



**Ark Helenswood Academy  
Attendance Policy**

## Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all students of compulsory academy age at Ark Helenswood Academy.

### Key Requirements/ Legal Duties

By law, all children of compulsory academy age must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents / carers have a legal responsibility to make sure this happens - either by registering their child at an academy or by making other arrangements to give them a suitable, full-time education. As a last resort, schools and local authorities have legal powers to deal with poor attendance.

The Academy seeks to operate in ways which maximise student potential while supporting parents/carers in meeting their legal requirements.

The Academy fulfils its responsibilities in respect of taking a morning and afternoon session registration; of being open for the required 190 student academy days unless prevented by extreme weather or other unforeseen exceptional circumstance, and by using the nationally recognised attendance codes.

### Key Principles

- Students at the academy have the right to the best possible education
- In order for students to access the best possible education, a high level of attendance is essential.
- Students' ability to stay and feel safe, enjoy and achieve and to make a positive contribution may be jeopardised by poor attendance

### Context

Ark Helenswood Academy endeavours to provide a safe learning environment in which students can feel and be safe, inspire, achieve and excel. The academy acknowledges the proven correlation between high level attendance and student outcomes. This attendance policy emphasises positive strategies and a range of interventions to ensure the highest levels of attendance. However, when normal academy procedures do not result in good attendance, a range of further measures, including legal action, have to be considered.

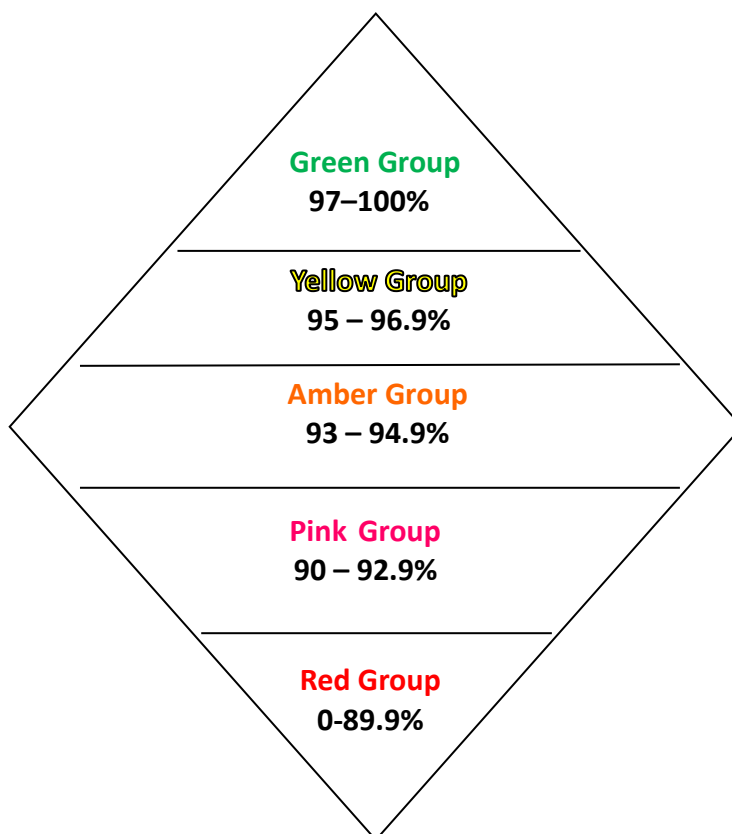
### Aims of the Policy

- To increase overall Academy attendance to 96% and above
- To raise the profile of the importance of high level attendance among students, parents and other staff
- To outline a procedure for monitoring attendance and punctuality and intervention strategies
- To eradicate persistent lateness
- To explain the legal processes for persistent lateness and absence

### Attendance Practice

Improving attendance is a whole academy initiative. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility including parents / carers, students and all members of academy staff.

The diagram below highlights the whole academy approach to attendance monitoring and intervention. This is led by the Heads of Year who work with their teams of staff to monitor and improve attendance, while raising the profile and emphasising the importance of attendance at individual and whole academy level.



- Green** - No Concern
- Yellow** - Concern
- Amber** - Risk of Underachievement
- Pink** - Severe Risk of Underachievement
- Red** - Extreme Concern

### Positive Reinforcement

In order to promote high levels of attendance and to recognise individual and collective high percentage attendance or improvement, the Academy uses a range of rewards and positive reinforcement strategies. As appropriate, these include:

- Display of individual attendance
- Display of tutor/class attendance
- Certificates
- Mention in assemblies
- Achievement Assembly prizes
- Letters home
- Home visits – some of which may be conducted jointly with the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) and members of the academy staff.

### Attendance Monitoring and Intervention

The Academy has an escalating approach to reinforcing high levels of attendance and intervening in respect of attendance concern. Please see **Appendix A** for 'Attendance Routines for Staff'.

The principles underpinning the model will be used to promote consistency both across the different year groups and within each year group. In summary these are as follows:

- The attendance statistics for every student at the Academy will be displayed weekly by the Attendance Officer.
- Attendance matters will receive positive reinforcement in assemblies.
- The tutor is responsible for the overview of attendance in their group, however they are supported by other staff at fortnightly attendance meetings.
- Green 97 - 100% and Yellow 95 - 97.9% - The tutor during tutor time has responsibility for praising students in the green group for high attendance and encouraging and supporting improvement for students in the yellow group through monitoring, dialogue with the student and recognising improvement.
- Amber 93 - 94.9% - The tutor will be supported by the Head of Year and ESBAS (agreed in fortnightly accountability meetings) with this group of students.
- Pink 90 – 92.9.9% - The tutor will be supported by the Head of Year, ESBAS and any other internal / external support agreed. Attendance below 90% falls below the Department for Education (DfE) Persistent Absence target, therefore external intervention and support will be provided.
- Red 0 - 89.9% - The tutor will be supported by the Head of Year, ESBAS and any other internal / external support agreed. As this attendance percentage falls significantly below the DfE Persistent Absence target the academy and ESBAS will work with parents/carers to improve the attendance of the students in the red group. This includes taking legal action where required.

To support this process the Heads of Year will hold fortnightly, attendance meetings for each year group with their senior line manager and the academy Attendance Officer, in which all students are monitored and banded in relation to their attendance percentage. In these meetings the attendance of students whose attendance is declining will be reviewed. A series of actions to support improvement will be agreed, delegated and recorded.

### **East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS)**

ESBAS involvement is usually triggered by an unacceptable level of:

- Unauthorised absence
- Persistent absence
- Lateness

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

If a student is absent from the academy, it is vital that a parent contact the academy at the earliest opportunity to provide a reason for absence. This should be by telephone to the Attendance Officer in the first instance supported by a written note on the student's return.

Absence can only be authorised where there is good cause. If no adequate reason for absence is provided, attendance will be recorded as unauthorised. The decision and authority to authorise an absence lays with the academy in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1996. Parents/carers cannot authorise absence. The academy reserves the right to request medical evidence to support absence due to illness.

### **Punctuality**

It is the Academy's responsibility to provide the best education possible. This can only be achieved if a student attends regularly and punctually. The Academy expects all students to arrive at the academy, registrations and sessions on time. Poor punctuality is not acceptable. A student arriving late will disrupt not only their own continuity of learning but also that of others. Occasional lateness to the academy or lessons will result in 'minutes late detention' on a Friday after school; patterns of lateness over a period of time will result in further follow up investigation and action.

All students should arrive at the academy by 8.40am ready for the tutor time or lessons (Wednesdays) at 8.45am. Morning sessions begin at 8.45am

### **Avoiding Holidays and Appointments during Term Time**

In the event that an absence is planned then the parent/carer must inform the academy Principal in writing in advance (using the application form available from the [academy website](#), clearly stating the reason for the planned absence, with a request that the absence be authorised. The Academy Principal will determine if the absence is approved or not and will inform the parent/carer of the decision in writing. This will be copied to the Attendance Officer for information. Examples of absences which may be approved include:

- Medical appointments
- Events involving immediate family such as weddings or funerals
- Certain religious or cultural events.

Examples of absences which will not be approved, without exceptional reasons, include:

- Family holidays
- Caring for siblings

In order to maximise individual achievement, parents/carers should avoid making routine appointments for students during the academy day or taking family holidays during the term time period. Parents/carers should be advised that absence without the consent of the Academy could result in further action and sanctions including a Penalty Notice issued by ESCC.

### **Legal Action**

All parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends the Academy on a regular and punctual basis. Should any student's attendance or punctuality become a concern, they will be subject to an Education Welfare referral. The Academy and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Local Authority will work in partnership where legal action is required.

Legal action includes:

- **Penalty Notice:** A Penalty Notice may be issued for each student who has unauthorised absence or lateness. The penalty is a £60 fine, if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within the 42 day period, a prosecution will be sought.
- **Prosecution for unauthorised absence:** It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the Academy. Magistrates can issue fines of up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders and impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Any prosecution will appear on a criminal record.

### **Supporting and Working with Parents/Carers**

In order to support parents in meeting their legal requirements and to maximise individual student attendance, the Academy seeks to keep parents/carers informed of their child's attendance and to actively involve parents/carers on attendance issues. Methods include:

- Unexplained/unaccounted for absence letter asking for reasons
- Escalating letters warning of concerns
- Parental meetings
- Active involvement of Local Authority staff - ESBAS
- Attendance percentages included on student reports and reported annually

- Discussion at parents' meetings/evenings

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Principal will provide an attendance summary within the Principal's Report to the Local Governing Body (LGB) termly. All staff, including the Head or Year, Senior Team Member and Attendance Officer with responsibility for attendance and punctuality, will work with the Principal to promote and implement this policy throughout the academy.

## Appendix A

### Attendance Routines for Staff

#### Tutors

**Tutors are responsible for the students in their tutor group and for ensuring they attend regularly and punctually.**

- Tutors receive the Attendance Tracker by email at the beginning of each week from the Attendance Officer.
- The tutor reviews their group and notes students with improved or declining attendance.
- Tutors share the weekly Attendance Tracker information with their group and reviews progress against the tutor group attendance target.
- Tutors ensure students record their weekly attendance in their Planner.
- The tutor praises students with improved attendance and rewards in line with policy.
- The tutor speaks to each student with declining attendance quietly in order to establish concerns and to promote improvement.
- If attendance continues to decline, the tutor must ensure the following happens after an initial discussion with the student:
  - Telephone call home to discuss the concerns with the parent / carer (unless a safeguarding issue).
  - Discussion with the HOY.
  - Possible parent / carer meeting if required.

A similar process should occur where there are concerns about punctuality.

#### Heads of Year

**Heads of Year are responsible for the students in their year group and for ensuring they attend regularly and punctually.**

- The Heads of Year (HOY), with the Attendance Officer and HOY senior line manager will, on a fortnightly basis monitor the Attendance Tracker noting concerns and successes.
- At fortnightly attendance accountability meetings for the year group, every student with declining attendance will be discussed and an appropriate escalating action will be agreed and reviewed the following week for impact.
- The Heads of Year will liaise with tutors to agree actions and ensure appropriate follow up.
- Where tutor actions are unsuccessful, the HOY will speak to the student, telephone the parent and if necessary request a parent interview.
- Staff at the fortnightly attendance accountability meetings will decide on appropriate escalations, support and referral to ESBAS.
- Attendance below 90% is considered a very serious matter at Ark Helenswood Academy.