

# Stevenage ESC

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

<b>Executive Headteacher:</b>	<b>Dan Nearney</b>
<b>Chair of Management Committee:</b>	<b>Emma Flawn</b>
<b>Date of Policy:</b>	<b>September 2022</b>
<b>Date of Review:</b>	<b>September 2023</b>

## **STEVENAGE EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

For a child to achieve their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential.

Stevenage Education Support Centre are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide a learning environment where all students feel safe, valued and welcome.

Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. High attendance, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good school attendance.

#### **Summary of Policy**

The clear expectation is that students will attend school every day. The importance of this will have been discussed with the student and parents prior to centre attendance commencing. Unexplained absences will be viewed as a matter for concern. Except in extreme circumstances, an attendance figure of 96% is the expected threshold for every student at Stevenage Education Centre.

Where a recurring pattern of non-attendance is observed, or where satisfactory explanations are not forthcoming, the matter will be referred to the ISL Attendance Team and parents/carers and referring school representatives (where appropriate) will be asked to attend a meeting at the centre to discuss future provision. The centre works closely with the Local Authority AIO (Attendance Improvement Officer).

The Head of Centre will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the Centre's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the Centre. The Head of Centre will also ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and analysed. The decision to authorise or not authorise an absence will always rest with the Head of Centre.

All Centre staff will ensure students are registered accurately and promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities. Staff will also support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in the Centre.

When a pupil absents themselves after arrival at the centre the parents or carers will be informed as soon as possible.

A register of pupil attendance is kept and is available to referring schools, County Officers, and members of the Governing Board.

## **Statutory Framework**

The Government expects parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring that their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

The government also expects schools and Local Authorities to;

- Reduce absence including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the establishment where he/she is a registered pupil. Under Section 2 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, a pupil is also required to attend their educational placement regularly until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they attain the age of 18.

The centre is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the centre is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Maintaining good attendance at the centre is the responsibility of everyone in the centre community - pupils, parents and all staff.

## **Students**

All students are expected to attend the centre every day and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their tutor and if the need should arise, from the Head of Centre. A variety of incentives are offered to students with the purpose of improving and rewarding attendance or maintaining excellent attendance:

- Termly certificates for all students with attendance above 96%
- Termly certificates for most improved attendance KS3 and KS4
- Lunch out Reward termly for all students with attendance over 96%
- £20 Restaurant Voucher draw, per term, per key stage.

Students entered into the draw will have one or more of the following;

- Improved attendance over the term
- Above 96%, and
- Excellent punctuality

## **Parents**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends the centre every day, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the centre as soon as possible - by phone call or preferably in writing. A pupil's absence from centre must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent.

Parents should avoid making medical or dental appointments for their child during centre hours. Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance. If a child's attendance is a cause for concern, a letter will be sent and parents will be invited to attend a meeting in the first instance. For students that are dual registered with a mainstream school, a copy of the correspondence will be sent via HertsFX. All schools with a dual registered student at the SESC will be invited to any meetings to discuss and review attendance with parents and a Local Authority Attendance Officer

A parent has the right to request to electively home educate their child/children. SESC will not recommend or suggest this option to any parent but when requested to remove a student from roll, will give parent time to consider their options. If there are safeguarding or social and emotional concerns around the student, a referral to Children's Services Hub will be made by SESC and the parent informed that the referral has been submitted.

If a student with an EHCP is requested to be removed from roll by the parent, contact will be made with SEND, the mainstream school (if appropriate) and The Hub at Children's Services.

Those parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from the centre in matters of communication.

## **Centre**

Staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all centre staff (not just teaching and pastoral staff). The centre will promptly investigate all absenteeism and liaise closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently: when a child is found to be absent in the morning, their home or place of residence will be contacted within the first half hour of the centre day.

If a student has not been seen in the Centre and there has been no communication from the parent in five school days, SESC staff will undertake a Monitoring Home Visit. If there are concerns or parent and student are not available to speak to, the DSL will contact Children's Services or The Police to report the concern.

## Registration

Registers will be marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon teaching sessions and will be marked in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register front sheet and staff handbook.

Registers will close 30 minutes after the start of the session. If a student fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the centre office and complete an entry in the late signing -in book before reporting to their form teacher (the office will subsequently amend the register entry to read 'absent/late'). If a pupil is persistently late, parents will be contacted by letter and invited to attend a meeting to discuss supporting improved punctuality.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives at the centre after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' ( O) for that session.

Form teachers will complete the register in each of their sessions and will notify the office as soon as possible of any absentees.

The office records individual pupil attendance details weekly on the children out of school database.

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Stevenage ESC will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to School Attendance Nov 2016 (DFE)

This states that:

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
- the pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause'
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs'
- the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the Local Authority for any of the following:
  1. the child's transport to and from centre
  2. boarding accommodation for the child at or near the centre, and
  3. enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a centre nearer to

his/her home

- the pupil is the child of traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the guidance are met
- there is a family bereavement
- the pupil is attending an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place at an institute of further or higher education or for a place at another school
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- the pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g., if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the centre is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances)
- the pupil is shopping during centre hours
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- Medical Evidence is required to authorise the absence.
- the pupil is away from centre on a family holiday unless in exceptional circumstance as agreed by the Head of Centre

## **Holidays**

There is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time for holidays and unless for exceptional circumstances, if taken, this will be unauthorised. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued as a result of this.

## **Study Leave**

As a Centre, we believe that all students' needs are best met by attending school every day in the period leading up to examinations. Study Leave will only be granted for Year 11 students during the time of their GCSE Examination period. Revision classes and Careers workshops will be offered at this time for students to attend. Any student has the right to attend the Centre during Study Leave and a parent has the right to request he/she does so.

## **Procedures for Following up Absence**

- If the pupil is absent, the office staff will contact the parents within 20 minutes of the start of the session
- If a pupil is absent for more than three consecutive sessions without an

explanation being forthcoming, the Assistant Head teacher and form tutor are to be informed and staff will write to parents.

- If a student returns to the Centre after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, staff will contact the parents for further clarification.
- An Attendance Improvement Officer will meet with the Head of Centre regularly, to review attendance and any meet with students and parents/carers at Attendance Panel Meetings. The Attendance Panel Meetings are a supportive strategy to improve attendance and punctuality of students who are persistently absent or late to the Centre.
- Following legislation in 2004 where evidence is available of long term unauthorised absence, **fifteen half sessions in the current term** and where all possible attempts have been made to encourage improved attendance, it is possible following referral to ISL Attendance Team, that a Fixed Penalty notice for £60 will be issued per parent. If this is not paid within the set timescale of twenty-one days, then a further notice of £120 may be issued. Should this also be unpaid then prosecution and attendance at court is likely to follow.

	<p><b>Green 95%-100%</b></p> <p>With this level of attendance, you have given yourself the best chance of fulfilling your academic potential.</p> <p>Good attendance also appeals to Colleges, Universities and Employers as it informs them that you are dedicated and reliable.</p>	
	<p><b>Amber 91%-94%</b></p> <p>With this level of attendance your progress will have already started to suffer. You will have missed some important information in lessons and need to catch up!</p> <p>The school will be reviewing your attendance record closely and may already be taking steps to ensure that it improves.</p>	
	<p><b>Red under 90%</b></p> <p>With this level of attendance your chances of success are definitely at risk. If you have been ill, the school will support you in doing the extra work needed to catch up.</p> <p>It is likely that if you have patterns of absence or unexplained absences, the school will already be taking steps to ensure your attendance improves. This might include working with other agencies to support your family in helping you to improve your attendance or even taking court action if there is no improvement.</p>	