



## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **Philosophy**

High levels of attendance are essential if students are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills and qualifications which will equip them for life.

*We know from research that every day at school does indeed matter. Every extra day missed at school is associated with a lower attainment outcome for children. As overall absence levels increase, the average percentage of students' attainment levels decreases at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)<sup>1</sup>*

As a school we seek to ensure that our students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming and caring environment where each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

The school aims to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality by operating an attendance policy within which students, staff, parents and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership to provide mutual information, advice and support. It remains the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually; however, the school will work with students and their families to ensure each student sustains high levels of attendance and punctuality.

### **Aims**

- To maintain and maximise the attendance of students in line with current legislation and guidelines.
- To encourage students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities and secure academic achievement through high levels of attendance and punctuality as a preparation for good practice in life.
- To provide an effective system for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
- To recognise the external factors which influence student attendance and work in partnership with parents, students and other agencies to address these.
- To use positive recognition of students' attendance achievements.

## Roles and responsibilities

### School

#### **To achieve our aims we will:**

- Use the SIMS registration system.
- Keep accurate and up-to-date attendance registers in line with current legislation.
- Keep a school roll that is regularly updated.
- Only delete students from the register in line with current legislation.
- Preserve entries on the admission and attendance registers for a period of three years.
- Inform the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer of any student who is going to be deleted from the admissions register.
- Be responsible for data capture, report production and the administration of the procedures.
- Collate and analyse data to identify trends and enable action to be taken.
- Investigate all absences.
- Pass on the details of irregular attenders to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer.
- Provide a range of strategies based on reward and intervention to deal with absenteeism. Persistent absenteeism will be dealt with in partnership with the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer.
- Inform the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer of all leave requests for child performance activities.
- Where a child fails to attend school, make reasonable enquiries to establish their whereabouts within ten days and refer to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer by day ten.
- Monitor attendance daily and formally review attendance at least on a fortnightly basis.
- Follow up absences and take reasonable steps to address issues and improve attendance.
- Communicate appropriately with parents where a student's attendance is a concern.
- Provide a free breakfast club to all students to encourage them to attend school on time.
- Provide weekly rewards in assemblies to House Groups with the best attendance.
- Hold celebration assemblies at the end of each half-term and term.
- Issue punctuality cards for students who are regularly late for lessons.
- Issue truancy cards for students who are regularly truanting lessons.
- Issue Penalty Notices to parents whose children refuse to improve their attendance.
- Send texts after registration to inform parents of their child's absence, if information has not been provided by the parent.
- Send texts to inform parents if their child has been late throughout the day.
- Send texts to inform parents if their child has truanted throughout the day.
- Conduct home visits in order to improve attendance of individual students.
- Work with the Local Authority Early Help Department at Children's Services to support families in need of a variety of interventions including help to improve attendance.
- Organise attendance action planning and review meetings with parents and students where attendance is a concern.
- Commence legal proceedings through the issue of Penalty Notices or initiate prosecution action where the criteria of the Local Authority Code of Conduct has been met.
- Ensure that school registers are available for inspection by HMI, Children's Services and the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer.

## **Students**

### **Take responsibility to:**

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive on time to school.
- Attend lessons on time.
- Engage with the school ethos and expectations with regard to attendance.
- Engage with the school where concerns arise, as outlined in the procedure for improving attendance.

## **Parents**

### **Support students to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality by:**

- Encouraging 100% punctuality and attendance.
- Notifying the school in writing of the reasons for all unavoidable planned absences (medical appointments etc.), in advance of the absence.
- Notifying the school of the reasons for on-the-day absences (illness etc.), before the end of registration on the same day.
- Taking reasonable steps to secure medical appointments outside of school time.
- Avoiding holidays in term time.
- Applying to the Headteacher for Leave of Absence at least two weeks in advance of any unavoidable term time absences.
- Engaging with the school to improve attendance where concerns arise, as outlined in the procedure for improving attendance.

## **Attendance**

Students are expected to be registered twice each day for attendance, as well as during each lesson. The two attendance registers are taken in the first registration session at 8:30am and in the second registration session at 10:45am.

Students are expected to maintain a minimum 97% attendance. Students who fall to or below 90% attendance will be regarded as a Persistent Absentee.

## **Punctuality**

All students are expected to arrive to school on time and then attend each lesson on time. Students arriving to the first registration session after 8:30am will be recorded as late. Similarly, those students arriving to the second registration session after 10:45am will be recorded as late. The registers close at 9:15am and 11:30am respectively; thereafter, students will be recorded as arriving after the registration session has closed. Persistent lateness contributes towards a student's attendance record and will be monitored and followed up in line with the school's punctuality procedure. It is the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure that students attend school regularly and punctually.

## **Authorised absence**

This is when the school accepts there is an unavoidable reason for absence, for which the parent has notified the school. This decision will be made in line with current legislation and guidance. The school may require evidence of the reason for absence, for example medical appointment cards or notes from a medical practitioner. Any student who is a Persistent Absentee, or who the school deems is at risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee, will require official documentary evidence for absences to be authorised.

### **Religious Festivals**

The Headteacher will authorise one day for religious observance. Parents must request this leave in advance, in writing. This day must be set by the relevant religious body, which may vary within a religion.

### **Unauthorised absence**

This is when the school does not accept that there is an unavoidable reason for absence, even if the parent has notified the school. This decision will be made in line with current legislation and guidance. Examples of unauthorised absences include:-

- Known truancy.
- Absent without notification from parent, regardless of reason.
- Persistent Absenteeism without official documentary evidence.
- Looking after siblings.
- Running errands for parents.
- Time off for family celebrations.
- Holidays.

School days are precious; children only attend school on 190 out of 365 days. There are 175 days a year which parents can use for any activities other than school. If parents take students out of school without the school's prior authorisation the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (which is illegal) and noted in your child's school records. Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher.

**Where a parent has taken their child on leave of absence during term time without the Headteacher's authorisation, we will issue a Penalty Notice. In these circumstances a warning will not be given.** Penalty Notices are per parent, per child as appropriate, so if there are 2 parents both will need to pay the fine. From 1 September 2013 penalty notices will need to be paid within 21 days at £60 or £120 within 28 days. Unpaid Penalty Notices will result in prosecution for the absence in the magistrate's court.

The school makes the decision as to whether the request of leave should be granted or not and the Local Authority stipulates the criteria for imposing a penalty for this.

### **Term Time Leave**

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and came into force on 1st September 2013. The amendments remove references to 'holiday' from school and extended leave of absence, as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Requests for leave of absence should not normally be granted for the purposes of a holiday. The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Headteachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances and it is only for the Headteacher to determine what is truly exceptional.

**Leave of absence will not normally be authorised in the following circumstances:**

- Student's attendance is less than 97% in the previous 12 months.
- During GCSE or other public examination years.
- In years 10 and 11.
- In a transition year.
- At the beginning of any academic year.
- Retrospectively.
- If there are any other academic concerns such as poor punctuality, student's ability to catch up on the work missed etc.
- If leave of absence has already been taken in the same school year.

**We will also take into account the following:**

- The student's general absence/attendance record, e.g. Unauthorised absence.
- Proximity of public examinations.
- Amount of time requested.
- Age of the student.
- Length of the proposed leave.
- Student's ability to catch up on the work.
- Student's educational needs.
- General welfare of the student.
- Circumstances of the request.
- Purpose of the leave.
- Frequency of the activity.
- When the request was made.

**Applications for Leave of absence**

Requests must be made in advance or the absence cannot legally be authorised. All requests must be made at least two weeks in advance to the Headteacher by completing the school application form. A parent with whom the child resides with must make the application even though the student may not be taking the proposed leave with them. The form must be fully completed and the parent will receive a written response confirming if the request will be authorised or not. The school may set work for holidays taken in term time.

**If leave is granted and the travel is abroad, the parent will need to supply official documentary evidence, such as the flight tickets and/or evidence of the circumstances.**

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

Any student whose attendance falls to or below 90% is defined as a Persistent Absentee (PA). Absences for students who are PA, or at risk of becoming PA, will not normally be authorised unless supported by official documentary evidence of medical appointments or ongoing illness/medical conditions. Without such documentation, absences will be unauthorised and will continue to be unauthorised until documentation has been received.

Students who are PA, or at risk of becoming PA, will be supported, monitored and reviewed by House Teams and brought to the attention of the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer in line with school procedures for attendance.

### **Failure to return to school on the date expected**

If there is a reason which delays the student in returning to school the parent must inform the school immediately. The school will require official documentary evidence of this issue and will then decide whether the absence will be authorised. For any travel arrangements outside of the UK we require proof of return flights, prior to the leave being taken. This may prevent an unauthorised absence and fine if the student is unable to return on the date expected. Each case will be assessed individually and medical evidence from abroad will not be accepted routinely as evidence that a student was unable to attend school.

### **Roll Removal**

- If a student is taken on leave of absence which has been authorised by the school and fails to return on the agreed date, any extra time absent from school will be counted as unauthorised. If the student fails to return within ten days of the expected date of return, then the school may remove them from the school roll and notify the Local Authority accordingly.
- If the student has 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and the criteria in current legislation have been met, the school may remove them from the school roll and notify the Local Authority accordingly.

### **Success Criteria**

- The whole school attendance percentage will be higher than that for the same period in the previous year.
- The whole school Persistent Absentee percentage will be lower than that for the same period in the previous year.
- The whole school absence percentage will be lower than that for the same period in the previous year.
- The whole school unauthorised absence percentage will be lower than that for the same period in the previous year.
- The whole school unexplained absence percentage will be lower than that for the same period in the previous year.
- The whole school lates percentage will be lower than that for the same period in the previous year.
- Student intervention records will consistently show action in line with the school attendance policy.

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