

### **Ethos**

Azhar Academy Girls School is committed to the principles stated in this policy document. We sincerely believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore, from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this, we will take appropriate action to ensure that all students achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any barriers, which may impede full attendance, are addressed as quickly as possible.

Azhar Academy Girls School recognises the importance of attendance in school and is fully aware of the correlation between high levels of attendance and attainment.

Azhar Academy Girls School takes the issue of poor punctuality very seriously. When a pupil arrives late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson/school day. This reduces their chances of academic success. Poor punctuality can also cause social disruption – children and young people may feel uncomfortable and embarrassed arriving to the classroom when everyone else is already settled. In fact, when one pupil arrives late it disrupts the teacher and the rest of the class, compromising everyone's learning.

Azhar Academy Girls School seeks to provide an environment and foster an ethos where high levels of attendance/punctuality are the norm, while providing support and encouragement to improve, whenever high levels of attendance/punctuality are not achieved.

Azhar Academy Girls School is committed to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and fully recognises the impact that attendance/punctuality has on the five outcomes of the agenda.

### **Aims**

Azhar Academy Girls School aims to ensure that:

- All students have an equal right and access to, an education in accordance with the school's Aalimah/Islamic Studies/Hifz syllabus alongside the National Curriculum.
- No student will be deprived of their educational opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- The attendance percentage for each child remains above the target threshold of 95% at all times and that of punctuality above the target threshold of 90%.

### **School timings**

For the purpose of this policy, the school day starts at 7:25 am sharp for Aalimah and Hifz students and at 7:55 am sharp for Islamic Studies students between Monday and Thursday, and at 7:25 am sharp for all students on Friday.

### **It is recognised that:**

- The majority of students want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peers and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society
- Some students and their parents may need to be supported in meeting their attendance/punctuality obligations and responsibilities
- It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure their child's attendance/punctuality at school as required by law (Section 7, 1996 Education Act).

## **Expectations**

Azhar Academy Girls School expects that all our students will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day
- Carry out any work provided by the school during an authorised leave period.

Azhar Academy Girls School expects that parents will:

- Endeavour to arrange health appointments out of school hours wherever possible
- Inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may prevent their child from attending school
- Fulfill their legal responsibilities and ensure their child attends school punctually
- Contact school, as soon as is practical and preferably early on the morning of absence or lateness, whenever their child is unable to attend school or will arrive late
- Seek permission from the school for any leave of absence

Parents and children can expect the following from the school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance/punctuality
- Early contact when a student is absent/late without explanation
- Action on any attendance/punctuality problem notified to the school
- Referral of specific attendance/punctuality issues to supporting agencies where appropriate
- Attendance figures published in the School's Prospectus to parents.

### **We encourage attendance/punctuality by:**

- Consistent, clear communication with parents and students about the importance of regular, attendance/punctuality
- Setting targets for improved attendance/punctuality and sharing these with Governors, parents and students
- The accurate completion of registers at the start of each session, and within 15 minutes of the start of each session
- By imposing reasonable sanctions that will desist from persistent absence and/or lateness.

### **The school will respond to non-attendance by:**

1. Contacting parents on the first day of an absence if no reason for absence has been received. (Contact will be via email, telephone or text message.) Parents are encouraged to inform the school of any non-attendance via telephone, text and/or email as early as possible.
2. In case where the reason for absence is extended (more than one day) or persistent illness\*, evidence to confirm this will be required the next day the student attends school. Evidence can be in the form of a doctor's letter, copy of medical prescription or the label on prescribed medicine. Failure to provide such evidence will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised.
3. Where a pattern of persistent non-attendance is emerging (normally two unauthorised absences within two weeks), the parent/guardian will be written to and invited to visit the school to see the Headteacher in order to help resolve the difficulties and to enable close target setting as well as to raise expectations.
4. Where there is no response to school intervention and/or where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted without satisfactory explanation, the school will refer the matter to the LA Education Welfare Officer.
5. Where there is clear evidence that excessive absence has led to under-attainment, and where there has been an unsatisfactory response to school intervention from the student concerned and their family, the school reserves the right to permanently exclude the student from its roll.

\* While we don't expect any child to attend school when ill, we do urge parents to very carefully consider not sending them to school for minor ailments, eg. a mild headache. Such unnecessary absences severely hinder their academic progress.

## **The school will respond to lateness by:**

1. Requiring any student who arrives more than 5 minutes after the lesson to collect a late pass from the office, where her time of arrival and reason for lateness will be recorded, before she can be admitted into the classroom.
2. Marking any student who arrives late to school by more than 20 minutes as absent without authorisation for that entire session.
3. Giving a 45 minute detention on Friday. Detention starts at 12.15 pm and ends at 1.00 pm. Texts will be sent to inform parents of the detention.
4. Where a pattern of persistent lateness is emerging (normally four late arrivals within a period of two weeks), the parent/guardian will be written to and invited to visit the school to see the Headteacher in order to help resolve the difficulties and to enable close target setting as well as to raise expectations.
5. Where there is no response to school intervention and/or where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted without satisfactory explanation, the school will refer the matter to the LA Education Welfare Officer.
6. As a final resort, the school will refuse to re-register the student for the next academic year, or in cases where attendance is extremely poor and has clearly resulted in the pupil's under-attainment, the school reserves the right to permanently exclude the student from its roll.

## **Completion of work missed due to absence or lateness**

Regardless of the cause of absence, every child is expected to copy all work missed due to absence or lateness from their peers. Absence from school is not a valid excuse not to have covered missed work.

In all cases of late arrival to school, the student is required to complete missed work before the next lesson.

In cases where a student has been absent for a day or two, including due to illness, they are required to cover missed work by the following day. If there is a reason why this should not be reasonably expected, it must be made known to the Headteacher by the parent upon the child's return to school along with a mutually agreeable timeframe by when missed work will be completed.

For extended absences, the Headteacher, in consultation, with the subject teachers, will specify a time period by when all missed must be completed.

Subject teachers will strictly monitor whether or not missed work is completed within the specified timeframe and will report any concerns to the Headteacher. They have also been requested to assist students who need help with missed work outside of the classroom, but still within school hours, such as during breaks and/or after school, provided that they have time for it.

## **Holiday Absence**

The school acknowledges that, from time to time, some parents will want to take their children out of school for holidays.

However, it is equally important that children attend school regularly to achieve their full potential. Children who miss out on school can feel vulnerable and left behind. Family requested absence in term-time is very disruptive and can seriously affect the child's education. On average, children who miss 17 or more days in a school year lose one full grade in their GCSEs.

Parents **do not have the automatic right** to remove their children from school during term-time. By law, they are required to make an application to the school before taking their children out of school during term-time. It is absolutely at the Head teacher's discretion to decide whether or not an absence should be authorised. The Headteacher will only authorise absence in term time when there are genuinely exceptional reasons for a child to miss school.

Absence in term-time will **not** generally be authorised under the following circumstances:

- during national or school tests or examinations;
- when a child's attendance is below 95% and punctuality level below 90%;
- if the child has been suspended, is on report or on probation following a behavior-related problem;
- during the month of September; and
- for more than 10 days during term-time in any school year.

Absence in term-time will only be authorised if parents or guardians make a request to the school sufficiently in advance on the appropriate form and can sufficiently demonstrate that there are genuinely exceptional reasons why the absence has to be in term-time. Parents are advised against making any arrangements or plans prior to obtaining authorisation in writing from the Headteacher.

**The cost, convenience or availability of a particular holiday will not be taken into consideration.**

If an absence has not been authorised by the Headteacher and parents or guardians remove their child from school, their child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the class register.

Absence for performing 'Umrah or Hajj may be agreed by the Headteacher, but will not exceed 5 days, in addition to the regular 10 days, in any school year. This will only be applicable if the child herself is going for 'Umrah or Hajj, proof of which will have to be provided to the school. Again, the discretion on whether or not to grant approval for 'Umrah or Hajj will remain with the Headteacher absolutely.

Parents or guardians who take their children out of school without permission, either without applying for permission at all or despite having been refused permission, **will** be issued with fixed penalties of £50 per each day of unauthorised absence and may face possible prosecution in court on charges of truancy. Also, all unauthorised absences equivalent to a period of ten or more consecutive school days will automatically result in the removal of the absent child from the school's registers and the matter will immediately be referred to relevant authorities.

Any child whose annual attendance percentage is below 85% and/or punctuality percentage below 75% will not be offered a place at the school for the following academic year.

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