


**Meadowhead School
Academy Trust**

Sixth Form Attendance Policy



**This is a policy of Meadowhead School Academy Trust.
Meadowhead School is a Foundation School
and a member of the
Meadowhead Community Learning Trust**

'Make a Difference'

Revised: July 2023

Steve Bacon & Rob Gardiner

Meadowhead Sixth Form Attendance Policy

Policy Summary

Meadowhead School and Sixth Form encourages all of its students to attend school regularly and on time. It encourages parents/carers to fulfil their legal responsibilities in sending students to school every day and on time. The school will liaise with parents/carers and listen to any concerns. Any issues causing a student to miss school or lessons should be discussed in full and at the earliest opportunity. Meadowhead School and Sixth Form will do all that it can to provide a positive, supportive and understanding learning environment, accessible and acceptable to all. Failure to attend school will result in procedures being put into place as outlined in this document.

Policy Intent

Meadowhead School takes attendance in the Sixth Form very seriously and we acknowledge that good school attendance plays an essential part in academic development for post-16 students. All post-16 courses are intensive and students cannot afford to miss valuable teaching and study time.

As well as timetabled lessons, students also have non-contact periods on their timetables for private study, homework, social-time and enrichment activities. If students are granted the privilege of studying at home, we would expect them to be committed to spending their time effectively, but this privilege may be withdrawn if a student is not meeting his/her work commitments. In such cases students will be scheduled to work within school.

Sixth form students should strive to achieve consistently good attendance as poor attendance will affect academic attainment. Students should therefore aim for at least 95% attendance for the year. An exemplary record of attendance says a huge amount about the student as a person: that they are dedicated, well-motivated, organised and someone who takes their responsibilities seriously. Good attendance also plays an important part when applying to higher education establishments or employment.

The Sixth Form provides a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the community feels wanted and secure. All staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

The Sixth Form has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. To meet these objectives, Meadowhead School maintains an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Whole-School Policy for School Attendance

Meadowhead School:

- Aims to improve the overall percentage of students at school to above 95%.
- Makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and Governors.
- Has developed a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- Provides support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
- Has a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data.

- Will continue to develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Has implemented a system of both rewards and sanctions.
- Promotes effective partnerships with external services and agencies.
- Recognises the needs and support of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Partnership

What the school expects of Sixth Form students

- Attend regularly, on time and ready to learn. We expect a student's attendance to be 95% or higher.
- Attend registration, study time, tutor time and planned enrichment.
- To sign in should they arrive after registration time.
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school.
- Make every effort to make dental/medical appointments outside of school hours.
- To avoid other commitments during school hours, even during non-contact periods.
- Complete an absence request form if they need to leave early or will be absent from school for a full/half day.
- To ensure that a parent/carer contacts the school if they are absent for any reason. Students **are not able to self-certify** their absence.

What the school expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure that their son/daughter attends school regularly, on time and prepared for the day.
- To contact school on the **first day** their son/daughter is absent for any reason and then on **all** subsequent days.
- To arrange medical and dental appointments out of school times whenever possible; if this is not possible students need to obtain permission from the Academic Support Manager to leave school for their appointment.
- To **avoid** taking holidays in term time.
- To speak to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may prevent their son/daughter from attending school.
- To provide evidence to support all absences such as an appointment card/letter, a copy of a prescription slip with name and date visible, or medication packaging with name and date visible. Alternatively if none of the above are available, a note, signed by the parent/carer, explaining the reason for absence.

What parents/carers and students can expect from school

- A Sixth Form education that is dependent upon regular attendance at school.
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality at school, and regular encouragement.
- First-day contact with parents/carers when absence is unexplained.
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of absence.
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified.
- Regular communication with students and parents/carers.

Procedures

Registers are a legal document; great care must be taken to ensure registers are marked accurately and on time. Attendance of all students is monitored and evaluated regularly using the following procedures.

Registration

All students should be on site by 8:30am and in their Form rooms for an 8:35am registration on the Class Charts system. Throughout the day students will be registered by each subject teacher.

Absences

If a student is absent from school it is expected that the parent/carer contacts the school as soon as possible.

Acceptable reasons for being absent from school, set by the Department for Education:

- The student is too ill to leave the house.
- The student has a hospital appointment.
- The student has toothache and has an emergency appointment.
- A day of religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent/carer belongs.
- The student is prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause.
- There is a close family bereavement.
- Interviews for courses/employment that will begin after the end of their time in Sixth Form. Students should not miss lessons to attend interviews, shifts and inductions for part-time work.
- University and Employer Open Days – students may attend no more than two of these events in an academic year.
- Work experience – requests for term-time leave for essential work experience (e.g. medicine, law) will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. These requests should be submitted at least a month in advance where possible.

Unacceptable reasons for keeping a student away from school are:

- To mind the house.
- To look after siblings.
- For employment.
- To celebrate a birthday.
- Sleeping in.
- One student is ill, so all are kept off school.
- Minor ailments such as a tummy ache or headache.
- Because it is the end of the week or term.
- Driving lessons.

If a student is absent from school longer than a period of 5 days due to illness parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence to support the student's absence.

Leave of absence will not be given to enable a student to undertake employment during school hours unless it is to engage in work experience arranged through school.

Signing In and Out

It is a legal requirement that we know who is in the school building at all times.

Students must make sure that they sign in each time they are late to school then sign out each time they leave the building throughout the day.

Sixth Form students must bring their lanyard to school every day and use this for the purposes of signing in and out of the building.

In-school procedures

We are keen to identify attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity to give parents/carers, students and the school the ability to intervene early and prevent further decline. We will do this by following the procedures outlined below:

Unexplained absence process

If a student is absent from school and we have received no communication from a parent/carer, a text message will be sent to the priority contact on the morning of students' absence requesting a reason.

A letter/email detailing any unexplained absences will be sent to the parent/carer if no communication has been received. A reply is requested stating the reason for the student's absence to enable attendance records to be updated. If no reply is received, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Academic Support

Academic Support sessions take place on Thursdays in Period 6, and are staffed by Heads of Year. Academic Support is a supportive measure for students to help them catch up on missed work. It provides a supervised, quiet space for independent work that can also be attended voluntarily.

Students will be referred to Academic Support if:

- They have fallen behind with subject work and have been referred by their teacher
- They have missed a lesson without an authorised reason
- They have had an unauthorised absence from school in the preceding week
- They have been late to 2 or more sessions in a week, including to form time

Failure to attend Academic Support sessions after a referral will lead to an intervention from the Head of Year. In isolated instances, sessions may be rearranged with the Academic Support Manager for a valid reason.

Cause for concern process

Cause for concern messages will be sent home to parents/carers when a student's cumulative attendance, or attendance over a 2 week period, is between 90 & 95%.

This early notification is intended to share our concerns with you and give you the opportunity to intervene/contact the school so that early support/intervention can be put in to place, if needed.

STAGE 1 – Academic Support Manager Intervention

Attendance below 90%.

- Should attendance decline to 90% or below, students will be invited to attend a meeting with the Academic Support Manager.
- This meeting is an opportunity to discuss in detail the issues/barriers that are impacting students' attendance to school.

Attendance will be monitored closely for 5 weeks by the Academic Support Manager.

STAGE 2 – Head of Year Intervention

Continued poor attendance.

- Students will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head of Year where we will address the main issues and agree targets and support actions to help improve their attendance.
- This meeting is an opportunity to discuss any further intervention required in order to improve the student's attendance.

The Academic Support Manager and Head of Year will monitor and review the student's attendance over the following weeks to identify any significant improvement in their attendance. If this has been achieved then no further intervention/action will be taken at this stage. Should attendance not improve, or decline further, we will implement the next step, as agreed at the previous Attendance meeting.

STAGE 3 – Head of Sixth Form Intervention

Failure to meet the requirements and action points during Head of Year meeting.

- A letter will be sent to the parents/carers of the student informing them of the situation. They will be requested to attend a meeting.
- Parents/carers and the student will meet with the Head of Sixth Form and discussions will take place about action points and next steps in order for attendance to improve.
- A written warning will be issued if appropriate.

STAGE 4 – Deputy/Head Teacher Intervention

Continued failure to meet requirements of attendance agreement.

- Careers support in finding an alternative provider if a student is persistently absent from school and refuses to engage in intervention procedures.
- Appropriate disciplinary proceedings will be decided by the Head Teacher, including asking the student to leave the Sixth Form.
- The parents/carers of the student will be involved in the process.

Procedures in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) Guidelines

- Meadowhead Sixth Form reserves the right to apply a reasonable condition of attendance in order for students to qualify for free examination entry. Where a reasonable condition of attendance is being considered, the Head of Sixth Form will make this clear in any Stage 3 Intervention meeting as outlined above.
- Meadowhead Sixth Form will ensure that candidates are withdrawn from a programme where they have not attended classes for 4 continuous weeks for unauthorised reasons, excluding school holidays. Prior warning will be given to parents/carers via email and in writing. Where a student has not been withdrawn but has been absent for more than 4 weeks, there must be auditable evidence of an intention to return.

Fitness to Study

Students with mental and physical health/wellbeing conditions are entitled to reasonable adjustments and support under the Equality Act, 2010. We want to ensure consistent and fair treatment in situations where a student's health or wellbeing may be negatively impacted by continuation of study.

Reasonable adjustment means ensuring that there are reasonable steps to ensure students are not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage' due to their disability or difficulty. Reasonable adjustments are intended to remove barriers to learning and promote success. It is important, however, to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the individual support that can be provided within a sixth form school.

Our staff provide outstanding care for all students, but there will be times when a student's physical or mental health are so affected that they are no longer able, despite support both internal and externally, to maintain reasonable academic progress. It must be noted that:

- There must be medical evidence to support a request for reasonable adjustment.
- All reasonable adjustments should be financially reasonable and practical. For example, arranging catch up work for short absences, rearranging coursework deadlines / internal exams.
- All students are on full-time programmes of study designed to be delivered in a classroom situation where students are expected to be physically present. We are not a distance-learning centre, and whilst on a temporary basis it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible with attendance due to ill health, prolonged periods of absence cannot be sustainable.
- We are not able to provide regular one-to-one academic support for prolonged absence.
- There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health can require support beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer.
- Occasionally a student's ill health may present a health and safety hazard to either themselves or others.

There are therefore occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our judgement that, in the best interests of a student, continuing at Sixth Form is no longer the best option. This will always be done in collaboration with families and in a timely manner.

Holidays

Government legislation does not permit parents/carers to take students out of school during term time as this can have a detrimental effect on their academic progress.

Holidays **will not be authorised** in school time. Parents/carers wishing to apply for exceptional circumstances need to complete a *Request for Exceptional Term Time Leave* form at least 20 school days prior to the absence to give to the Academic Support Manager. Upon receipt of this request, a decision will be made (the Headteacher's decision is final), and parents/carers will be notified either in writing/or verbally of our decision, course of action and how the absence will be recorded on our system. If this request is not agreed the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Governors is to:

- Maintain an overview of attendance through reports provided by the Headteacher via the Headteacher's Report.
- Attend School Attendance meetings if necessary.

The role of the Headteacher is to:

- Have overall responsibility for attendance within school.

The role of the Deputy Head and Head of Sixth Form is to:

- Provide advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues.
- Implement targets, review statistics and amend policy as necessary.
- Have responsibility for monitoring the progress of students Looked After by the Local Authority.
- Maintain an overview of attendance and manage the day-to-day implementation of attendance plans and strategies.

The role of the Heads of Year is to:

- Liaise with the Deputy Head, Head of Sixth Form and the Academic Support Manager regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Lead developments to improve attendance.
- Oversee the procedures undertaken to improve attendance and punctuality within their year group.
- Identify appropriate target groups using attendance data.
- Develop systems of rewards for good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all students recognise the links between good attendance and raised attainment.
- Attend Attendance meetings, where necessary.

The role of the Academic Support Manager is to:

- Liaise with the Deputy Head, Head of Sixth Form and their Head of Year regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Run the texting system, checking on absences and sending first-day absence checks.
- Monitor registers and update Class Charts on a weekly basis.

- Send emails/letters, weekly and half-termly, to parents of students whose attendance is causing concern.
- Update punctuality records daily.
- Provide details and prepare paperwork for attendance meetings.

The role of the Form Tutor and class teachers is to:

- **Accurately** mark registers and lesson monitor, using the appropriate codes, throughout the day.
- Report any issues or problems which may affect the attendance or punctuality of a student.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the classroom and the school.
- Report on attendance and punctuality in yearly reviews and reports.
- Check in with any student who has been absent from school on the first day that they return. Pass on any concerns to pastoral or safeguarding teams as required.

ATTENDANCE FLOW CHART

1

Academic Support Manager Intervention

Meeting held with students whose attendance is below 90%

Continued poor attendance over 5 weeks

2

Head of Year Intervention

Meeting with student, attendance agreement completed

Failure to meet requirements of attendance agreement over monitoring period

3

Head of Sixth Form Intervention

Parental meeting and written warning

Continued failure to meet requirements of attendance agreement

4

Deputy/Head Teacher Intervention

Possible request to leave Sixth Form