



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

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This Policy should also be read in conjunction with any relevant Jefferys Education Trust documentation/policies. Please ask if you need further information.

### Vision

Within the schools of the Jefferys Education Trust regular school attendance is recognised as key to good pupil outcomes. The links between regular attendance, reaching potential attainment and future life opportunities are well researched. For this reason the schools will encourage good attendance and be robust in monitoring attendance and take action when attendance fails.

Absence can be a symptom of:

- ❖ Wider safeguarding issues - domestic violence, hidden harm etc
- ❖ Low aspirations and/or disaffection
- ❖ Generational trend
- ❖ Economic climate
- ❖ Health or medical needs
- ❖ Lack of regard of the importance of regular attendance

### Aims

- To maximise our attendance rates across the JET by encouraging, recognising and rewarding good attendance.
- To investigate individual absences and ensure that pupils and parents are clear that unauthorised absences especially are not acceptable.
- To work closely with pupils and parents, along with other professional agencies, to help them overcome problems which may prevent students from attending regularly.

### The Legal Framework

- Parents are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take problems seriously which may lead to non-attendance.
- Penalty Notices may be issued under the Local Authority's (LA) Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School. A copy of this Code of Conduct can be obtained from the Attendance Officer or the Prevention and Inclusion Service.

## **Monitoring approach to Attendance in the Jeffery's Education Trust**

Attendance is checked on a twice daily basis. Parents of pupils who are absent without explanation will be automatically contacted mid morning by an automated Truancy Call system or by the School Office. All schools have a 'first day contact policy' in relation to pupil's absence. Parents should expect to be contacted on the first day of their child's absence.

Upon return to school, parents must provide a letter of explanation for the absence if a satisfactory reason has not already been discussed with the Attendance Officer. Those pupils whose attendance is causing concern may be asked to provide medical notes for absence. Tutors / Teachers will collect the notes and send them to the Attendance Officer.

The authorisation of any absence is at the Head Teacher's discretion. If the legitimacy of the absence due to illness is in doubt, the school reserves the right not to authorise the absence and to request parents to provide medical evidence. With parents' permission, the school may also contact the student's GP.

In the case of those pupils whose level of attendance is causing concern, the Attendance Officer will send home letters and a copy of their child's attendance to date. In some cases, the school may choose to meet with parents or conduct a home visit. If there is no improvement the pupil will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who visits the school on a weekly basis to monitor student attendance.

All unauthorised absence will put parents at risk of being issued with a Penalty Notice, or of legal proceedings being instigated for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school.

## **Strategies to Encourage Good Attendance**

We believe that pupils who do achieve good attendance should be recognised and rewarded; thus providing them with positive reinforcement and providing other pupils with further incentives to improve their attendance.

Rewards are issued for excellent attendance weekly or half termly, both for individuals and tutor groups or class groups. Recognition can be made through:

- Personal congratulations from Head Teacher.
- Letters/postcards home.
- Notices in the Newsletter.
- Prizes for the best attendance each term and for the year.
- Certificates for the Record of Achievement.

Positive messages about good attendance are always delivered in class time, tutor times, assemblies and meetings with parents. Up-to-date attendance data is always available from the Attendance Officer or school office.

## **Parents' Responsibilities**

- Parents are under a legal duty to send their children to school regularly.
- It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence as soon as possible, if not before 09.30am.
- Parental contact should be made by telephone on the first day of absence.

- Parents should resolve any in-school problems with the appropriate member of Teaching Staff or Head Teacher without any adverse effect on attendance.
- On return from the absence, a letter should be provided explaining the absence or parents should personally contact the School Office.
- Parents should discuss any problems with the school at the earliest opportunity so that a joint effort can be made to address them.
- The School Prospectus, website, newsletters and occasional letters provide the parents with details of our expectations.

### **Interventions to Address Poor Attendance**

The JET employs a range of strategies to address the problems of pupils who have unacceptably low levels of attendance. Staff work across the JET to identify those at risk. The Pastoral Team's and Attendance Officer, who are responsible for attendance, keep detailed records of concerns and regularly analyse the data in order to target resources. Records show the routes of intervention, progressing from the Tutor / Teacher, to Head of House / Year and finally the Head Teacher. Early intervention is the key. Strategies include telephone calls and letters home, meetings with the student and parents in school and/or home and visits by Education Welfare Offices.

Following these initial interventions and if the problem has still not been successfully dealt with, the pupil's case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service. We work closely with our Education Welfare Officer to support the pupil and parents/guardians in discussing a suitable action plan to get the pupil back into full time education. Through the referral the EWO would be best placed to make an assessment of the issues presented.

As a final measure, where the non-attendance of a pupil is not solved the Local Authority (LA) will seek legal advice and may pursue legal action to enforce attendance through the courts.

Where there have been issues of long-term absence we also work closely with the EWO and parents to ensure the pupil is re-integrated back into school.

The Local Authority convenes annual attendance conferences and network meetings and is working closely with the Health Service professionals to improve attendance across the city.

### **Legal interventions**

#### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Fixed Penalty Notices were brought in by Southampton LA in September 2005 as an alternative to prosecution. All students who have 10 instances of unauthorised attendance (ie 5 days) may be liable.

A full copy of the LA's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School can be obtained from the school or the Education Welfare Service.

## The Importance of Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register in which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, students are marked present or absent. Absence must also be denoted as authorised or unauthorised.

It is essential that the registers are accurate and secure.

## Registration and Punctuality

In order to receive a present mark, pupils should arrive in time to attend registration.

Latecomers, before close of registers, will be marked present, indicated with an 'L', and in the case of Upper Shirley High receive a detention during break time to make up the time.

Pupils who arrive after registers have closed, must sign in at Reception. The late arrival will be marked present with a 'U' and statistically this code counts as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Persistent lateness will result in strategies to address the lateness; this may result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

Persistent lateness also places parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

### Leave of absence

All schools within the JET will not automatically authorise requests for leave of absence. **There is not an automatic entitlement for any family holidays or leave of absence during term time.**

The Head Teacher will consider each request on its merits **but will usually only be agreed in exceptional circumstances.** The most important considerations are:

- Whether the leave of absence could be taken during periods of normal school holiday.
- Whether the student is subject to any examinations during the academic year concerned and achievement may be adversely affected.
- Whether due consideration has been given to the timing of the holiday e.g. at the start of a new term.
- The pupil's current level of attendance.
- No authorised absence will be given during Year 11, KS1 or KS2 SAT's periods, this will include all siblings within the family.

Parents must apply in writing to the Head Teacher **at least three weeks** in advance of the planned leave of absence. An application form is available from the school office which, once considered, will be returned to the parent indicating whether or not the period of leave has been agreed. Parents may be asked to come into school to meet with members of staff before a final decision is made.

In cases where overseas travel has been booked in advance of a request, the school may request sight of travel documentation and where no return travel arrangements have been made, the student may be removed from the school roll on the last day of their attendance.

Parents should be aware that all siblings' attendance should be above 95% in order for any leave of absence to be agreed. If one sibling is below the 95% requirement, the holiday will automatically be refused by all schools, unless in exceptional circumstances.

***Any requests for leave of absence that have not been agreed by the school, but are subsequently taken will put parents at risk of a Penalty Notice or prosecution.***

In cases where a leave of absence request is declined the school will enter a "G" code in the register which denotes an unauthorised absence.

## **Truancy**

Pupils who truant will be placed on attendance report and a letter is sent home. Pupils will be required to make up the lost time and persistent truancy will result in the student being referred to the EWO.

EWOs and the Police conduct truancy sweeps throughout the city. Pupils may be brought back to school and letters sent to parents. Those conducting the sweep may visit the pupil's home if they are absent without explanation.

Pupils identified on truancy sweeps, or returned to school by the Police having been caught truanting, place their parent(s) at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

In cases where a parent has contacted the school and reported their child to be absent due to sickness and the absence has been authorised, but the pupil is subsequently identified on a truancy sweep, or, the pupil is returned to school by the Police, the school reserve the right to de-authorise the absence. This would then place parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued or legal proceedings being instigated, as the absence would be unauthorised.

If a parent has phoned their child in absent due to sickness, the parent is responsible that their child will remain at home during school hours, unless visiting the Doctor's surgery.

## **EWO Referrals**

We work closely with the EWO to support pupils whose attendance is causing concern. This includes the reintegration into school of pupils with long term absence. The EWO may instigate home visits and, therefore, will be able to assess a non-attender's problems in the wider family context, offering advice and solutions where possible.

## **Year 11 Attendance**

If any pupil has below 90% attendance their exam entry is discussed between the Exam Officer and the Vice Head Teacher. **There is no automatic assumption that such students will be entered for the exams.**

### **School Leaving Date**

The school leaving date for all pupils is the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **School Attendance Policy**

This policy is monitored as a matter of course by those responsible for its day-to-day operation and is reviewed annually.

### **Criteria for Success**

- Attendance rate increases.
- Authorised absence rate decreases.
- Unauthorised absence rate decreases.
- Improvement in individuals' attendance.
- The profile of good attendance within the school community.

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Authors: Hazel Hayter, Lara Jordan and Lyn Zammit (March 2012)