and steps to get a student to attend the academy on a full-time basis. However, at times, this may well not be suitable due to the medical condition or mental welfare (as diagnosed by a medical professional) and therefore, the academy will work with all stakeholders and the EAT and Local Authority, to seek an appropriate alternative.

Whilst a student will remain on roll at the academy when a EAT referral is submitted, the provision and support will primarily come from the Education Access Team and Local Authority. However, the MSAP Coordinator will support with certain aspects of the provision being put in place, to ensure all students are supported and reassured that they remain part of the Plume Academy family.

### **Senior Member of Staff**

#### **Vice Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mr A Stoneman**

Mr Stoneman, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, will oversee the academy strategy regarding attendance. He will liaise and line manage the work of Aquinas and Attendance Compliance to agree attendance targets, devise and implement strategies/development plans to raise attendance and review and evaluate procedures.

The role also entails linking with Campus Leads, Heads/Assistant Heads of Years, MSAP Coordinators and attendance officers, as well as trustees and relevant attendance personnel.

### **Link Trustee**

The Trustees are required to have a link person for attendance and through linking with the Local Authority, be aware of developments locally and nationally and to report back to the Board of Trustees on attendance at the academy. The Link Trustee will also advise the Board of Trustees on annual attendance target figures which will be set and suggested to the Department for Education for use in the following academic year.

On an annual basis, the Link Trustee will review the Attendance Policy. Where necessary, in conjunction with the Attendance Officer and Mr Stoneman, overseeing whole academy attendance, changes will be made to the policy and then circulated to the above groups for approval and ratification.

## **Appendix 2 - School Attendance and the Law – Roles of External Agencies and Education Welfare Service**

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority. The Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is '*in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school*'.

The register is a legal document and schools/academies must, under the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006, take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools/academies have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school/academy (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school/academy may decide to grant leave of absence, which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

- Parents/carers who are found guilty of breaking the law on attendance may be taken to court and face fines of up to £2500, and in some cases, imprisonment.
- ACT can also use court proceedings to seek an Education Supervision Order or Attendance Order on the child.
- During these court proceedings, the magistrates may consider issuing a Parenting Order which would include parents/carers attending parenting skills session.

Under the Education Act 1996, a parent is defined as: the biological parent of a child; anyone who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child; or any person who, although not a biological parent and who does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child.

### **The role of Aquinas at Plume, Maldon's Community Academy**



Our parents/carers are expected to contact the academy at an early stage and to work with the relevant staff in resolving any problems in a collaborative manner. This is usually successful, however, if the attendance issues are not resolved in this way, the academy may refer the child to Aquinas via our Maximising School Attendance Programme.

Aquinas works alongside the academy's internal attendance team to help promote good attendance and reduce absence, including Persistent Absence, and to act early to address patterns of absence.



Aquinas conduct weekly attendance reviews for all students, identify individual concerns and recommend the appropriate action. The process of intervention implemented by Aquinas, is solely designed to overcome any identified barrier to a student's attendance without the need for pursuing a legal pathway.

The process is primarily aimed at working with parents/carers to firstly inform them of the concern (via an initial concern letter), and then engage with them to identify and resolve any barriers affecting an individual student's attendance where attendance remains a concern (via a School Attendance Meeting/).

Parents/carers are advised to attend School Attendance Meetings when invited to do so. If attendance remains a concern after a School Attendance Meeting, a Legal Action Warning Letter will be issued to parents/carers, which may be followed by an Attendance Review Meeting (ARM) if attendance does not improve.

It is only where all support-centred measures have failed to make an impact and the unauthorised absences continue that legal action in the form of Penalty Notice will be considered. Aquinas may alter the intervention process where necessary and which may involve additional meetings, home visits, requests for medical evidence, and/or undertaking an interview directly with the student.

Aquinas is accredited by Essex Police under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) with the power to issue Penalty Notices'. Aquinas also works very closely with the Essex Attendance Compliance Team, is a member of The National Association of Social Workers in Education (NASWE), and a signed member of a Whole Essex Information Sharing Framework (WEISF).

**Attendance Compliance Team (ACT) formerly known as Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES)**

This carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.

The academy may refer a student to ACT where attendance remains a concern following school intervention by Aquinas. The ACT team will work with schools/academies and families to address serious attendance issues., however, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against the respective parents/carers.

Further details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) .