



## Viaduct Federation of Schools Attendance Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Governing Board	Autumn 2021
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	July 2021	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	Autumn 2023	

**Designated teacher:** Headteacher

**School target for attendance:** 96%

**School target for unauthorised absence:** 0.0%

At The Viaduct Federation we recognise the importance of regular school attendance and believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. The Supreme Court defines regular attendance as attending on every occasion where pupils are required to attend the school. It is also vitally important that children arrive and leave school on time.

Education provides a means of enhancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines the educational process and leads to underachievement and low attainment.

High levels of attendance are the responsibility of everyone in the community – pupils, parents/carers, governors and all staff.

#### **Aims:**

- The Schools aim to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- The Schools see regular school attendance as essential for all the pupils if they are to be successful, aims to work in partnership with parents to ensure the highest possible levels.
- The Schools aim to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

#### **The Law**

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

Local Authorities have various powers to ensure that parents meet their duties.

#### **Responsibilities of Parents/Carers**

There are legal obligations on parents to secure education for their children of compulsory school age, whether at school or otherwise and to send them to school regularly once they are on the school roll.

If the schools are to achieve their attendance targets, parents must see themselves as partners with the school in their children's education and support the schools in the following ways:

- Ensure the fullest possible attendance of their child. Extended request for leave may result in the child being taken off the school roll and having to be re-admitted on their return.
- When absence is unavoidable, provide a verbal or written explanation on the first day of absence.
- That Doctor's/Surgery stamps to be provided for illness/medical appointments
- In cases of long term sickness (more than one week) a member of the school nursing team can access GP records to ascertain the best return to school plan.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school and is collected from school on time
- Ensure that the school has up to date emergency contact numbers.

### **Responsibilities of the Schools**

It is the responsibility of the schools to support attendance and to deal with problems which may lead to non-attendance. The schools employ a range of strategies to improve and encourage good attendance and punctuality including responding to holiday requests and pursuing unexplained absence with parents. The schools will phone parents on each day of absence\* if parents have not informed the school of their child's absence by phone or letter (unless a doctor's note indicates a longer term of absence). Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently with attendance being a regular feature of year group meetings. \*home visits may also be undertaken

### **The Importance of Registration/Punctuality**

Registers are important legal documents and are kept securely. The law requires schools to call the register twice a day:

- At the start of morning session.
- Once during the afternoon session. At The Viaduct Federation the registers are called at the start of the afternoon session.

Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents.

Children are marked either present or absent in the register. Particular attention is given to accurate registration; staff use consistent rules and coding for registration. It is our policy to actively discourage the late arrival of children at school. A child who arrives late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning but also that of others. A firm line is taken on late arrivals.

When a child arrives after the registration period the child enters school through the only available entrance as all other entrances have been locked. A reason must be given to the office staff for their lateness. The child will then be registered 'late' and an unauthorised absence for that session.

When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised. The school administrator enters this information onto the

computer on a daily basis. If this persists the class teacher will inform the person responsible for attendance who will contact the parent/carer. Unresolved lateness will then be referred to the Education Welfare Officer at the Local Authority

### **Notification of Absence**

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent giving a reason for the absence. This can be done by:

- **Telephone:** the school administrators will enter the reason for absence directly into the register;
- **Letter:** the class teacher will place the letter in the envelope which goes to the office with the register;
- **Personal:** an explanation may be given personally to either the class teacher or the administrator when the child returns to school. This will then be entered into the register.

In the first instance the person responsible for attendance will verbally follow up all absences which are unexplained. If no notification is received about a child's absence a standard letter will be sent to parents asking for the reason.

### **School Responses to Absence**

#### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Where a child is absent at the time of registration the law requires schools to indicate on their attendance register whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be kept away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. The law requires that absences not agreed in advance to be recorded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory explanation is given.

The schools will:

- Investigate all unexplained absences
- Operate a system of first day calling if no reason has been provided for absence and will try to make contact on each subsequent day until notified of reason of absence.
- Contact parents if it has any concerns over attendance
- Attendance will be monitored by the schools and where concerns are raised, they may refer the case to the 'school attendance team' at the local authority to begin the legal process towards a fine for non attendance.

By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents. The school need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence if they doubt the explanation. If the schools are satisfied that the circumstances are both genuine and exceptional\* the absence may be authorised.\*The NAHT states 'the defining principles for exceptional circumstances are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short'

Excessive amounts of authorised absence can disrupt continuity of learning. The school will therefore watch for emerging patterns of authorised absence by individual children. Equally

persistent early drop off before the school is open and late pick up after school has ended will be monitored and referred to social services.

### **Examples of Authorised Absence**

An absence will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

### **Examples of Unauthorised Absence**

The school cannot accept any of the following:

- Term time holiday
- Shopping during school hours
- Special occasions e.g. birthdays
- No uniform/shoes
- Overslept
- Haircut
- At home due to family illness

Parents are asked to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, avoiding term time so that their child's education is not disrupted. Unauthorised term time holidays of five consecutive days will be referred for a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Headteacher/deputy will talk to those parents whose child's absence is persistently below national expectations reminding parents of the disruption to their child's education and that it could lead to i.e. fines or court action.

### **Exclusions**

Where a child has been temporarily excluded [fixed term or permanent] he or she will remain on the school roll. The absence will be regarded as authorised. Once a permanent exclusion is confirmed the child will be removed from the school roll.

### **Communication with Parents**

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the schools place great emphasis on this in its communication with parents. Attendance is shared at parent/carer consultation evenings and in the end of year reports. It is monitored termly and this may lead to steps being taken between these points.

### **Parental Concerns**

Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All the staff at The Viaduct Federation are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset a child which means they become unhappy, and may not want to attend school. Parents are encouraged to communicate with the schools, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved.

Discussions with the parent/carer and teachers will take place and appropriate action will be taken.

### **School Attendance/ Youth offending Team**

Close liaison between the school and the School Attendance/Youth Offending Team is crucial in attempts to improve attendance. The principal function of the School Attendance/Youth Offending Team is to help parents, schools and the LEA meet their statutory obligations on school attendance.

### **The Role of the LA**

The LA is charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations, including where necessary, the taking of action through the courts. The LA discharges the enforcement obligations through the Education Welfare Service.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The attendance of pupils will be monitored on a regular basis by the person responsible for attendance. The Headteacher will keep governors informed on attendance issues through the Headteacher's termly report to the governing body.

This policy and the procedures included within it will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure continued high standards in all aspects of attendance.

*This policy links with the Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy*