



**SAFE START SCHOOL**

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY

## **Student Attendance/Welfare Policy**

Created: November 2023 by: Rachel Duffy

Reviewed by: Rachel Pilling

At Safestart School, we encourage each family to strive to ensure that their child's attendance at school is the best that it can be.

We recognise that from time to time, children can become unwell.

Regular school attendance is very important so that your child can benefit from all of the academic, social and therapeutic opportunities on offer. In our experience, when a pupil is absent they can find it difficult to slip back into their routine and they will have missed vital learning opportunities, skills-based interventions, and therapy which will hinder their progress.

### **What should I do when my child is poorly?**

- Parents/carers must notify the school office on the first day of any unplanned absence between 8:30 and 9:30am, providing a reason for absence and an expected return date.
- Parents/carers will also need to inform the Transport Office to avoid the need for transport to go to the home.

### **What should I do when my child has an appointment during school time?**

- Parents/carers must notify the school office in advance of any planned absence, including medical appointments, during school time.

### **What should I do if my child is going to be late for school?**

- Parents/carers must notify the office if their child is going to be late for school and provide a reason.

### **What will school do?**

- If there is no contact from home by 9:30 am following an absence, office staff will try to contact parents/carers by phone
- If office staff are unable to make contact by 10:30, the designated safeguarding lead will be alerted and a welfare check may be completed if deemed necessary.
- If by 11:00am there has been no contact your child will be classed as a Child Missing in Education.

### **Safetstart School will:**

Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance

- Remind parents/carers at least annually of our attendance expectations by sharing this policy once reviewed in the Autumn term.
- Celebrate good or improving attendance, where appropriate, by:
  - o Celebratory certificates home from the Headteacher for all pupils who achieve a good level of attendance for each half term and each term.
  - o At the end of each academic year, a certificate, and a reward with the Headteacher will be given to all pupils that have overall good attendance for that academic year.
  - o Positive discussion at annual review
  - o A letter home where appropriate

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

As a school, we will always work with parents (and other agencies, as appropriate) to understand the reasons underlying absence.

**Authorised absences:** Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised absences:** Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no prior 'leave' has been granted.

If school has followed its attendance procedures and a pupil continues to have unauthorised absences, the school may seek advice from the local authority School Attendance Support Team.

### **Examples of unauthorised absences are:**

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

List not exhaustive.

Parents/carers should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents/carers before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved with the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. As a school, we will always work with parents (and external agencies as appropriate) to understand and address the reasons behind absence.

### **Child Missing from Education:**

All children and young people, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. It is essential that we, as a school, are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage.

If a pupil has stopped attending and her or his location is unknown, the school must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. In such cases, the school may undertake a home visit, prior to a referral being made to the local authority Children Missing Education team.