Pace Independent Special School Attendance Policy

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This policy must be read in conjunction with:
- Behaviour Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

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Introduction

We have high expectations for all students and believe that high levels of attendance and punctuality are essential.

We aim to give all students a fresh start and want all students to have the opportunity to embrace the opportunities that we provide at PACE to enable them to achieve their potential.

We understand that securing good attendance requires a partnership approach. The PACE team work with families and agencies to remove barriers to attendance and to support engagement.

Overall Aims

- to help overcome barriers to attendance through appropriate support strategies
- to ensure that all students receive their maximum entitlement to education
- to promote the benefits of good attendance and punctuality to make each student aware that attending more leads on to achieving more
- to encourage students to take responsibility for their own attendance and to maintain a full attendance record
- to re-establish a positive routine of daily attendance and punctuality

The Government expects us to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (less than 90%)
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education, to which they are entitled
- act early to address patterns of absence

Strategies to maximise attendance

Welcome and induction

When starting at PACE students and families receive a warm welcome. Attendance challenges are discussed and tailored support put into place so help achieve good attendance.

Celebrating and communicating

We want to celebrate all of the progress and achievements that our students make, including good attendance.

We will inform students of how they are doing with their attendance and celebrate the progress they make through verbal feedback and reports.

We will inform Parents / Guardians of attendance progress and concerns through telephone calls and reporting.

Planning for engagement

Our staff understand that if students want to be in school then they will be. The team plan lessons and experiences that are fun and stimulate involvement.

Transport

Getting into school can be challenging for some students. We take a differentiated approach at PACE to help students to overcome anxieties and to develop independence. Many of our students travel on Local Authority supplied taxis or are transported by Parents / Guardians. Staff provide support with these arrangements.

Rewards

Good attendance is regarded as an achievement and is acknowledged and praised accordingly through the reward system.

The students have the opportunity to win daily and weekly rewards.

Recording attendance

The register is completed twice daily, at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

The register is a legal document and it must be completed accurately. The Government guidelines that we work to can be found here. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

If a student fails to attend we will establish the reason for the absence and mark the register accordingly. At PACE we use the National Register codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. These codes have been updated in line with the current Government instructions with regard to recording Covid-19 issues.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf

We are in exceptional times due to the impact of Covid-19. This has raised a wide variety of issues for schools and attendance. The Government guidance on attendance is linked to the guidance on actions that people need to take in order to keep people as safe as possible from the virus. If a student or member of staff contracts symptoms then the Government guidance with regard to isolation and testing that is current at the time will be followed.

Absence procedures

We expect Parents / Guardians to contact the school to notify us that the student is going to be absent and the reason why.

If no contact is made by the Parent / Guardian then absence will be marked as 'Unauthorised' until a reason has been given. If there is no contact from home the PACE team will make Welfare Calls and attempt to make telephone contact with families to establish why the student is not in school. If we are not able to make contact and the absence persists PACE will pursue students and families in order to establish the reason for the absence and to check on the welfare of the student using a range of methods including:

- contact Parent / Guardian by telephone
- inform partner agencies
- undertake a home visit
- Issue a letter requesting information
- invite Parents / Guardians to a meeting to discuss attendance
- refer families to partner agencies if there are safeguarding concerns

If absence is not resolved through an attendance meeting PACE will refer the case to The Education Welfare Service who will initiate formal procedures.

Authorised and Unauthorised absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise a student's absence and additional information may be required such as a letter from a GP or an appointment notice.

Where a student is absent due to sickness or is otherwise genuinely unable to attend, the school may then authorise the absence. It is the school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases the explanation that the child was ill can be accepted without question or concern (we expect medical evidence to be provided for absences of more than 4 days). In exceptional circumstances further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.

The Headteacher is not able to authorise absence where no acceptable reason is given.

Absence in exceptional circumstances

The Headteacher may only authorise leave in exceptional circumstances.

If a Parent / Guardian wishes to take their child out of school during term time for any reason then a request must be made to the Headteacher before the leave is taken. The headteacher may authorise exceptional circumstances such as:

- death of a Parent / Carer / Guardian / Sibling
- life-threatening or critical illness of a Parent / Carer / Guardian / Sibling
- leave of absence already granted by a previous school

The Headteacher will consider requests for leave taking into account:

- reasons for the request
- number of previous requests
- proximity of examinations
- duration of the leave requested

Lateness

Registers are closed 20 minutes after the session begins. Students who arrive late but before the register closes will be marked with an unauthorised absence code. Exceptions to this include when the lateness is not under their control, late running taxis for example.

Children who go missing from education

If a child goes missing from education it is potentially and indicator of abuse or neglect, including sexual exploitation, FGM, force marriage, or travelling to conflict zones. School staff will be alert to these safeguarding concerns when a student goes missing for an extended time or on repeat occasions. (Keeping Children Safe in Education updated September 2020) and Children Missing in Education Nov 2013, updated Sept 2016).

The school will notify the local authority of any student who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. (Pupil Registration, England Regulations 2016 regulation 12).

Monitoring and evaluation

Senior leaders review and implement the attendance policy and procedures. The whole school attendance data and the impact of this policy will be monitored and adjusted to help us maximise attendance and comply with statutory requirements.