Educate U

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Susan Evans, Director of Education	**Date:** 01/04/21
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Attendance Policy

Prior to being placed with us our children and young people may have experienced difficulties with attending school. Therefore, it will be part of their transition to work with them to improve and maintain a high level of attendance. This policy reflects the vision and aims of Educate U. All staff work collaboratively to encourage every student to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children and young people to maximise the learning experience in order that all children and young people reach their maximum potential. We are determined in encouraging the development of high self-esteem and for our children and young people to take pride and ownership of their learning. In conjunction with this, we will continuously provide a clear framework for parents and staff as well as clear procedures for involving parents and/or external agencies where appropriate.

Our policy applies to all children and young people registered at this school aged 5-18 and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils that are registered at our school on the school website. Educate U encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that

> *"parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly"* (DfE 1999).

Aims & Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and the Central Advisory Team in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve students' achievement by ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to all children and young people in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with students, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in students a sense of their own responsibility.

- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Parents/Carers

We will work closely with our parents/carers to support the students if their attendance starts to decline.

We will monitor attendance and when a difficulty arises, we will work in partnership to support the child back into education. This can be a home visit, change of timetable, change of activities. We need to minimise the impact on the students' learning by encouraging and promoting attendance.

If the child or young person has a regular Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting then attendance will also be point raised in each meeting.

Punctuality

It is the parent/carers responsibility:

- To ensure that their children and young people arrive to school on time. Doors open at 9.25 am. This is sufficient time for all pupils to get to their classroom.
- To ensure children and young people who are late after 9.40 am report to the school office to sign in. Records are kept of the pupils that are late with an L code in the register
- To ensure children and young people are collected promptly at the end of the school day and that necessary arrangements are in place for the journey home. If these differ from the child's normal arrangements, the class teacher and school office should be made aware of this.

Absences

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 08:45am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office, or emailing office@educateu.co.uk
- To provide medical evidence where possible, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.

Parents/carers of children and young people for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 10:30am.

Illness/Medical absences

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc.

The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

At Educate U, we recognise the impact that EBSA can have on attendance to school and our attendance figures as a school. For many of our students, anxiety, trauma, or other emotional difficulties can create significant barriers to attending school regularly. As an SEMH school, we are committed to catering for young people with EBSA, providing a supportive and understanding environment where students feel safe to engage with their education. We work closely with students, families, and external agencies to identify the underlying causes of EBSA and implement tailored strategies to help students gradually reintegrate into school. These include developing a sense of belonging to Educate U with:

- **Support Plans**: Tailored support to each student's specific needs, incorporating strategies to manage anxiety, address emotional triggers, and ensure gradual re-engagement to Educate U. This may include flexible timetables, home tutoring, quiet spaces, and regular check-ins with a trusted staff member.
- **Safe and Supportive Environment**: Key staff develop a safe, nurturing space where students feel comfortable and supported. This might involve having a designated calming area, using sensory tools, and ensuring that staff are trained in recognising signs of distress and providing immediate emotional support.
- **Gradual Reintegration**: For students who experience significant anxiety, re-integrating them into school life slowly can be effective. This might include phased returns to school, starting with part-time attendance or a focus on one-to-one outreach tutor support before gradually increasing participation in group activities.
- **Therapeutic Support**: Educate U offers access to a Educational Psychologist who can undertake an EBSA assessment with a child or young person. Appropriately trained mental health professionals, such as counsellors and therapists can then work with students on a one-to-one basis to address the root causes of their EBSA, build coping mechanisms, and support emotional well-being.
- **Parental and Carer Involvement**: We work closely with our families to create a consistent approach to managing EBSA. Regular communication and joint problem-solving can ensure that there is continuity between home and school, which can help reduce anxiety around school attendance.

Absence for Holidays

Parents/carers are expected to take their children and young people on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education. If there are exceptional circumstances, parents/carers must complete an absence request form in advance of the trip (ideally at least 4 weeks prior). These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher or Senior Management Team (SMT), and they will use their discretion whilst applying government recommendations.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To obtain a absence request form from the school office.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally 4 weeks prior).

If parents/carers decide to take a holiday without SMT's authorisation, the child's absence(s) will be marked as unauthorised.

Absence for Other Reasons

Absences for reasons such as religious observance (up to 2 days per year) or close family bereavement *may* be authorised by SMT. These requests must be discussed with the school. Absences for close family members' weddings or funerals will be limited to one day's authorised absence, if granted.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To inform the office, in writing, of the need for leave in circumstances which are known in advance.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

Unexplained Absence

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority. The school will work closely with home to find a solution to the situation and return the child to the school. If Safeguarding is identified the appropriate measures will be implemented.

We provide a bespoke timetable for children and young people who are struggling with attendance at school; this will include visits from the school team, phone calls emails and the use of outside providers to re-engage and work with the child's anxieties.

Children Missing in Education

If a child or student is absent (unexplained) for at least 5 consecutive days. A home visit may be carried out. If the absence continues for a total of 10 days, the family will be referred as a CME case for the Local Authority. Link for form below:
https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education/schools-new/attendance/child-missing-education

Educate U will try every support measure available to us to help the family help the child to return to school.

Appendix 1: Absence request form

Pupil Information			
Pupil Name:		Class:	
Name of Parent / Carer making the request:		Parent/Carer Contact number:	
Parent/Carer contact email:			
Absence Request Information			
Date(s) of Requested Absence:			
Reason for Absence:	[ ] Illness [ ] Illness [ ] Medical Appointment [ ] Family Emergency [ ] Religious Observance [ ] Personal Reasons (Please Specify): [ ] Other (Please Specify):		
Duration of Absence:	[ ] Full Day [ ] Partial Day (Please Specify Time):		
Additional/Supporting Comments:			
Parent/Guardian Signature:			
Date of Submission:			

Please submit this form to the school office at least 14 days prior to the planned absence, or as soon as possible in case of unexpected absences. Approval of the absence request is subject to school policies and regulations. For any questions or further assistance, please contact the school office.