



# **Connor Downs** Academy

## Attendance Policy

Review date September 2016

To be reviewed September 2018

# **Connor Downs Academy**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **RATIONALE**

We believe that all pupils, staff, parents and hub councillors are part of a community of learning, where standards and expectations are high and there is a real purpose in being part of the Connor Downs family.

### **Whole School Policy for School Attendance**

#### **Our Attendance Mission Statement**

Connor Downs Academy seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full- time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

The academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We are proud of our attendance record which is generally very high and are grateful to our supportive parents and carers who work with us to promote and encourage good attendance by their children. Staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

If the headteacher grants leave, he or she should determine the number of days the child can be away from school.

To meet these objectives Connor Downs Academy will maintain an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support. Examples of this include through the weekly newsletter, text alerts and the web-site.

The named attendance lead for our school is Mrs Kerry Gallagher.

#### **Our Aims**

1. To improve the overall percentage of pupils attending school.
2. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
3. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
4. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
5. To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
6. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service, where required, and with other services and agencies.

7. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Aim No. 1: To improve the overall percentage of pupils at school

1a Our attendance target is 96.5%. This is a slight increase on our previous target of 95%.

1b The named Hub Councillor for attendance is Kevin Gallagher.

1c We apply the Whole School Attendance Policy consistently.

1d We establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.

1e We relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum.

1f We monitor attendance in measurable outcomes and review with the Hub Council.

1g We will usually refer to Education Social Work Service pupils whose attendance is less than 80%.

1h The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations make it clear that:

*'Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents/carers who wish to take such leave are required to write to the Headteacher detailing why leave must be taken during term time. In order to make the decision whether to authorise leave or not, parents/ carers may be asked to provide evidence to support their exceptional circumstances. If the leave is authorised, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.'* A list of what does and does not constitute exceptional circumstances is shown at Appendix 1.

1. Parents/carers need to be aware that Penalty Notices can be issued per parent, per child for excluded pupils found in a public place, for unauthorised absence from school, for unauthorised leave taken in term time, and/or for pupils stopped during a Truancy Patrol. Non-payment of this fine can result in prosecution.
2. Each half-term the Office will advise class teachers of their pupils with the lowest attendance. The class teachers will endeavour to make informal contact with the parents/carers to see if there are any underlying reasons for the absences and/or if there is any support we can offer. If attendance does not improve to a satisfactory level, an initial letter will be issued followed, if necessary, by another if attendance does not improve, without a valid reason. Pupils whose attendance is less than 85% are considered to be 'Persistent Absentees'. The school writes each term to all such pupils. Records of contact will be kept for 3 years.
3. Addressing the issues behind non-attendance and persistent absenteeism is a priority for the academy in conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer.
4. The School may ask for supporting evidence/documentation to verify pupil absence.

Aim No. 2: To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks

2a If a pupil is absent without reason, we make telephone contact with the parents/carers on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason for non-attendance. We also have the facility to send text messages if required. If we are unsuccessful in making telephone contact a letter will be sent home requesting notification of the reason for the absence. If an unknown absence continues for 3 days we will write to the family asking them to contact us by return with the reason for the absence. If no reply is forthcoming we will ask our Education Welfare Officer to visit the family. If we are unable to ascertain the reason for any absence or are unsatisfied with the reason given the absence will be marked as 'unauthorised'.

2b We ensure clearly defined late registration procedures, writing on a half-termly basis to parents of all children who are persistently late.

2c We respond swiftly to pupil lateness.

2d We define clearly the roles and responsibilities of each staff member within the academy staffing structure.

2g We explore a range of opportunities for parental partnership for example: seeking to foster and develop positive partnerships with parents; encouraging/inviting parents in to school to discuss attendance concerns; including attendance matters within newsletters; signposting parents to our Parent Support Worker and/or School Nurse etc...

2h We timetable our Inclusion Leader to meet half-termly with the Attendance Officer.

2i We review individual pupil and whole school attendance at least half-termly.

2j We are familiar with the Education Welfare Service's referral and recording system

2k We include absence data in the pupils' annual reports.

Aim No. 3: To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils

3a We will highlight the importance of good attendance in:

- Assemblies
  - Curriculum
  - Newsletters: absence reporting, holidays in term time, targets
  - Term and Holiday Date information
  - School web-site
  - Parent workshops
  - Parent consultation evenings
  - Staff being available to talk to pupils/parents
- If necessary, we can arrange for information to be provided in a range of languages

3b We seek improved communication with parents and use parental questionnaires annually.

3c We will maintain accurate and up-to-date contact information for parents. Parents are required to inform the school of any changes to their contact information as and when they occur by completing the update form available from the office. Regular reminders are also printed in the newsletters. Every Autumn Term we undertake a whole school data checking exercise whereby information is sent to parents/carers showing the current details held for their child(ren); parents/carers are asked to check this information and advise us of any changes.

3d We involve parents in attendance issues from the earliest stage – making first day contact by telephone in the event of unknown absence.

3e We keep staff up to date with the attendance strategy and provide Continuing Professional Development opportunities in 'Promoting Positive Behaviour & Attendance'.

Aim No. 4: To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data

4a We use a computerised registration system enabling the analysis of attendance information. Data can be analysed by authorised/unauthorised, class/year group, absence code, gender etc

4b We use appropriate absence codes as required by the Department for Education.

4c We will be consistent in the collection and provision of information.

4d We analyse the effects of persistent absence on attainment.

Aim No. 5: To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school

5a We will produce an annual report to governors on attendance.

5b We will produce regular newsletters for parents, carers and friends and will report information on attendance matters including targets and attainment.

5c We display materials at focal points – foyer/noticeboards etc.

5d We encourage parents into the school to discuss individual cases.

5e When necessary, we will discuss attendance issues in inclusion meetings and pupil progress meetings and/or in relevant staff meetings.

5f We will provide training for appointed/promoted staff.

5g We will introduce award systems, including certificates, badges, trophies etc.

Aim No. 6: To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies

6a We have designated staff who liaise with Education Social Work Service and other agencies when required.

6b We carry out initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral.

6c We gather and record relevant information to assist the Education Welfare Service.

6d We encourage the active involvement of other services and agencies in the life of the academy.

Aim No. 7: To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

7a We will be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of pupils returning to school after a significant period of absence.

7b We will involve/inform all staff/agencies in the reintegration process.

7c We will provide opportunities for counseling and feedback.

7d We will consider peer support and mentoring.

7e We will involve parents as far as possible.

7f We will agree a timescale for the review of the written reintegration plan.

7g We will provide guidance for teachers, TAs etc. who may be working with the child.

Hub Councillors

Attendance has always been a matter of concern to our governance. The Head of School may wish to submit reports to the Hub Council on various aspects of pupil attendance. Hub Councillors have a valuable role to play in establishing the importance of school attendance matters and in supporting measures taken to improve attendance.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. However, this will be brought forward should changes in protocol be recommended by either the Department for Education.

## Appendix 1

### Leave of absence in exceptional circumstance

The DfE states that Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. The Hub Council in consultation with the Aspire leaders have agreed the following as our only 'exceptional circumstance' and it may be used as a guide for when considering leave of absence requests.

The only exceptional circumstance considered, for more than one day's leave during term-time, is if parents are unable to take time off work in the school holidays due to the nature of their employment. For example, we are aware that many of our families are employed in the tourism industry when school holidays are their busiest period. As a result they may be unable to take holiday during these busy times. A form may be requested if this applies and will require a signature form the employer to confirm that this is the case.

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence in this 'exceptional circumstance' the Head of School will consider:

- The impact for the student's academic progress of any absence
- The pupil's attendance over the academic year
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or exams;

Single days in term-time will not be routinely approved unless it meets any of the following:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling - Heads of School should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days
- Serious illness of a close relative - only if the Head of School is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Competing at significant out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at an exceptionally high standard of achievement. For example, playing a sport for a national team
- Time- off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service
- Religious observance - The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs"
- This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Heads of School may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time

- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. One day's leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Head of School is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Attending out of school events with parents such as concerts or plays.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost.