Attendance Policy

Rationale
At de Stafford School we believe that regular attendance will maximise opportunity provided to students. de Stafford will work alongside parents/carers to ensure that students’ attendance is consistent and punctual. Full attendance is a necessary part of the learning process.

The School, alongside the LA, firmly believes that regular school attendance is key to achieving. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment is clearly evidenced. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Aims
- To support students and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- To ensure that all students have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning
- To ensure students progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school
- To make parents/carers aware of legal responsibilities
- To provide a caring learning environment, which allows issues that prevent regular attendance to be identified and dealt with at an early stage

Audience
Parents, Staff, Governors.

Monitoring
To be monitored & reviewed by Home School Liaison Officer and Attendance Team as procedures change

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

We expect that all students will:
- Attend 100% of the time, unless the absence is authorised by the school.
- Attend all lessons
- Attend punctually
- Attend prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their parent/carer, Social and Academic Mentor or Head of Year any problems that prevent them attending regularly and punctually.

We expect that all parents/carers will:
- Be aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school on a regular full-time basis - Section 7 Education Act 1996
- Ensure that their child arrives punctually and prepared for the day
- Ensure that they contact the school on the first day of absence, and every day thereafter with all absences being subsequently supported by a note
Contact the school if a problem occurs that may or has resulted in their child not wanting to attend.
Be prepared to attend attendance meetings to discuss support for their child.
Notify school immediately of any changes of circumstances or contact details.

We expect that school will encourage attendance by:
- Providing a welcoming atmosphere for all students.
- Keeping a regular and accurate register of attendance twice a day and for all lessons.
- Contact parents/carers on each day of absence where no prior explanation has been received.
- Monitoring students’ patterns of attendance.
- Inform parents if attendance becomes a cause for concern
- Responding promptly to a child or parent/carers concern about the school or other students.
- Make initial inquiries to parents/carers of students who are not attending regularly, express concern and clarify the School's and Local Authorities expectations with regard to regular attendance.
- Refer to Education Welfare Services students presenting irregular or unjustified absences.
- Celebrate good and improved attendance
- Publish attendance statistics

Procedures:

Registration and punctuality

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day. At de Stafford School, morning registration is taken at SAM time and afternoon registration is taken after lunch at 2:10pm. The register will show whether a student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity or absent.

Punctuality to School is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with a student’s SAM tutor is one of the most important periods in the day. Lateness to school causes disruption to that individual’s learning and to that of the other students in the class. It is paramount therefore that all students arrive at school on time.

- Registration takes place at 8:30 am and students who arrive after this time will be recorded as late to school. Close of register is 8.50am.
- After close of registration students must sign in at Student Services for the purpose of ensuring health and safety of all students and ensuring that we meet our legal obligation.
- Students who arrive to school after 9:00am, without contact from parents and a valid reason will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session, and can be subject to prosecution by the Local Authority.
- Examples of unjustified lateness include: missing the bus, getting up late, uniform issues or waiting for a friend.
• Lateness by a student will be dealt with through the School pastoral system and may be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
• Afternoon registration will be take place after lunch at 2:10pm.
• The School day ends at 3.15pm unless otherwise advised.

The register must show whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Schools, not parents, authorise absence and in doing so must adhere to DCSF Guidelines in authorising absences. Schools should make sure that parents are aware of their responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly.

• **Authorised** absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for an absence for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for the absence. In cases of doubt reference should be made to the Head of Year.
• All other absences must be regarded as **unauthorised**

### Students leaving during the School Day

Students are not permitted to leave the premises without prior permission from the School.

• Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of School time.
• Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected time of return and whether the student is being collected or will make their own way to their destination.
• Students must sign out at Student Services on leaving the School and sign back in upon their return.
• Where a student is being collected from the School, parents are requested to report to the School reception before the student is permitted to leave the School site. If you arrange for another adult to collect your child please ensure that you have contacted school in advance to advise.
• If a student is known to have left the School site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the School be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police to register the student as a missing person.

### Requests for Holiday/Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

The School holiday dates are published a year in advance and we strongly expect parents/carers to book their family holidays during the School holidays. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. As parents you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child’s attendance at school. During the academic year, students are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

If, however, this is unavoidable, parents/carers should apply to the School by completing a Leave Request Form which can be found on the School Website or collected from
Reception. This must be signed & returned to the Headteacher directly; however it is no longer policy to authorise any absences due to holiday taken during term time. Some exceptional circumstances may be considered when appropriate.

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for a holiday during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the head teacher, each parent/carer may be liable to receive a penalty notice for each child.

All requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher. Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final.

Changing Schools
It is important that if a parent/carer decides to send their child to another school they must inform the school of their decision as soon as possible. A student cannot be removed from the roll of the school until the following information has been received in writing to the Headteacher:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school
- The name of the new school and start date
- The new home address if it is known and applicable

The student’s records will then be sent onto the new school. In the event of the information not being provided then the student/family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

There is an expectation that the child will continue at school until the transfer takes place other than in exceptional circumstances. A student will not be taken off roll until they have actually started at the new school, or at the Headteacher’s discretion, if a student has not attended school for four weeks and they are known to be attending another school or are known to be living out of County.

Withdrawing from School
If a parent decides to withdraw their child the school cannot take them off roll until another school place has been arranged. Alternatives open to parents who withdraw their child are:

- Finding another school place.
- Education by parental provision – It is a parents legal responsibility under section 7 of Education Act 1996 to arrange full time education at school or otherwise. This must be put in writing to the school before a child’s name can be taken off roll. Education Welfare and the Home Education Department will then be notified of your decision.

The school are not legally obliged to provide any work to be sent home for a child who has been withdrawn from school.

Headteacher: Mr Jeremy Garner
School Action to Improve Attendance

Parents should be made aware of the school attendance policy and should be encouraged to co-operate with the procedures outlined in the policy. School will only provide work for absent students to complete at home if these absences are authorised and valid.

Schools should have systems and procedures for:

- Registering pupils - registers MUST be up-to-date and accurately completed
- Categorising absence
- Collating and analysing attendance data to identify trends and enable action to be taken
- Determining in which exceptional circumstances leave of absence will be granted in term-time
- Monitoring attendance and punctuality for all lessons
- Dealing with late arrivals
- Dealing with unauthorised absence
- Referring cases to the LEA
- Re-integrating pupils who have been absent.

Action will be taken to improve a student’s attendance before a referral is made to the Education Welfare Service. This could include:

- Phone Calls
- Letters
- School Meetings
- One to One Meetings with students
- Head of Year support

Where intervention at school level fails to effect an improvement in attendance a referral to Education Welfare will be made. School works closely with Education Welfare to determine the course of action to be taken in cases of poor attendance and other agencies such as Children’s Services, Family Support Service and the Police should be engaged where appropriate.

ATTENDANCE PENALTY NOTICES

The issue of a Penalty Notice will be considered by the Education Welfare Service if a child has 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents’ failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason. Unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time could result in parents being sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003?

Section 23 of the Act gives powers to the Local Education Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling
to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. The powers came into force on the 27th February 2004.

Why has it been introduced?
Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally as missing school affects a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a student vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities.

What is a Penalty Notice?
Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (those for which the school cannot or has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court whilst still securing an improvement in a student's attendance. If the Penalty Notice is paid in full on time, then you will not be prosecuted for this particular offence.

What are the costs?
The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Please be aware that each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who incurs unauthorised absences. For example, if there are two parents and one child, each parent will receive one Penalty Notice. If there are two parents and two children incurring unauthorised absences, each parent will receive two Penalty Notices, which in this case would amount to £120 each if paid within 21 days.

How are they issued?
By post to your home.

When are they used?
Surrey Local Education Authority (LEA) considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:
- Overt truancy (pupils found during truancy patrols)
- Holidays in term time
- 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks

The Authority does not take such action lightly and would prefer to work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

Headteacher: Mr Jeremy Garner
Is a warning given?
Yes, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued, which will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to effect an improvement. In that time your child must not have any unauthorised absences from school. In the event of a further referral in the same rolling year a Penalty Notice may be issued with immediate effect. Warnings will not be issued in the event of a holiday in term time.

Is there an Appeal process?
There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish.

How do I pay?
Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalments is not an option with Penalty Notices.

What happens if I do not pay?
You have up to 42 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child. If proven, this can attract a fine of up to £2,500 and/or three months imprisonment, or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?
Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice as payment discharges your liability in this respect. However it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as Education Welfare.

Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?
Yes, Surrey Local Education Authority (LEA) and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need to secure an improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or with the LEA's Education Welfare Officer at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

For more information on Education Welfare issues, please contact the Local Area Office.

Legal Proceedings
Education Welfare, on behalf of the Local Education Authority, has authority to commence proceedings either in the Magistrates' Court or in the Family Proceedings Court when a student fails without justification to attend the school on a regular full-time basis. Lateness after close of registration constitutes unauthorised absence and where a pupil continually arrives late under these circumstances legal proceedings may be considered. When considering legal proceedings the Education Welfare Officer will consult with the Head teacher who would be asked to complete a Certificate of Attendance for the pupil to be used in the prosecution process or in the application for an Education Supervision Order.
The only statutory defences for absences are:
- Illness with medical evidence
- Religious observance
- Authorised leave
- Issues with home school transport provided by the LEA

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