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LVS Hassocks

A unique, positive education for young people
on the autism spectrum

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date Written: 15 June 2017

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Date Reviewed: 11 September 2019

Next Review: 1 September 2021

The aim of this policy is to develop good attendance and punctuality to give our learners the best chances in life. This policy is written with regard to the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance. These requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1), 93), (4) & 6 and 458 (4) & (5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to advice contained within DFE-0025702013; School attendance, October 2014.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Policy and with DfE guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

Statement of Intent

LVS Hassocks is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all its Learners. We believe that if Learners are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a School, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all Learners. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and Learners the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home -school links and communication systems that can be utilised when ever there are concerns about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a Learner's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and Learners to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We are aware of the significant challenges faced by our learners, namely:

- Many learners have previously experienced attendance issues and some might well have been classified at Persistent Non-Attenders or School refuser.
- Attendance issues for ASC Learners can 'balloon' quickly due to anxiety issues and breakdown of routine.
- Many of our learners travel significant distances to attend school - this can place additional barriers on learners at times of heightened anxiety.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by their Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a Learner's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave. The amendments make clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where the request for leave was not agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

The guidance in The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 will be followed with regard to deleting Learners from the Admission Register.

Rights and Responsibilities

The School:

- LVS Hassocks expects Learners to attend school regularly, on time and properly equipped and ready to learn.
- LVS Hassocks will encourage good attendance and will communicate with parents and the Local Authority as soon as possible if there is a problem with attendance or punctuality.
- LVS Hassocks staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
- LVS Hassocks will work in partnership with parents and Learners to resolve issues, which affect attendance or punctuality as quickly as possible.
- LVS Hassocks will include in reports to parents on achievement, Learner's attendance at least annually.

The Learners:

- Learners will ensure that they attend school regularly and on time.
- Learners will attend all lessons punctually.
- Learners can expect to be welcomed and receive assistance following periods of absence in order to catch up.
- Learners will be listened to and respected.
- Learners will have individual records of attendance/punctuality acknowledged by the school.

The Parents:

- Parents are responsible for ensuring their child regularly and punctually attends school, properly dressed, equipped and in an appropriate condition to learn.
- Parents are responsible for immediately informing the school of the reason for any absence by telephone call before 9.30 am on every morning of any absence.
- Following five or more days of consecutive absence for illness, the parents/carers will be required to attend the school for a meeting with a member of the (SLT) Senior Leadership Team. Parents must provide the school with a Dr's note for this meeting.
- If a Learner is ill (up to maximum of 5 school days) then the school is able (after consultation with the parent) to record these absences as 'I' – illness. If however the absence continues for longer than five school days the school reserves the right to record the absence as 'O' unauthorised, until such time as a Dr's note is received.
- If attendance problems do develop, the school expects parents to work actively with school staff and their local authority to solve them.
- Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record, this form part of the all Progress Reports.

Registration

Types of Registration and General Register Maintenance

- At LVS Hassocks an electronic registration system is used to record, track and monitor all attendance.

Start and Close of Registration

- LVS Hassocks will complete accurate registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session within 5 minutes of the start of the session.
- Registration begins at 9.30am and 1.15 pm each school day and registers will be closed 10 minutes after these times.
- If a Learner arrives after the register has closed, they will be marked as Late – after register closes.
- For learners educated off site, the base tutor is responsible for making contact with the alternative establishment (or parent if the learner is at home) to ensure attendance within the timeframes given above.
- Session registers will be taken for all sessions within 5 minutes of the commencement of the session, and absence from the session will be noted.

Use of Symbols

The following symbols are used in registers:

| Code | Description |
|------|---|
| / | Present AM |
| \ | Present PM |
| B | Educated off site |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances |
| E | Excluded |
| F | Extended Family Holiday (agreed) |
| G | Family Holiday (not agreed). Unauthorised |
| H | Family Holiday (agreed). Authorised |
| I | Illness |
| L | Late (before 9.15/1.45) |
| M | Medical, Dentist, Hospital |
| N | No reason Yet Given |
| O | Unauthorised not covered by othercodes |
| P | Approved sporting activities |
| R | Religious Observation |
| T | Traveller Absence |
| U | Late after Registration closes. |
| V | Educational Visit or Trip. |
| Y | Enforced Closure |
| Z | Learners not yet on Roll |
| # | School Closed to Learners |

The Legal Status of Registers

The register is a legal document and must be maintained accurately, recording Learners attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised.

A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a Learner.

Registers must be kept for a minimum of 3 years following completion at the end of the academic school year.

Staff Responsible for Processes

The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher is responsible for attendance issues and will check the registers on a regular basis to identify any attendance/punctuality concerns. The school administrator will check the registers daily and email staff and the SLT if staff fail to complete their registers by the designated time.

The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher teacher will liaise regularly with the relevant authorities to discuss any attendance/punctuality concerns and ensure that all relevant external professionals are kept informed. (i.e. Social Worker)

The SLT regularly monitors the school's registers and will make further enquiries if they notice any anomalies or cause for concern e.g. periods of unauthorised absence.

The base class teacher/adult in charge is responsible for taking the register daily, once for the AM session and once for the PM session. The class teacher/adult in charge is responsible for register maintenance of their class register.

The class teacher/adult in charge of each session is responsible for register maintenance of their session register. Including the following:

- ◆ Ensuring that code used are appropriate (/ , \, or 0 etc.)

LVS Hassocks will ensure that all staff are aware of the registration process and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law.

Each Learner should be seen by the staff member taking the register.

Procedures for Following up Absence/Lateness

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to contact the school on every morning of the child's absence. If this contact is not made then LVS Hassocks will:

- Contact the parent by telephone within 15 minutes of the arrival time on the day of absence (unless advised of transport issues), or if the parent is unobtainable;
 - Write/Email a letter requesting information – within 24 hours.

If the above actions do not elicit an explanation for the absence and the absence continues, a further letter/email will be sent to the parents/carers – within 5 school days.

If this letter does not elicit an explanation for the absence a second letter/ email will be sent to the parent/carer within 5 school days, the Learner's local education authority will be informed and the parent may be invited in to the school for a meeting by the Head of School / Deputy Head. This meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the Learner from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.

If the Learner's difficulties are not resolved at this meeting, then a formal referral will be made to the relevant education authority and any other key professionals and a formal intervention might be planned. The school will keep the local authority and any significant professionals informed of the attendance issues on case by case basis.

If the Learner is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks, in exceptional circumstances there will be provision to allow the Learner to ease back into the school system. In the event of a Learner returning after a long term absence then an individual transition plan will be implemented. This will include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the Learner as possible.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

THE DSCF CIRCULAR NUMBER 10/99 STATES THAT PARENTS MAY NOT AUTHORISE ABSENCE, ONLY SCHOOLS CAN DO THIS.

Exceptional Leave of Absence: This may include;

- ◆ An immediate family member is critically/terminally ill
- ◆ Families who have been through a traumatic event
- ◆ Families where a parent/carer is able to demonstrate clearly (e.g. a letter from an employer which can be verified) that they are restricted to all annual leave within school term time.
- ◆ Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- ◆ Days of religious observance
- ◆ Exceptional family circumstances i.e. bereavement
- ◆ Transport arranged by the LA has failed to arrive where the Learner relies upon funded

transport. Absence will be recorded as unauthorised when due to:

- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Haircuts
- ◆ Missed taxi
- ◆ Slept late
- ◆ No uniform
- ◆ Looking after brothers or sisters or unwell parents
- ◆ Minding the house
- ◆ Birthdays
- ◆ Holidays*

If it may be necessary for the school to ask the parent/carer to provide the school with written evidence of reason for absence e.g.

- ◆ Appointment cards/letters
- ◆ Medical certificate
- ◆ Letter from GP

If there is an extensive period of absence due to medical reasons the school may ask for the permission of the parent/carer to contact the child's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the child from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the child.

**Holidays during term time are not acceptable and have shown to have seriously negative consequences upon a Learner's progress. However, the Head of School retains the discretion to authorise such a holiday in exceptional circumstances.*

Strategies for Promoting Attendance/Punctuality

- In the belief that Learners are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is lively and meets their needs the curriculum will be regularly reviewed.
- Attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices.
- Expectations are made clear to parents with regard to attendance.
- Opportunities to maintain awareness through newsletters, parents' evenings and Learner reports will be used.
- Parents, Learners and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Learners with a known attendance problem being admitted to school will be interviewed with the parents and will be set targets for improvement.
- Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Learners who are absent for an extended period of time will be reintegrated back into school with an individual transition plan.
- All issues, which may cause a Learner to experience attendance difficulties, are to be promptly investigated by the school.

This policy will be reviewed to its effective implementation on an annual basis and updated as appropriate.