

Post-16 Attendance Policy for managing the attendance and absence of students

This document is informed by:

Education and Skills Act 2008 (ESA 2008)
 Education & Skills Funding Agency Regulations (EFA)
 The Education Act 1996, 2002 & 2011,
 School Attendance (Guidance for Schools) August 2020,
 Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance,
 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, & subsequent amendments
 The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999,
 The Education and Inspections Act 2006,
 Children Act 1989 & 2004,
 Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance,
 Regional Local Authority Early Help Pathways,
 Meridian Trust Behaviour and Safeguarding Policies.
 Supporting Pupils at school with Medical Conditions DfE Guidance
 Meridian Trust Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy v3
 Meridian Trust Supporting Students with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy Jan 2022

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1) Introduction and Legal Duties in respect of this policy:

- a) Under Part 1 of Education and Skills Act 2008 (ESA 2008) young people aged 16 and 17, who have not attained sufficient level 3 qualifications, are under a duty to continue in education or training until the young person's 18th birthday. The statutory duty does not extend until the end of the academic year in which the young person turns 18 however, they should be encouraged to complete the education or training they are undertaking beyond their 18th birthday.
- b) Under the ESA 2008 there are statutory duties for all local authorities, schools, academies, Post-16 & college provisions to promote participation in education and training to enable young people to meet their duty to participate. Part 1, Chapter 2(10) & (11) of that Act specifically places a duty on education providers to promote good attendance.
- c) Under Part 1, Chapter 2(13) of the ESA 2008 education providers have a duty to inform their local authority (LA) when a young person is no longer participating, for example they have dropped out or been permanently excluded. The LA have a duty to keep a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) register of students who are not participating and work with them to re-engage them.
- b) Under section 175 Education Act 2002, education providers also have safeguarding duties to keep all enrolled students safe and investigate any unexplained absences as absence from school is a safeguarding concern - **The student's welfare is always paramount.**
- d) The Trust recognise the importance of attendance and punctuality in enabling students to achieve their maximum educational potential, helping them to participate in the life of the academy that they are enrolled in, their Post-16 provision, as well as their local community. This supports students to have optimum life chances when entering adulthood as high attainment depends on good attendance.
- e) Under the Education & Skills Funding Agency Regulations education providers must provide a minimum full-time provision of at least 540hrs of planned learning (both qualification and non-qualification hours) a year, this equates to approx. 18 hours per week. The attendance register is used to prove this duty is being upheld. Activities such as work experience or tutorials can be included within these hours.

2) Core Expectations for Students, Parents/Carers and Academy Staff Members:

The trust expects the following to be upheld in order to maintain the above duties:

- i) All staff (teaching & support) to have a key role in supporting and promoting excellent attendance in an environment where all enrolled students are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school daily. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- ii) Staff to promptly involve (especially where there are concerns) both students and parents/carers in all aspects of the Post-16 placement, to promote partnership working to support the student to achieve the best outcomes and fulfil their duty to participate in education or training.
- iii) Post-16 Provisions to be welcoming and caring environments where students feel safe, secure and valued.
- iv) Effective communication to take place between staff, students and parents/carers to support good attendance and punctuality and to provide appropriate information and advice. This may be via conversations, emails, letters, meetings and/or other interventions, including but not limited to, the early help pathways available within each academy's respective Local Authority.
- v) Appropriate systems of recognition and encouragement to recognise the effort students make in achieving good attendance and punctuality.
- vi) Post-16 students who have chosen to enroll into the provision, should demonstrate their dedication to the intensive courses they have committed to. This means taking responsibility for their learning within timetabled lessons as well as independent study during non-contact periods, and part of this dedication is good attendance and punctuality; an important life skill for the future.
- vii) Post-16 students to aspire to achieve 100% attendance with a minimum of 96%, of their expected/agreed timetable, with absence only being for exceptional reasons. All absence affects the pattern of learning and relationships within school; both with staff and peers. As absence disrupts teaching routines, it may also affect the learning of others in the same class.
- viii) Absence from Post-16 education to be frequently monitored, explored and supported, making reasonable adjustments where required. The Meridian Trust Post-16 Attendance Welfare Procedures will be used along with guidance from senior and specialist leaders.
- ix) Persistent absence will be taken seriously and will have consequences.

3) Definition of a 'Parent/Carer':

The term 'Parent/Carer' is used to address those with responsibilities for children and young people under the age of 18. For the purposes of education, 'Parents' are determined as per Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 which defines a parent as:

- *the natural parents of a child, whether they are married or not;*
- *anyone who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child;*
- *any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.*

4) Registration & Punctuality

- All Post-16 provisions will keep registers in accordance with government regulations and Education Funding Agreements by taking an official register twice during the academy day (as morning and afternoon sessions vary, please see each academy website for detailed registration times). Post-16 student registration may be within a tutor or lesson time and the coding used to identify the type of absence will be used as per compulsory school age students i.e. authorised and unauthorised differentiation as this helps us to identify students of concern and enable conversations to happen to support them (see section 5 of this policy for definitions of absence).
- All Post-16 students will be expected to attend tutor time unless an individual or group alternative is agreed/arranged.
- Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Students arriving within 30 minutes of the register opening in the morning (start of registration) or 15 minutes after the register opens in the afternoon, will be deemed as '**late**' and therefore will be coded as '**L**' on the register; a consequence such as detention, may be used.
- Students arriving after the register closes without a verified reason will be marked as '**unauthorised late**' and coded as '**U**'. A '**U code**' means absent for the whole session due to missing the legal registration period; continued U code absences will be treated as persistent absence and lead to consequences as per section 8 of this policy.
- The Student or Parents/carers should notify the Post-16 Provision of absence, on every morning of absence, giving the reason. If no call is received, for the purposes of safeguarding, it must be assumed that the student is on their way to school and if they do not arrive, the absence will be followed up accordingly.
- When a student is absent, if contact is not achieved at any point between day 1 and 5 of absence, or if general absence level is a concern, a 'Safe and Well Home Visit' will be made.

5) Unplanned Absence and Definitions/Types of Absence:

- Every half-day = one session. One whole day = two sessions. It is the Post-16 provision (not the student or parents/carers) that decides whether an absence from school is recorded as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore, information about the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing and supported by evidence wherever possible at student/parents/carers cost. Meridian Trust feel it is important to identify whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised to ensure it is easy to recognise concerns emerging.
- Authorised** absence is where the absence is considered reasonable. This may be for illness (**I** code), medical/dental appointments (**M** code) (which unavoidably fall within the school day), emergencies or other unavoidable cause (**C** code). Although reasons given for absence will be recorded, as per above 5(a), the absence may be recorded as unauthorised if the reason is not deemed appropriate, reasonable, or if there are ongoing attendance concerns.
- Unauthorised** absence is where the absence is not considered reasonable due to the reason given or where there is an overall level of concern; and/or for which a "request" for term time absence has been unauthorised. This includes but is not limited to: unexplained absences, late arrival at school after registration has closed (**U** code), shopping, looking after siblings, birthdays, day trips, visiting family (all **O** codes) or holidays in term time which have no exceptional circumstances evident (**G** code). **Unauthorised absence** can lead to several consequences as detailed in Section 8 of this policy.
- Persistent Absence (PA)** is where a student misses **10%** or more of their education within a specific timeframe (e.g. whole academic year, a term, or for a minimum 8-week period) for whatever reason (authorised or unauthorised). Persistent absence is viewed as failing to adhere to the provisions acceptable behaviour guidelines and can lead to permanent exclusion.

- e) **Medical Evidence** will be requested where a student's level of attendance becomes a concern (see section 8 of this policy - Stage 2) and absences may not be authorised without it. This will lead to unauthorised absence being recorded. Provision of medical evidence will be at the student or parents/carers cost.
- 6) **Independent Study and Requirements for Arriving/Leaving the Academy Site Outside of Normal Start/finish Times:**
- a) All Post-16 students are expected to complete the full day within the academy, irrespective of whether actual lessons or learning hours are timetabled unless it has been agreed/authorised by a senior leader to deviate from this expectation. Any deviation would be based the following:
 - b) Independent study is an important part of Post-16 learning as it increases a student's independence, research skills, planning and resilience. If students are granted the privilege of studying at home, they are expected to be committed to spending their time effectively.
 - c) This privilege may be withdrawn resulting in the student reverting to working on-site if the following expectations are not met:
 - Acceptable attendance and/or punctuality
 - Excellent behaviour
 - Expected progress in subjects
 - Subject work commitments fulfilled
 - d) It is a legal safeguarding requirement that we always know who is on site. Students must make sure that they sign in if they are late and sign out if leaving the building throughout the day e.g. to leave the site for lunch, an appointment or for home study.
 - e) Where a student is given permission to complete their Independent Study Session off-site this will be recorded as 'educated offsite' (**B** code)
 - f) Where a student is not expected to attend or study, the session will be recorded as 'non-compulsory school age not expected to attend' (**X** code).
- 7) **Requests for Planned Absence During Term Time:**
- a) Meridian Trust actively discourage absence during term time within all education provisions. It is considered that each student should attend all sessions regularly and punctually in order to avoid disruption and maximise their educational achievement.
 - b) Parents/carers are required to complete a **Post 16 Term Time Absence Request Form**, at least three weeks' in advance of the date of travel where possible to enable the request to be considered and responded to. The **exceptional circumstance** of the request must be detailed, and sufficient evidence must be provided to verify the reasons when the request is submitted, or when subsequently requested. Forms are available from the academy website Post-16 section or the Post-16 office.
 - c) The Post-16 Provision will have a designated/authorised senior leader identified to determine whether the request for leave meets "**exceptional circumstances**" criteria which may include: Driving Test (practical and theory, Bereavement, Emergency Clinical Visits, Hospital Appointments, Illness (severe enough to prevent attendance e.g. planned recuperation following an accident or medical procedure), Orthodontist appointments, Religious Observance, Apprenticeship/University/Post-18 employment job interviews, Representing the College in sport or University Open Days. Parent/carers may receive a telephone call or be requested to attend a meeting to discuss the request in more detail.
 - d) Where the leave of absence request, or part thereof is **authorised**, parents/carers will be notified in writing detailing any restrictions set e.g. adhering to the dates requested. If restrictions are not adhered to, the leave will revert to unauthorised. The absence will be recorded as an '**H**' code on the register.
 - e) Where leave of absence is **unauthorised**, parents/carers will be notified in writing. The absence will be recorded as a '**G**' code on the register.
 - f) Where an absence is **suspected** of being for the purposes of leave and a request has not been made, it is the parents/carers responsibility to disprove the suspicion by providing evidence that the absence was for an alternative exceptional reason. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
 - g) Where leave of absence is stated as '**for the purpose of religious observance**' each Post-16 provision will follow the guidance from their respective local authority. Generally, **only one individual day**, exclusively set aside by a religious body will be accepted as a religious observance absence and there will be a maximum of three single days within a year that would be acceptable. Evidence from the religious body may be required.

8) **Trust Post-16 Attendance Welfare Procedures – Support and Addressing Concerns re Attendance and Engagement with Learning (see Annex A for Visual Demonstration):**

- a) The trust procedures are based on a relational approach; meaning communication, discussion and support in the first instance, with a ‘staged’ escalation of daily support, identification of concerns, interventions, escalation and consequences. Stages 1-5. See Annex A of this policy.
- b) Support is accessed via internal resources within the academy and external resources from Charities, External Agencies, Health Professionals, LA Early Help Pathways.

9) **Deletions from Register:**

- a) Under Section 8(3) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, the following are prescribed as the grounds on which the name of a pupil not of compulsory school age is to be deleted from the admission register;
 - (a) that he has ceased to attend the school, or, in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school;*
 - (b) that he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and —*
 - (i) at no time was his absence during that period agreed by the proprietor;*
 - (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and*
 - (iii) (iii) the proprietor of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;*
 - (c) that the pupil has died;*
 - (d) where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school; or*
 - (e) that he has been permanently excluded from the school.*
- b) Where a student has chosen to leave the provision or is removed from the register for any other reason detailed above, a referral will be made to the Local Authority under the duty described in Section 1(c) of this policy.

By following this policy, Meridian Trust Post-16 Provisions will be demonstrating their duty to promote working in partnership with parents/carers, students and other agencies to promote maximum attendance to secure successful outcomes for students.

Attendance Policy Supporting Documents in relation to individual academies

Annexes are subject to change without official ratification of the whole policy as they will need to be altered locally to link with each Local Authority as appropriate:

Annex A	Trust Post-16 Attendance Welfare Procedures
Annex B	Post-16 Term Time Absence Request Form
Annex C	Post-16 Student Admission Agreement (Learning & Attendance)

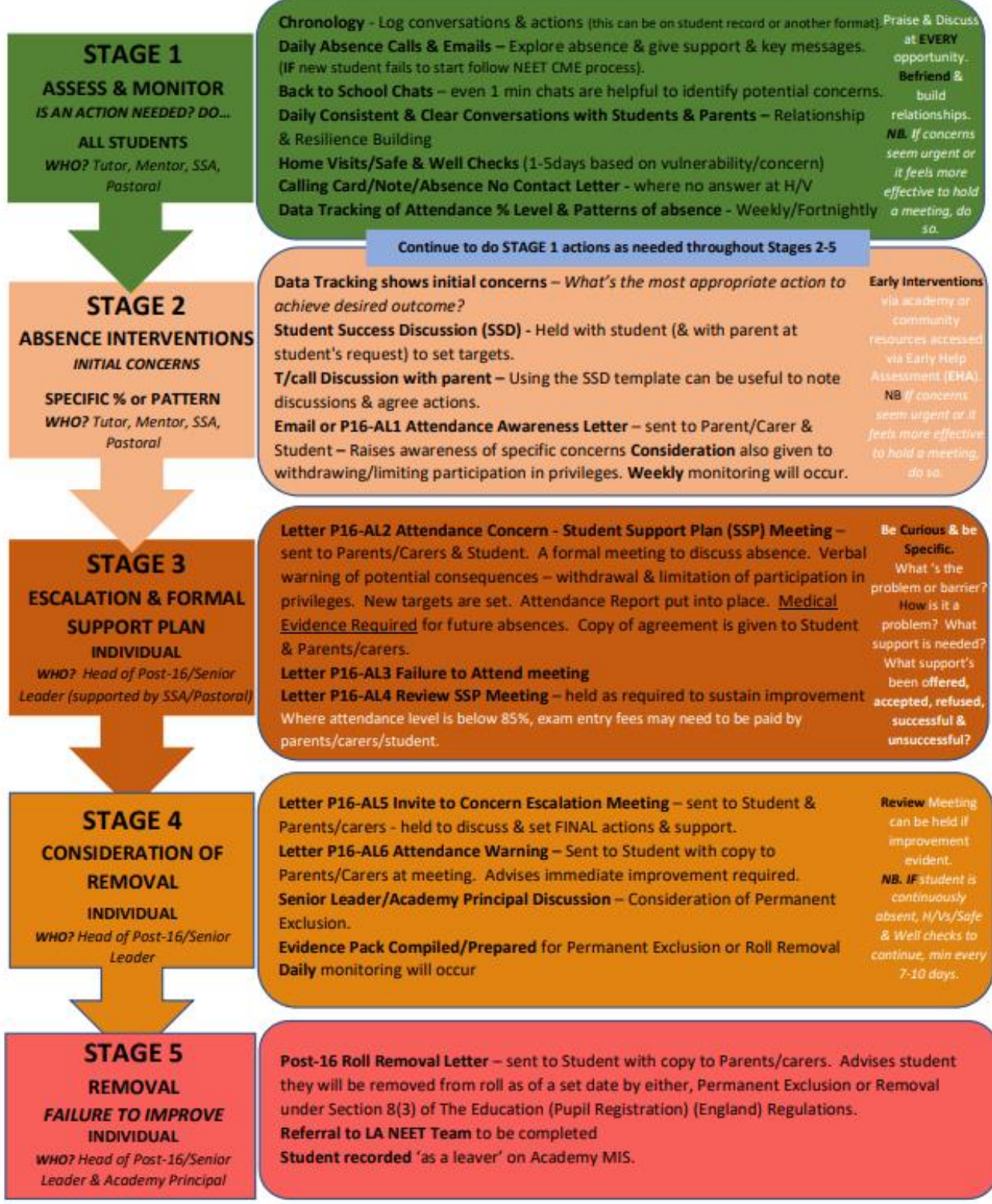
ANNEX A - TRUST POST-16 ATTENDANCE WELFARE PROCEDURES

POST 16 ATTENDANCE WELFARE PROCEDURES (STAGES 1-5)



The trust procedures are based on a *relational needs-led approach* focused on communication, discussion & support using early help pathways with a 'staged' process to identify concerns & take action to prevent escalation.

% is only a guide, a specific **TRIGGER** should also justify an action e.g. Frequency (3 sporadic days or bouts within 4/6-weeks) or reasons for absence are concerning. Do each **ACTION ASAP**. **MONITOR** & decide next action **weekly/fortnightly**.



ANNEX B – POST-16 TERM TIME ABSENCE REQUEST FORM



POST-16 TERM TIME ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

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PRIOR TO APPLYING FOR TERM TIME ABSENCE PLEASE READ THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The full Meridian Trust Post-16 Attendance Policy followed by each provision can be accessed the academy website.

1. The expectation is that all students aspire to achieve 100% attendance at school, with a minimum of 96% unless there are exceptional reasons for absence, which would then be authorised. Evidence may be requested to prove exceptional circumstances.
2. Attendance in Post-16 is vital for educational progress and absence during term time is strongly discouraged. There is **no entitlement** to have leave of absence during term time.
3. All adults involved with a young persons' care and education have a duty to ensure they promote the participation in education beyond compulsory school age from 16-19 years.
4. A Parent/carer is defined under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 as: the natural parent of a child, whether they are married or not; anyone who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child; any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child (e.g. partner, step-parent, sibling over the age of 18 or grandparent).
5. All requests will be considered on an individual basis and must be received in advance of travel (we request a minimum of **3 weeks**) where possible to allow for administering the request. Details of other school age siblings and where they attend school should be provided as we are required to liaise with sibling schools.
6. If a request is refused the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
7. If the period of absence requested is authorised, the requested dates must be adhered to. Failure to travel and return on the requested dates, causing additional absences to be recorded as unauthorised.
8. If absence is not requested in advance and it is suspected that absence from school is due to unauthorised reasons e.g. holiday, you will be required to provide evidence to prove the absence was for legitimate authorised reasons.
9. If absence continues for more than 20 days or 10 days past the agreed return date, the place at Post-16 provision may be withdrawn and a referral to the Local Authority will be made.
10. If you are travelling in school holiday times, ensure you are aware of any quarantine return protocols.
11. All students must ensure they catch up on all lesson & coursework if they have a period of absence.
12. Please be aware that continued absence may place your child's Post-16 place in jeopardy and behavior/attendance consequences may be used.

A HOLIDAY MAY BE CHEAP DURING TERM TIME BUT A CHILDS EDUCATION IS PRICELESS

Term time absence request for: **Student Name**
 House & Form Year Group:..... 1st Line of Address & Post Code:
 1st Date of Absence: Last Date of Absence:

Please note:

If the absence request is not deemed **exceptional circumstances**, the absence will be recorded on the student's record as **unauthorised**. Continued unauthorised absences can lead to behavior and attendance consequences being imposed and potentially the loss of the Post-16 place at the provision.

Purpose of Absence – Please ensure you detail: the specific reasons for the absence and **what is exceptional** about the circumstance. Please also attach evidence that verifies why the absence is exceptional, especially why the absence cannot be taken during a school holiday period. You may also attach an additional letter if you wish.

.....

Name of other children in the family	Age/Yr Grp	Education Provision/School	Please note you are required to complete a request for each child and to each school/academy if different. NB. Schools are required to liaise with each other and share information.

IMPORTANT WARNING – PLEASE READ PRIOR TO SIGNING

- You may be requested to attend a meeting to discuss this request further.
- Once a decision has been made you will be notified in writing.
- If the absence is authorised specified dates must be adhered to. Failure to travel and return on the requested dates, causing additional absences to be recorded as unauthorised, which may lead to a sanction if evidence cannot be provided, at your own cost, to verify the cause for additional absences.
- If the absence is refused, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may lead to consequences being used.

By signing below, you are confirming **all** parents/carers have read and understood the information and warnings within this form. **All parents/carers & adults living with the child must print & sign.**

Print Name..... Sign Name.....DoB: Relationship to Student: Dated.....
 Print Name..... Sign Name.....DoB: Relationship to Student: Dated.....
 Print Name..... Sign Name.....DoB: Relationship to Student: Dated.....

ACADEMY USE: Current Attendance: % Last year's attendance (if relevant or request is Autumn Term) %
 Number of School Days Requested: Request received in advance of travel (3 weeks' where possible) **Yes / No**
 Are there Exceptional Circumstances? **Yes / No** Rationale for decision:

DECISION: Date: Authorised (Letter TTAP16 A Unauthorised (Letter TTAP16 B)
 Signed by Designated Person: Date: Leave Taken? **Yes / No**
 Letter to Parent(s)/Carer(s) issued by Post on: Also by Email? **Yes / No**
 Reason for Absence noted on Student Attendance Record
 Return Date Diarised for Review (Meeting or Continued Monitoring)

POST-16 STUDENT ADMISSION AGREEMENT (Learning & Attendance)

Student Name:

Date Commenced in Post-16:

I understand and agree my responsibilities to ensure the following expectations are met:

- To fulfil my legal duty to participate in education or training by attending every day, on time and am prepared for my learning.
- To attend registration/tutor sessions (unless formally agreed otherwise) and contribute to tutor session activities.
- To sign in and out of the site if I arrive late after registration time or leave before the end of the school day.
- To inform a member of the Post-16/Pastoral team if there is a problem which may prevent me from attending the provision or lessons.
- Make every effort to arrange medical appointments outside of academy learning hours.
- Complete a Post-16 Term Time Absence Request Form if I need to arrange an absence from my learning; and I understand only exceptional reasons will be accepted.
- To provide evidence to support any absence, such as an appointment card/letter, or if neither are available, arrange for contact from my parent/carer to discuss/explain the reason for absence.
- To not enter part-time employment that will interfere with Post-16 attendance or study time.
- To attend and participate in meetings to discuss concerns if concerns arise.

Signed: Dated:

Parent Name(s):

I/We understand and agree my/our responsibilities as the parents/carers of the above-named student:

- To support and encourage my child to fulfil their legal duty to participate in education or training, ensuring they attend school regularly, on time and are prepared for learning.
- To ensure I have contacted the Academy on the first day of their absence and then on all subsequent days. I understand that this responsibility may be passed on to my child once they are 18 years old; if in the first instance, my child has notified the provision, I will ensure I make a follow up call to discuss any concerns it may have caused or support that may be required.
- To ensure 'holidays' are not taken during term time.
- To communicate promptly with a member of the Post-16/Pastoral team if there is a problem which may prevent my child from attending.
- To attend meetings to discuss concerns if they arise.

Signed: Dated:

Signed: Dated:

What parents/carers and students can expect from the Post-16 Provision/Academy:

- A high quality Post-16 education in a safe, helpful, welcoming environment which encourages students to learn and behave to the best of their ability and support them to fulfil their legal duty to participate in education or training.
- Promotion of excellent attendance and punctuality with robust regular monitoring of attendance and progress.
- Prompt action, support and challenge for absences and/or progress where concerns become apparent.
- Regular communication with parents/carers and students.