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1. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Outline Esland Bedford School's expectations around attendance and punctuality
- Communicate the benefits of good attendance
- Detail the procedures following non-attendance
- Articulate how Esland Bedford School monitors and evaluates attendance
- Describe the strategies and support Inclusion School and its staff utilise to enable an improvement in student attendance and support families

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy's development has been informed by the Department for Education's 2022 guidance "Working together to improve school attendance".

Parents/carers have a duty to educate their children 'suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs which they may have' either by regular attendance at school or otherwise under Section 7 of The Education Act 1996. Parents/carers whose children are registered at school are then responsible for ensuring that they attend punctually, regularly and stay at school.

Schools must ensure that attendance registers are kept, in accordance with legal requirements and the policy of the school. In addition, schools must inform the Local Authority about pupils who do not attend school regularly or who have been continuously absent for two weeks or more (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate). Schools have to include data on authorised and unauthorised absence on the school website.

Local Authorities are required to ensure parents/carers carry out their responsibilities with regard to their children's education.

3. A whole school approach

Esland Bedford School strongly promotes, encourages and celebrates excellent attendance for all its students and their families because of the benefits it provides to each student's personal development and academic progress.

However, Esland Bedford School recognises that many of its students are experiencing ongoing mental health needs, and some are in crisis. In these circumstances, each student's attendance is viewed individually and within the context of each student's needs and it is essential that Esland Bedford School, parents/carers and other professionals communicate and work together to promote, improve and ensure good attendance.

Punctuality is part of Esland Bedford School's expectation of good attendance.

Esland Bedford School embeds a whole school approach to attendance in which all staff, students and parents/carers understand the benefits of good attendance and believe in this mindset.

All staff are trained in valuing and celebrating good attendance and identifying persistent or declining attendance to ensure early intervention.

As a school, we work in partnership with the student and their family to be a positive, safe and welcoming environment in which they want to be present. We communicate the benefits of good attendance throughout a student's time and celebrate this in reports and communication with families.

We want to work with the families of our students and we want them to be significant contributors to our school community. Esland Bedford School looks to promote family activities as part of this approach and make school a safe and welcoming place for all the family.

During our admissions process we identify those who experience emotionally-based school avoidance and work with the student's previous school, their family and the Local Authority to support this from the start of their journey at Esland Bedford School. Further details of this can be found in Section 7.

Esland Bedford School has high expectations and standards for its staff around attendance and punctuality as these serve as important modelling for our students. For example, if a lesson starts at 10am, it is the expectation that a teacher/tutor is always on site to meet and greet their students.

4. Benefits of good attendance

There are numerous benefits to a young person's attainment, social and personal development and their mental health and wellbeing from regularly attending school. These benefits can be taken for granted and easily overlooked. At Esland Bedford School we feel it is important to communicate the positives of regular attendance.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the benefits for students who regularly attend into the following areas:

Learning and attainment

- Access support to meet learning and other needs from trained teachers and tutors
- Increase self-esteem through positive recognition of effort and achievement
- Enhance literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- Increase opportunities for college, university, employment or chosen future

- Achieved recognised qualifications
- Develop forms of intelligences (e.g. emotional, interpersonal, logical-mathematical, verbal-linguistic)
- Develop confidence through learning with a supportive network of teachers, tutors and wellbeing professionals
- Increase organisational ability
- Access greater number of qualifications through regular attendance
- Experience the transformative potential of education

Social and personal development

- Experience a sense of belonging and community outside of the family
- Build and experience friendships
- Develop resilience
- Develop teamwork and understanding of others' needs and beliefs
- Develop social communication and interaction skills
- Experience positive routine and structure
- Experience a sense of achievement
- Engage with kind and nurturing adults who can be positive role models
- Develop positive routines
- Develop practical skills, such as cooking, gardening and employability skills
- Experience new cultures, beliefs and people to broaden horizons and break down prejudice and stereotypes
- Develop identity, purpose and independence

Mental health and wellbeing

- Access mental health support from experienced, trained and caring adults, including signposting to other services
- Develop strategies for positive mental health and wellbeing
- Develop confidence and self-esteem through relationships peers and trusted adults
- Experience a change of environment
- Support peers and others
- Develop friendships to challenge feelings of loneliness
- Develop positive relationships and routines (e.g. to support sleep)
- Attend a non-judgemental, accepting and calm environment
- Offer a distraction from other problems
- Engage with physical exercise to boost mental wellbeing
- Access therapeutic activities, such as art, crafts and music to benefit wellbeing

5. Procedures

The school registers attendance twice per day – at the beginning of the day in Tutor time (9:15am) and at the beginning of lesson 4 (11:55am). Registers are recorded on the Bromcom MIS.

5.1 Informing Inclusion School of an absence

If your child will be absent on a specific day, please use the following procedures to inform school. If you know that your child will be absent in advance (e.g. a medical appointment) please contact school by:

- Phone on 01525 863805
- Email at bedfordschool@eslandcare.co.uk

If your child has an unexpected absence (i.e. illness), we ask that you contact us by email or phone by 9.15am using details provided above.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school directly on the first day of absence, and all subsequent days, with a reason for absence.

Parents/carers who do not make contact with the school regarding a child's absence and cannot be contacted by the school will have an unauthorised absence recorded for their child.

If no contact is received by 9.30am the school admin team will contact you directly as part of our safeguarding procedures.

5.2 Requesting a leave of absence

If you wish to request a leave of absence (e.g. holiday), please contact the office at bedfordschool@eslandcare.co.uk and request an absence request form. This must be completed and returned to the office. Requests will be passed to the Headteacher for review.

The Education (Pupil Registration England) Regulations 2013 regulations make clear that Headteachers can only grant leave of absence during term time when there are exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher will determine if the request for an absence in term time is exceptional and will consider each request on a case-by-case basis.

If a request is made for longer than 10 days parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the request. Similarly, if multiple short breaks are requested that add up to 10 days parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the matter.

5.3 Daily absence procedures

If a student does not arrive for their school by 9.30am, and the Admin Team has not been contacted by the parent/carer to inform school of the student's absence in advance, it is the responsibility of the Form Tutor or Admin Team to follow the following safeguarding procedures:

1. The Form Tutor will take the register at the start of the Form period. The register is open for 15 minutes.
2. If the student has not arrived within the 15 minutes of the registration period opening, a member of staff will make a call to the primary contact number. They will be marked as an unauthorised absence (N, reason for absence not yet provided) on the register until we have spoken with a parent/carer when the code will be updated to reflect the correct absence code.
3. If a voicemail facility is available we will always leave a message saying that [name] has not arrived and ask for them to return the call with a reason for absence as soon as possible.
4. All communication will be recorded, including if a voicemail message has been left.
5. Staff will further update the evaluation once the call has been returned with a reason for absence and update the register with the appropriate absence code.
6. If an email has been requested by parents as a primary method of communication,

staff ensure this is done and the student's evaluation updated. However, if absence is persistent, a phone call will always be made.

To assist with this process, Esland Bedford School asks that parents/carers provide at least two emergency contact numbers prior to a student starting so that someone can be contacted if a student is absent.

5.4. Requesting additional support

If you are concerned about your child's attendance and would like to request additional support, please contact our Assistant Headteacher to discuss how we can support you and your child.

- Sharon Taylor sharontaylor@eslandcare.co.uk

6. Measuring and monitoring attendance

Esland Bedford School's lead for measuring and monitoring attendance is the Assistant Headteacher. They work in partnership with the safeguarding team and Pastoral Leads to oversee the attendance.

6.1 Definitions

The following table defines the three key terms related to attendance:

- **Good attendance** Present for 90% or more of school
- **Persistent' absence** Missing 10% or more of school, the equivalent of 1 day off school every 2 weeks
- **Severe' absence** Missing for 50% or more of school, the equivalent of every other day not in school

6.1 Early identification of emotionally-based school avoidance

Due to the needs of many of our students, they will have already been identified as emotionally-based school avoiders (EBSA) or are vulnerable to this.

If a student has been previously identified as an emotionally-based school avoider, additional support will be provided to the student and their family, ensuring that student voice is at the centre of these discussions, in order to identify the individual barriers to attending for that young person. A list of strategies to support all students can be found in Section 7.

These students, having been identified, will be highlighted on the register and reviewed during the safeguarding team's weekly attendance review.

For those students who have not been previously identified as emotionally-based school avoiders the same support will still be available.

If a previously unidentified student's attendance drops below 90% School will initiate contact with home via the respective Pastoral Lead to discuss the reasons for absence and what support School can provide to enable good attendance.

These students will be identified as emotionally-based school avoiders on the registers and receive the same support as those identified from admission.

6.2 Process for measuring and monitoring attendance

An attendance register is completed twice daily.

An attendance percentage is calculated automatically. This is recorded cumulatively for each

week, half-term, term and the whole school year. This enables the safeguarding team to identify trends and patterns over a range of periods.

Attendance is monitored weekly by the safeguarding team and it is their responsibility to identify additional support for the student and their family. All supportive strategies are recorded and reviewed in subsequent reviews.

Attendance strategies and interventions are shared with all staff in fortnightly staff meetings, daily briefings and all staff are encouraged to contribute to the design and success of securing good attendance for students.

The Pastoral Lead/Assistant Head will lead in liaising with parents/carers and sharing and communicating attendance details, plans and strategies.

Attendance and absence is discussed at student review meetings, which can include Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Reviews, Personal Education Plans (PEP), Autumn Term Review and any meeting requested by parents/carers or suggested by the School.

School attendance is reported termly to the Esland Bedford School governing board including the cohort's overall percentage, the number of 'persistently' and 'severely' absent, and is differentiated by category of vulnerable students (e.g. Child Protection, SEND, EAL, Looked After Child, Pupil Premium, FSM and Looked After Children).

The overall attendance percentage is compared term-on-term and year-by-year.

6.3 Safeguarding and external support

As outlined in this policy, School will be in daily contact with parents/carers if their child is absent.

If School staff are not able to contact the two emergency contacts provided during admission within 48 hours this will prompt an unannounced visit from a member of the safeguarding team.

If there is no one at home or no contact is made at the home visit the member of the safeguarding team will contact the police and make a referral to the relevant Local Authority Childrens Services.

A student's absence could be indicative of a deeper issue. Although School will do all it can to support a student and their family, there will be some support that it cannot provide and require the involvement of other partners and agencies, such as Early Help, CAMHS, and the Local Authority.

Ultimately, if attendance does not improve, it indicates that Esland Bedford School is not the correct placement for that student. As School has said that it can meet the students' needs and they are not attending it will require the SENCO to lead discussions with the student, parent/carer and the Local Authority SEN department at an Emergency Annual Review.

7. Strategies for improving attendance

Esland Bedford School's lead for supporting and improving attendance is Assistant Headteacher, Sharon Taylor, sharontaylor@eslandcare.co.uk. Pastoral Leads and the SENCO will also be essential in designing a personalised support package to improve attendance. All staff will have this information shared with them to ensure a consistent approach is implemented by the whole school.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of strategies and supportive measures to improve attendance:

- A small step approach to returning to school, including simply “crossing the threshold”
- Implement a reduced timetable, with fortnightly reviews to look to increase the reduced timetable gradually and supportively
- Be met by a trusted member of staff at the start of each day
- Accessing additional therapeutic and wellbeing support within school, such as Art Therapy
- Changing classes or lessons due to difficult peer relationships (if these cannot be resolved in another manner)
- A home visit to discuss concerns and identify appropriate support
- A personal return to education plan can be formulated at home visits, identifying trusted adults, effective strategies and embedding student voice.
- Social stories and visual timetables, led by the SEND Lead
- The Pastoral Lead, or another DSL-trained member of staff, will look, with parental/carer/student permission, to collect the student from their home to take them to school
- Arrange a review meeting with parents/carers, as well and with support from our Pastoral Manager
- Referrals for further support such as Local Authority SEN, Early Help Hub, Children’s Services, CAMHS, GP, sleep support or other appropriate avenues of support
- Hold an Emergency Annual Review
- If following all these interventions a student continues not to attend education, and other strategies have been put in place, and there has not been any other safeguarding considerations which have prompted a Children’s Services referral, a referral to Children’s Services will be made

8. Links with other policies

This online safety policy is linked to our:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Children with health needs who cannot attend education Policy.

