

## **Inscape House School attendance policy**

We have a responsibility in partnership with parent/carers and local authorities to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and punctually. We aspire for all our pupils to achieve 98% attendance, unless there are medical conditions or other special circumstances which have been notified to the school's reception.

- This policy sets out the responsibilities of parent/carers and the School. It is very important that we do not blame a pupil or family when a pupil is regularly late or absent but rather we should give support and encouragement to the pupil and family. Our multi-disciplinary team is committed to working with young people, their families and the team of professions around the child, to reduce barriers to accessing education

### **Aims of policy**

- To ensure the school meets their safeguarding responsibilities
- To improve pupil attendance
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school and to communicate this effectively to pupils, staff, parents and governors.
- To raise educational achievement of all pupils
- To provide support and guidance to parents and pupils
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data
- To promote and reward regular school attendance at whole school, class and individual level
- To ensure the school takes into account the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when monitoring and reporting on attendance issues.

### **Background to our policy**

Statistics show that there is a direct link between good achievement and good attendance.

- 20% absence is the equivalent to one day's absence, every week throughout the school year.
- 20% absence over 5 years is the equivalent to a whole year missed!

Regular attendance ensures better progress, both socially and academically. School work is easier to cope with and the learning experience more satisfying. There is also a positive correlation between attendance and happiness at school. Pupils who attend school regularly generally find it much easier to form positive relationships with other children and with adults, and to develop effective social skills (a key

priority for our pupils), to follow school routines and to enjoy all that the school has to offer.

### **The role of the school**

- To keep accurate registers of attendance. For information, to record that a child is present an oblique stroke is made and different codes are used to show an authorised or unauthorised absence.
- Absences are to be registered by using the approved symbols placed on the register.

These are as follows:

B Educated off site ( this includes college and community based education

C Other authorised circumstances

D Dual registration (attending other establishment)

E Excluded (no alternative provision made)

F Extended family holiday (agreed)

G Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)

H Family holiday (agreed)

I Illness (not medical/dental appointments)

J Interview

L Late (before register closed)

M Medical/dental appointments

N No reason yet provided for absence

O Unauthorised absence (not covered by other code)

P Approved sporting activity

R Religious observance

S Study leave

T Traveller absence

U Late (after register closed)

V Educational visit or trip

W Work experience

X Non-compulsory school age absence

Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Z Pupil not on admission register

# Planned whole or partial school closure - All should attend (no mark recorded)

### **The school has a duty to follow up absences to:**

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on the school's management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session (afternoon).

### **Recording lateness:**

If a pupil has not arrived in school when the register is taken, an N (no reason) will be recorded in the register. If there is no valid reason for lateness it will be recorded on the register as either "L" (late, before register closed) if the pupil arrives before 9:30am or "U" (late, after register closed) if the pupil arrives after 9:30am. "U" is counted as a half day absence (one school session). The parent/carer will be contacted if a pupil is late five or more times in a term or two or more times per week. We understand that as most of our pupils use school transport, so as well as contacting families we will have discussions with the transport providers (usually the local authority transport department). If no message has been received by 9.30am, school will start to call all the contact numbers that have been provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If we still have not been able to ascertain where a child or young person is then we will make a home visit. In the event that we are still unable to gain a response, we may report the absence to the police as the pupil will then be classed as missing.

### **Purpose of recording:**

- To record on a student's annual report the number of sessions present, the number of authorised absence and unauthorised absence.
- To provide information for the DfE and Local Authority on attendance by completing the School Census three times per year.
- To secure the attendance of pupils by identifying the cause of absence and supporting families to make improvements in this area. **Our multi-disciplinary team is committed to working with young people, their families and the team of professions around the child, to reduce barriers to accessing education**
- To regularly inform the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

## **Admission Register**

- The admission register contains the personal details of every pupil in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended.

## **Expectations set out by Ofsted on pupil absence**

Our school is inspected periodically by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted). When the inspectors visit, they will be looking at the school's efforts to improve attendance. Issues they will consider are:

- where a school's attendance lies in comparison with the national average
- use of data to improve attendance
- whether attendance has improved as a result of actions taken by the school, including agreeing realistic targets with its local authority and meeting them
- whether the school has been active in monitoring and promoting the attendance of different minority groups
- how attendance compares with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances
- whether reductions in overall and persistent absence have been sustained
- the impact of systems put in place to help learners catch up following periods of non-attendance
- the support available to those pupils who are unable to attend

It is therefore very important that our school makes attendance a priority.

## **The role of the parent/carer**

- To ensure that the pupil attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when a pupil is significantly unwell and therefore unfit to attend school. If there is a particular reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty with attendance, parent/carers should let the school know in order that they can support the family through this difficulty.
- Ensuring that the school is informed, by telephone, every morning of absence, giving a reason and an estimate of when the pupil is expected to return to school. This is so we can meet our safeguarding responsibilities. If it is known that the absence may be more than a few days we may agree to less frequent updates.
- Providing a short note to the teacher on the pupil's return to school is required as this is a physical record which can be filed against the register.
- Arranging all medical appointments, where possible, out of school hours or during school holidays – if this is not possible, a note should be sent to the

teacher prior to the appointment to inform of the need for the pupil to be out of school for an appointment.

- Ensuring that your contact details are kept up to date by contacting the school office with any changes. This is very important in case of an emergency.
- Work with the team around the pupil, to ensure that your child/young person is punctual and arrives at school just at 8:55am, ready to start the school day.

### **Punctuality**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 9.00am at the latest. We work closely with transport so that pupils are neither too early or too late.

### **Authorised absence**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as “Authorised Absences”.

These include:

- Pupil illness (this includes high levels of anxiety) - code I will be used. ***Our multi-disciplinary team is committed to working with young people, their families and the team of professions around the child, to reduce barriers to accessing education, including the reduction in anxiety.***
- Family bereavement
- Religious observance
- Unavoidable or emergency medical appointments (upon presentation of appointment card or letter)
- Medical evidence will be required for frequent or long absences.

### **Unauthorised absence**

There are instances when pupils are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law and these are known as “Unauthorised Absences”. Examples are as follows:

- Waiting for deliveries or repairs
- Family outings for reasons other than significant celebrations
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Unapproved holiday

Where no explanation for an absence has been provided, parent/carers will be contacted by phone or letter. Where no reason for the absence is given or the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as “unauthorised”.

### **Term-Time absence**

There is no entitlement to time off during term-time. The school is closed for 14 weeks of the year and parent/carers are expected to use this time for taking holidays and visiting family. Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the Headteacher in accordance with school policy as agreed by the Governing Body.

In line with legislation, our policy recognises that only in an exceptional circumstance will time off be allowed during term-time. Parent/carers must fill in a “time off during term-time” application form in advance of this absence and before making any booking. In certain cases parent/carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher.

Any time off during term-time which has not been approved will be marked as “unauthorised absence”. If no advance application was made for leave of absence, then the absence must be recorded as “unauthorised”.

### **Governors**

Governors support the Headteacher in managing requests for pupil leave of absence and take the position that families have ‘no right’ to such leave. Governors decide the start and finish of the school day and determine the dates of the school term and holiday dates. The Chair of Governors can be contacted via the school office.

### **Pupils on long term leave due to illness or disability**

Occasionally some pupils have to be away from school over a long period of time due to illness or disability related issues (most often at Inscape with heightened levels of anxiety). We will ensure that if they are well enough they can continue their education either in hospital or by arranging home tuition. We will work closely with outside professionals / agencies to ensure your child continues their education.

### **Safeguarding pupils**

The school must be able to demonstrate to Ofsted that it knows the whereabouts of each pupil and the reason for their absence. It is very important for the local authority to be able to track pupils if they are not attending school and, in some cases, for schools to make a referral to Social Care. If your family is moving house, please let us know if you will no longer require a place for your child/young person, with the date that they will be leaving. It is also helpful to us to have the name of the new school that will be attended. If you do not have this information at the time, please leave a forwarding address and telephone number so that we can contact you.

Pupils who leave the school and their whereabouts are unknown will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and may have their details entered on the Brent ‘Children Missing from Education Database’ if the pupil’s whereabouts cannot be located. When the school has a concern about a pupil’s attendance record, we will instruct the Education Welfare Officer to conduct a home visit, even if a reason has been provided for absence. This is an important safeguarding measure to preserve the well-being and education of children. Such visits may be announced or unannounced.

### **Formal warnings and fixed penalty notices**

For persistent absence, i.e. unauthorised term-time leave or a minimum of 10% absence (absence need not be consecutive absence) the Headteacher may make a referral to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a formal written warning or a fixed penalty notice.

### **How we celebrate excellent attendance and improving attendance**

Pupils with 98%+ and 95%+ attendance each term, will be celebrated with certificates and rewards being awarded.

In recognition that many of our pupils have experienced and may still experience barriers to their attendance and punctuality, for those who have made significant improvement, a certificate and reward will be awarded at the end of each term.

### **Support for Parent/Carers**

- Coffee mornings and other activities which provide regular opportunities for parent/carers to meet with the wider School Leadership Team.
- Parents / Carers are welcome to book an appointment to see a member of the school senior leadership team at any time, via school reception or a special support meeting can be organised. We try to offer an open door approach but booking an appointment ensures no disappointment.
- Teacher and parent/carer meetings

### **References:**

Improving Attendance at School (Charlie Taylor, DfE 2012)

Advice on School Attendance (DfE 2014)

Governors' Handbook (DfE January 2015)

Framework for School Inspections (Ofsted January 2015)

Family Lives website [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk).