

Lawnswood Campus



Student Attendance Policy

Review Date: Autumn 2019

Please read

Governors as Management Board
Schools as PRUs

Signed by the Chair of the Management Board: Date:

Contents:

1. PURPOSE
2. DEFINITION
3. POLICY STATEMENT
4. RISK ASSESSMENT
5. PROCEDURES
6. REVIEW

1 Purpose

This policy is written to inform teachers, students, and parents/carers of the procedures and strategies to ensure regular attendance at Lawnswood Campus Pupil Referral Units

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

Some students are sometimes unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. If students are reluctant to attend, it is better to sort out the issues rather than give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

2 Definition

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by verbal conversation, and recorded on Sims.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- parents keeping children off school without a good reason
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- taking unauthorised holidays

Regular and punctual attendance is essential to the academic and personal development of our students and this is pointed out to all students/parents at the initial contact meeting or home visit.

3 Policy Statement

The aim of our curriculum policies and mission statement can only be achieved if a regular pattern of attendance is established. Positive learning experiences are vital to students 'wanting' to attend and these impacts on the quality of teaching and learning and a welcoming school environment. The students must feel valued and part of the process. Achievements in improving attendance for our students are an integral part of our rewards framework.

Students who are referred to PRUs often have experienced an interruption in their school attendance. This has implications for their transition into the Centres and for long term attendance as there is a need to re-establish good attendance habits. This is particularly important in Key Stage 3 & 4 where there is more likelihood of students deciding not to attend, even against their parents' wishes.

In order to promote good attendance, strategies need to be employed in order to involve parents, students and external agencies in working together. These are outlined in this policy and form a basis for procedures used within the Centre.

4 Risk Assessment

Where there is a risk which would be increased by poor attendance then a risk assessment should be completed and specific actions put in place.

5 Procedures

The following processes and procedures govern the way attendance is managed within the Centres.

ATTENDANCE OFFICER

This post is a key post within the Centre and is fundamental to establishing good attendance procedures and following these through. All issues relating to attendance will be dealt with by the Attendance Officer including first day contact, attendance meetings, home visits and joint meetings with the Attendance and Behaviour Officers when appropriate.

REGISTRATION

Registers are kept in accordance with Education Regulations. SIMS electronic registration is completed by teachers and/or Teaching Assistants at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session at the Centres and in the locations of off-site provision. The Attendance Officer will monitor all marks added onto the SIMS Attendance Programme. A manual register is given to the Attendance Officer during registration if the Sims system is not in operation in the class room.

Some schools request notification of attendance from us on a weekly basis and this is dealt with by the Attendance Officer. The Head of Centre or Deputy Head of Centre is responsible for overseeing that the attendance policy is followed within the Centre.

Separate registers are kept for students involved in off-site activities e.g. Work Experience, school trips etc. and any other regular off-site activity. The registers must be handed in to the Attendance Officer on the day of the activity. These marks are then transferred onto the SIMS system by the Attendance Officer.

Work Experience and other off-site activities are classified as present as they are approved educational activities.

Students engaged on a part-time timetable, where the Head of Centre has granted leave for the students to be placed on a modified timetable, are counted as an authorised absence.

During Registration, students are required to hand in notes for previous absences. These are sent to the Attendance Officer and these will be given a registration code. If notes are not supplied then the Form Tutor will remind students of the need for a written letter.

Absences cannot be given a registration code on verbal messages from students. However, verbal messages from parents are acceptable.

At Registration, the Form Tutor will use the opportunity to monitor the attendance of the group. It is important to praise students where there has been an improvement, even if this is only covering a week or involves a student attending on a day where there has been a history of non-attendance. Patterns of non-attendance that are beginning to develop can also be discussed with individual students.

LATE PROCEDURES

If a student arrives after the Register has closed then he/she must report to the Office where they are entered onto the students Late Register. This register will record the time of arrival and the reason for late attendance

The student's registration mark L code will then be transferred onto the students Class Register by the Attendance Officer.

FIRST DAY CONTACT

First Day Contact is made whenever possible so that good communication and supportive relationships between school and parents can be maintained. This is very important for parents and the Centre and has proved to be crucial to success.

After Registration, all electronic data is automatically sent. We then use PS Engage text messaging service to send out a text message to all non-attendees. The Attendance Officer and Senior Leaders, who have the responsibility for pastoral welfare, will liaise in order to monitor attendance and deal with any issues arising with regard to lateness, delayed transport and absence. This may include making contact with parents and following up serious concerns immediately.

Senior leaders, Pastoral Managers or other support staff may check on any absences and contact parents even if contact has been made previously. This is for an update on the reason for absence or to gain a fuller explanation of circumstances. It also gives a further opportunity to explain the importance of good attendance. A record is kept of each phone call that is made.

Parental contact will establish:

- the reason for absence
- The background to any sensitive issues relating to the non-attendance if parents are suggesting the absence is not just through illness. These will be passed on to the relevant member of staff immediately so that further contact can be made.

During the course of the phone call the member of staff can:

- remind parents that medical evidence may be required if appropriate
- emphasise the importance of consistent attendance and the role it plays in forming social relationships as well as improving academic standards
- remind parents that a written note will also be required when the student returns to school
- Inform parents that, where absences are regular or prolonged, concerns relating to attendance will be followed up. This may be by letters sent home or a request for a home visit to be made by the Attendance Officer, The School Health Nurse, or school staff.
- Inform parents / carers that further action, if necessary, may result in the involvement of the Authority, possibly leading to prosecution.
- Remind parents of the importance of informing the Centre to avoid an unnecessary home visit.

- Inform parents of the possibility of issuing a parenting contract/ EHA meeting.

Registration staff have access to SIMs detailing the previous week's attendance data for that registration group.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEES

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. The Attendance Officer is responsible for informing parents of their legal duty to ensure good school attendance. This may be through letters, home visits, EHA's and parenting contracts. During home visits, EHA's and parenting contracts a copy of the written notes will be given to the parents.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

We take every opportunity to encourage students to attend the Centre. If a student is unable to attend the parent should, in the first instance, telephone the Centre and give a reason for the absence. Parents are also asked to send in a written note of explanation on the student's return to school.

When time off is required for medical appointments, an appointment letter/card should be sent well in advance of the appointment.

Parental requests for holidays during term time are no longer authorised. If parents still insist on taking their child out of school they must complete a holiday form. Unless the holiday is for exceptional circumstances it will not be authorised by senior leaders.

Leave of absence for any other reason will need to be requested in person to the Head of Centre and a leave of absence form to be completed. It will then be at the discretion of the Head of Centre to say if the leave of absence will be authorised. Each request will be considered on an individual basis.

If education is to be delivered in a place other than in the school setting, Parents/Carers must ensure students are ready to commence work at the time pre-arranged with the tutor and are present at the chosen venue.

It is not possible for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, minding the house, birthdays, day trips etc. Leave may however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. after the death of close relative) after discussion with senior leaders.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed (in advance if at all possible). A "present" mark can still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The usual routines for dealing with poor attendance sometimes do not apply to children who are looked after by the Local Authority. It is imperative to work with foster carers or key workers representing looked after children. Regular meetings are arranged with this in mind and everyone must work together to ensure good attendance is achieved. The Virtual Head of Looked After Children has agreed that social workers should attend parental meetings.

REFERRAL TO THE CENTRE

Referral to the Centre takes place through direct referrals from schools or the Local Authority. Cases for the Local Authority are put forward by Children and Family Support Teams or the LAC team. Each case is then considered but previous attendance is a crucial

element of the discussion and can determine whether a place is offered. Previous evidence shows that, where poor attendance exists before referral, this is likely to continue and if this is the case the place may be withdrawn following a four week assessment period. The students would then be referred back to the Children and Family Support teams or LAC team for further consideration.

It is crucial that previous statistical information is accurate as this provides a benchmark against which success with attendance can be measured.

EXTERNAL AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Lawnswood Campus work with all Attendance Officers present in schools and academies. If a student is admitted to the Centre and attendance becomes an issue a number of steps will be taken by the attendance officer before being passed on to the Local Authority Vulnerable Young Persons Team.

The attendance of students is scrutinised at a weekly attendance meeting, where concerns are identified and discussed. This information is related to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer and various courses of action are taken including:

- Interviews with parents/students
- Letters to parents
- Early Help Assessment
- Letters of concern, home visits and/or meetings carried out by the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer.
- Preparation by the Attendance Officer and Local Authority Education Welfare Officer to refer for legal action by the Local Authority

There are letters used to inform parents of concerns relating to Attendance.

Whenever these letters are used a record is kept in the Centre so that school staff can access the information. Copies are also kept on the SIMS system under the student's name.

Each Senior Management Team is responsible for writing targets for the students and they will have a target relating to attendance if necessary. The target will be relevant to each student and may change periodically depending on circumstances. Attendance Reports will be available at any time through the SIMS system and these will provide the information from which the attendance target will be set.

REWARDING ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is given high priority by staff at the Centres and is part of a reward framework. Individual students are praised for maintaining or improving attendance by all staff.

REPORTING

Attendance figures are regularly reported on as part of the reporting process where an Attendance Report is supplied. Post 16 placements frequently ask for this information when references are completed and this is mentioned to students during the Work Related Curriculum programme.

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Parents/carers are encouraged to work with the Centres to achieve positive outcomes.

The termly report to the Management Body reports on attendance figures and these are supplied to the Local Authority on request.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Changes in the way attendance issues are addressed will need to be monitored in order to assess whether they are improving attendance or not.

Monitoring will take place by looking at:

- individual cases
- form/year group/cohort attendance
- whole Centre attendance
- LA monitoring meeting
- Behaviour and Attendance Officer feedback

6 Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or when new legislation/guidance concerning student attendance is published.