

The New School at West Heath

Policy on Attendance

Introduction

We aim to give our students a fresh start and we hope they all will that all its students will enjoy our school, and that therefore attendance will not be a problem. We expect a good attendance from our students because without it we will not be able to overcome past difficulties and offer new opportunities for success.

We recognise that some of students will have ongoing mental health issues, and that their attendance in school will be driven by factors sometimes beyond their control. We also recognise that for such students their attendance in school will need to be part of a carefully planned programme under the auspices of their consultant psychologist. In such instances absences will always be recorded for medical reasons. Some students will have great difficulty in maintaining full time attendance as a result of their emotional difficulties and or because of a diagnosed condition. In such instances we will ensure they have a carefully planned timetable that encourages their attendance and provides them with support at home.

Aims & Objectives

- To help overcome past “habits” of avoiding attendance as a coping strategy.
- To ensure that all students receive their maximum entitlement to education.
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own attendance and to maintain a full attendance record in order to get the most benefit from their time at our School.
- To re-establish the norm of daily attendance.
- To help students to gain the most benefit from their time with us and to protect them from the hazards of non attendance.

Strategies

(1) Prevention:

- From their very first visit students are warmly welcomed by all staff and students and we hope that they feel valued as an integral part of our School and will want to attend.
- Students who have had problems with school attendance in the past, perhaps because of a phobia or lack of social skills, are given intensive support to stabilise their attendance. Attendance targets may be included as part of their IEPs. Often it is chosen as the first target.
- The curriculum, timetable, and other activities are planned to keep students' interest and stimulate involvement in our School.
- Many students are collected from home each day by taxis whose drivers know which students are expected to attend and at what times. In exceptional circumstances, new students may be escorted in by an EWO.

- Good attendance is regarded as an achievement and is acknowledged and praised accordingly. Students will be rewarded either through the use of merits and or nomination for a prize in the Friday assembly.

(2) In the Case of Absence:

- The Register is taken twice daily and unexplained absences are followed up by a learning support assistant or the school secretary by a telephone call within one hour of non arrival.
- We expect that parents will notify us about genuine absences, by telephone. A letter is required when the child returns to school. We also expect parents be completely honest over problems in attendance (i.e. do not cover students' anxieties with excuses about non-existent physical symptoms). Anxiety is as legitimate a reason as any but the staff cannot assist in overcoming problems if we do not know the facts.
- After 20 half day absences the student health and welfare officer will consider making a home visit. Only if the absences are medical, holiday or exceptional circumstances will no action be taken.
- In the course of the home visit, an assessment of the situation is made after consultation with both the parents and the student. Recommendations may be made on an appropriate course of action which may include:
 - Making provision for a parent or a relevant EWO to accompany the student to the School and perhaps stay with him/her.
 - Other appropriate arrangements, such as a negotiated transitional timetable, with targets included in the student's IEP.
- After 40 half day absences the parents will always be asked to come into school for a meeting with a senior member of staff, and staff contact, to consider ways of improving the situation.
- Parents of students who travel by taxi are expected to notify the taxi company directly to cancel the transport.
- All students' attendance will be monitored.
- Parents will receive a letter at the end of each term informing them of the running total of attendances and ways in which the School was informed of absences.
- Absence is monitored on a weekly basis by the middle managers group. Action to address absence is formulated through this group. Exceptional circumstances that generate absence are monitored at this time.

Special circumstances:

HOLIDAYS: By law, a maximum of ten school days may be taken for family holidays in any academic year. However, parents are strongly discouraged from disrupting their child's education in this way, particularly when examinations are being prepared for or administered.

WORK EXPERIENCE: Students attending work experience placements are expected to attend their place of work for the required hours on each of the agreed days. Employers are asked to notify the School if a student fails to turn up for work experience. Students are expected to contact the employer if they are unable to attend their work experience for any

reason. If a work experience placement breaks down, the student is expected to notify the Careers Adviser at the School immediately to enable her to contact the employer. The student should begin attending the School again immediately, i.e. the day following the breakdown of the work experience placement.

REINTEGRATION: Once a student begins the process of re-integration, attendance at both schools at the agreed times is expected. It is during this delicate stage of building up confidence in a new and often overwhelming environment that the process is most likely to break down. (see Re-integration Policy.) It is essential that close co-operation with the other school is established before attempting to re-integrate a student and that the lines of communication and responsibility are clear.

The New School at West Heath should be notified immediately of any unexplained absences from the school and vice versa. This should be maintained until the student is well-established and attending the adoptive school full-time

Staffing & Resources

- The Principal has primary responsibility for the setting, implementing, and monitoring of policy and practice.
- Registration teachers have responsibility for taking the register, informing the Vice Principal (Education) of unexplained absences, and awarding attendance points at the end of each week.
- The Head of Education has responsibility for monitoring attendance and acting in accordance with this policy.

External Links

As described above, strong links with parents, colleges, work experience employers, and schools are all an integral part of attendance policy and practice.

The help of the Local Authority Special Educational Needs section or the EWO team is invaluable. They provide an excellent service.

Attendance

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:
Assessment, Recording & Reporting, Curriculum, Differentiation, Subject Policies

Appendices:

Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of:
The Senior Leadership Team

Lead responsibility: Vice Principal – Development

Relevant Legislation: DCSF Guidance

Approved by: S.S. Committee

Date approved:

Ratified by: Trustees

Date ratified: 10:2003

Reviewed – no changes

Date:

Reviewed – with revisions

Date:

Revision No.

1.1