



ACADEMY
GREAT BARR

Attendance Policy

Policy Owner:	A Ruby
Ratified by:	Local Governing Body
Review Date:	November 2025
Next Review Date:	November 2026

The name of the Senior Attendance Champion, the Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our Academy is:

Ms S Callaghan

The name and contact details of the staff member students and parents/carers should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis or for more individual support is:

Mrs D Duckett or Mrs A Ruby – attendance@GBR.merciantrust.org.uk

The name of our linked Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is:

Mrs A Connop

Introduction and Background

Q3 Academy Great Barr recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential for students to get the most of their academic experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

The law entitles every child of compulsory education age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure their child receives that education.

Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at the Academy, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly and on time. This means their child must attend every day that the Academy is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the Academy.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our Academy ethos to:

- ✓ promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ✓ ensure every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ✓ ensure that students succeed whilst at the Academy;
- ✓ ensure that students have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at the Academy and when they leave.

It has been developed in consultation with governors, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority, and parents/carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in the Academy and to outline the Academy's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved, and the procedures in place to promote and monitor attendance.

In addition, all educational settings follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- ✓ Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued;
- ✓ Raising and maintaining an Academy-wide awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- ✓ Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at the Academy, on time, and every day the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this Academy that students must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the Headteacher, not the parent/carer, who can authorise the absence.**

Promoting Regular Attendance

We believe in developing good patterns of attendance and setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all our students from the outset. It is a central part of our Academy's vision, values, ethos, and day-to-day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding, and wellbeing.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers, students, and all members of Academy staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- ✓ Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with our legal expectations;
- ✓ Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- ✓ Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters;
- ✓ Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- ✓ Accurately complete admission attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law;
- ✓ Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- ✓ Reward good or improving attendance;
- ✓ Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress;
- ✓ Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the Academy's target for attendance.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at an educational setting is a parent/carer responsibility, and allowing absence from the Academy, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from the Academy has to be classified by the Academy (not by the parent/carer), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from the Academy for a genuine reason such as illness or an emergency medical/dental appointment which unavoidably falls during the academic day, emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the Academy referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, but is not limited to:

- ✓ parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily (e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn);
- ✓ absences which have never been properly explained;
- ✓ children who arrive at the Academy after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in the Academy for safeguarding purposes. However, it is counted as an absence for the session;
- ✓ shopping trips;
- ✓ looking after other children or children accompanying others to medical appointments;
- ✓ their own or family birthdays;
- ✓ holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- ✓ day trips;
- ✓ other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A student is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more education across the academic year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any student's education, and we need the full support and co-operation of parents/carers to resolve this. All students who have attendance levels of 90% or below are a persistent absentee.

A student who has missed 50% or more education is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Students within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in the Academy or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all students' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from the Academy the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

- ✓ Contact the Academy on the first day of absence, and every further day of absence, before 8:45am;
- ✓ The Academy has an answerphone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the Academy, so that we may discuss the absence before deciding as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised;
- ✓ Ensure that your child returns to the Academy as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend the Academy, both parents/carers and Academy staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and Sandwell Council Guidance on Absence and Childhood Illness.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Call or send you a text message/email on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us;
- If we are unable to contact parents/carers, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home, and an unannounced home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding;

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance and/or punctuality is a concern;
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation. This meeting may also include our Education Welfare Officer from VIP Education and our Sandwell Schools Attendance Support Service Officer.
- Create a personalised action/support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child;
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their life.

Students who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their teachers.

The times of the start and close of the Academy day for all students at Q3 Academy Great Barr:

Gates open:	8:00am for Breakfast Club
AM Tutor Time starts at:	8:45am
AM Tutor Time finishes at:	9:10am
End of the day:	3:15pm

How we manage lateness:

- ✓ The Academy day starts at **8:40am** when children can begin to come into the Academy;

- ✓ AM registers are taken at **8.50am**;
- ✓ Children arriving after **8.50am** are classed as late and will be given a Late code.
- ✓ At **9.20am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a U code that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- ✓ The Academy will contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns.

Unauthorised lateness could result in the Academy referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to attend a meeting, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to the Academy on time. We expect parents/carers and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as an Academy, we celebrate punctuality.

Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend the Academy. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the Academy, the parents/carers, and the child. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend the Academy, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as a Sandwell Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority Team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these students. However, we will work with families and students to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, we are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all students who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more days of education (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness. See Annex A for summary tables of responsibilities for attendance.

Local Authority attendance support services

The Attendance Support Service works strategically by offering support to the Academy, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents/carers are expected to work with the Academy and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents/carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the Academy may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex B for the Sandwell Code of Conduct), or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Attendance and the Law

There is a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory education age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act, 1996). Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly at the Academy whilst on our roll.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act, 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either

full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all educational settings in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 academic week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the Academy's registers). The 10 academic week period can span different terms, academic years, or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent/carer (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent/carer, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular attendance, each parent/carer may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carer is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

See Annex B for the Sandwell Code of Conduct.

There is no entitlement in law for students to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in Academy hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the Academy."

The new Attendance Regulations, 2024 set out the statutory requirements for the Academy. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances", and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to 10 days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this Academy that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher may authorise such a request, and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the Academy. The Academy will usually consider that the parent/carer who has made the application is allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents/carers who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent/carer removes a child after their application for leave was refused, or where no application was made to the Academy, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Sandwell Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent/carer believed to have allowed the absence.

Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify, and support individual students or groups of students when their attendance needs to improve, and the Academy is required to submit attendance data to the Department for Education daily. Persistently and severely absent students are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other settings in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Annex A: DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for attendance (from 19th August 2024)
[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)

Annex B: Sandwell Code of Conduct
[Penalty Notice Code of Conduct | Sandwell Council](#)

Annex C: Illness Absence Guidance
[Children's Commissioner Website](#)