

Attendance Policy

Aim

My Choice School values the attendance of every child at school. We recognise that school attendance can be a challenge for some children, at different stages in their school life, and we seek to support and work flexibly with parents and carers to improve and sustain good attendance for all.

My Choice School intends to:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality
- Monitor attendance and act swiftly to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with parents and carers to ensure students have the support in place to attend school
- Reduce persistent absence by identifying the cause and implementing support plans with parents and carers
- Ensure that every student has access to full-time education

This policy has regard for the following DfE guidance:

- DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools (February 2023)
- DfE Children Missing Education 2016

Roles and responsibilities

The Head of Education is responsible for writing and reviewing this policy

The Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented

The Head of Education, Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are responsible for monitoring attendance data, identifying trends and acting swiftly to identify support measures and interventions for students.

The teachers and TAs are responsible for accurately recording attendance.

Recording and monitoring

Attendance will be recorded on the attendance registers by the class teachers or TAs. This is kept in hard copy and as an e register.

Standardised registration codes for all absences and attendance are used as detailed in **Working Together to Improve School Attendance August 2024**

Attendance is reported to the local authorities and professionals regularly by school, often daily. This may be direct to the local authorities or via Welfare Call.

The school day is **9am to 2.30pm**.

Lunch is 12pm to 12:30pm. Students are expected to remain at school for the lunch period unless they are leaving school accompanied by a parent or carer.

AM session 9am to 12pm

- Students will be marked as **late before registers close (L)** if they arrive between **9am and 9.30am**.
- Students will be marked as **late after registers close (U)** if they arrive **after 9.30am**. This mark will not count as attendance however the students will have their participation recorded on the Record of Points throughout the session.
- Attendance **after 10am** will be marked as **absent (O)**.

PM session 12:30pm to 2:30pm

- Students will be marked as **late before registers close (L)** if they arrive **between 12.30pm and 1pm**.
- Students will be marked as **late after registers close (U)** if they arrive **after 1pm**. This mark will not count as attendance however the students will have their participation recorded on the Record of Points throughout the session.
- Attendance **after 1.30pm** will be marked as **absent (O)**.

Absence Reporting

Absence must be reported to the school by the parent or carer as soon as possible. This can be done by:

- Emailing the Headteacher and teacher if a parent or carer is aware that their child will not be attending school the next day, including for illness or appointments
- Telephoning the school office and speaking to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- Emails and voicemails will be followed up with a telephone call by the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher

My Choice School recognises the challenges that parents and carers experience and the challenges that our students experience; we aim to support and to have an open dialogue and relationship with parents and carers.

If a student does not arrive at school and the school has not been notified by parents and carers, this will be followed by a telephone call to the parent or carer and to the taxi transport if applicable. If there is no response from parents and carers after reasonable attempts have been made, the Headteacher will contact the 2nd Emergency Contact as identified on the School Admissions form to ensure the welfare of all.

If students are attending external provision such as colleges, training providers or tuition services their attendance will be recorded on the school register in line with the standardised register codes. The teacher will contact the external provision to ascertain that the student has attended.

Interventions and support

My Choice School recognises that for many of our students, full time attendance is a target for them to work towards. We recognise that their daily attendance can be influenced by their emotional and mental health.

We also recognise the lasting impact of the Covid19 Pandemic where many of our students were not able to attend their previous schools and this has contributed to their anxiety and EBSA due to extended periods out of school.

My Choice School will work with parents and carers to support and understand their difficulties, with the aim of increasing school attendance at a pace that ensures engagement and a reduction of risk taking and behaviours that impact on self and others.

My Choice School does this using:

- **Support plans** that identify a scale of interventions and supports during the school day. The Support Plans are implemented with the agreement of parents and carers and the student is aware of the Support Plan being followed.
- **Reduced timetables.** A reduced timetable will be agreed with parents and carers and My Choice School follows the West Sussex Guidance on Reduced or Part Time timetables. The timetables will be for a fixed period and will have regular reviews, either fortnightly or half termly. The intention of the reduced timetable is to gradually increase the time at school at a steady pace, to reduce incidents and behaviours at school that can harm self or others.
- **Blended timetables.** A blended timetable will be a full time equivalent however not all of the school hours will be at the school; they might be at a college, at another suitable Alternative Provision, have tutoring from a tutoring provider commissioned by My Choice School or have Remote tutoring from a My Choice School teacher or have work experience. Blended timetables can be a combination of academic and vocational and are managed and monitored by the teacher and Headteacher.
- **In school interventions** such as mental health interventions or phonics interventions.
- **External Interventions** as identified through professional networks supporting the student and family. This can include substance misuse, mentoring or community interventions.

Any student who is attending an external intervention or an Alternative Provision will have daily contact from the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Teacher to have their attendance confirmed. This will also be verified by professionals leading the intervention.

Children Missing Education

Children who are absent from education can become children missing education.

Any student who has infrequent, irregular or persistent non attendance is at risk.

Non attendance at school is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and such children are at risk of being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation.

Children who are at particular risk of missing education are:

- Children at risk of harm or neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller Families
- Children of Armed Forces Families
- Children who are Looked After
- Children and young people supervised by the youth justice system
- Children who are in families that are insecurely housed or homeless
- Children at points of transition between year groups (Yr6 to Yr7) and between schools
- Children who do not experience a good enough expectation placed on them of attending school by parents or carers
- Children who are frequently missing from their home or care setting

Children Missing Education (CME) are at significant risk of:

- Underachieving
- Being victims of abuse
- Becoming NEET
- Becoming victims of child sexual exploitation
- Forced Marriage
- Becoming victims of criminal exploitation

My Choice School will have responsibility for obtaining and retaining the contact details, recording the admission details and attendance details of all students and will engage with parents / carers and professionals to identify children who have issues with non attendance, are at risk of being CME and work with all involved to identify supports and interventions for children at risk.

My Choice School will obtain the contact details of parents and carers (including a 2nd emergency contact) and other relevant contacts such as

family support workers or social workers, and the mobile number for the student. This information will be recorded using the School Admission form. The School Admission form will be provided to parents and carers prior to school admission and the Headteacher will check that all details are provided as indicated on the form. The School Admissions form will be kept as hard copy as a signed original) and electronic and can be updated as necessary.

Consent forms will also be completed by parents and carers prior to the student commencing at school.

Students will not commence at school if the School Admission form is incomplete. It is the responsibility of the parents and carers to inform the school when details change. The School Admission form will be used as the primary contact list for students.

The Admissions Register is held at the school in hard copy and is completed by the Head of Education (or by the Headteacher if instructed to do so by the Head of Education) when students are placed on or removed from roll. Students will be removed from roll if they have completed their Yr11 with us at My Choice School or if the Head of Education is instructed to do so by the local authority when a student under school leaving age transfers to another school roll.

Frequent, unexplained absence from school is a safeguarding concern, and referrals will be made to professionals to safeguard students. Records will be maintained of communications to parents and carers and the school will work with parents and carers to identify interventions to ensure regular attendance. This can include a reduced timetable or the inclusion of Alternative Provisions.

My Choice School will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain the welfare of students who are missing education or who have infrequent attendance or prolonged non attendance. My Choice School recognises that our students are among the most vulnerable and at risk groups and we also recognise that school attendance can be difficult for them. Ascertaining the welfare of students who have not attended school will be made without judgement, prejudice and is a supportive process.

Where a student has not arrived at school, and the school has not received a telephone call or an email to inform school about the reason for absence from the parent or carer, the school will endeavour to contact the parent or carer. This will be on the instruction of the Headteacher, and may be carried out by the teacher or DDSL.

The school will be aware of additional caring responsibilities of the parent or carers or their working hours and so My Choice School recognises that contact may not be achieved immediately and that voicemails or emails may be left by the school. Context will be considered and the level of vulnerability and risk of the student.

The taxi service (if commissioned) will also be contacted by the Headteacher to ascertain if any message has been given to the driver by parent / carers.

If during the school day contact cannot be made to ascertain the student's welfare, and reasonable attempts have been made, the 2nd emergency contact will be used. In some cases this is likely to be a social worker or support worker for the student, however it may also be a relative, or trusted friend or neighbour of the parent.

If absence is persistent or frequent then the following reasonable steps will be taken.

- The Headteacher will arrange a meeting with the student and parent / carer to discuss issues and supports and plan a re-engagement with school. This may also involve the social worker if appropriate and is intended to develop a supportive team around the child. The re engagement may include an adjusted timetable or possible transport support for the parent / carers.
- The Headteacher may initiate a more formal forum for addressing the issue if attendance persists or if it is not possible to arrange a meeting with the parent / carers. This may take place through the PEP process involving the Virtual School or through an EHCP Annual Review involving the SEND caseworker or through safeguarding channels.
- The Headteacher will inform parents and carers if safeguarding channels are to be used and obtain consent when required for referrals.

It is expected that My Choice School will engage in continued discussion with professionals and parents / carers following any of the above actions. It may be that further safeguarding referrals are made and that discussions are held with the safeguarding team.

Some CLA students are moved out of county by their local authority and are unable to continue attending My Choice School. In such cases the Head of Education will maintain contact with the social worker to ascertain the location and welfare of the student until they are able to be removed from roll and confirmed to be on roll elsewhere.

If no contact can be made with parent / carers, or if a reasonable plan of re engagement cannot be implemented, or if there is no further confirmation of the student's welfare then the Head of Education will discuss with the West Sussex SEND team to identify the next step. This may require a referral to the **Pupil Entitlement Team** and complete a **Non Attendance Referral**.

The Head of Education will discuss this with the **PE Investigating Officer** to explore any alternative course of action.

The parent / carers will be informed that this is the next step as the Non Attendance Referral may initiate legal proceedings and court action. It is essential throughout this process of recording attendance, absence and contacts with parent / carers and records of meetings that all documentation is held securely and in the attendance section of the Student File and also on CPOMS. This chronology and information will be required to support the Non Attendance Referral and may be produced in court.

Pupil Entitlement: Investigation:

Manager - Andrew Parker

Tel: 03302 228509

Email: Andrew.Parker@westsussex.gov.uk

Investigation - Advice Line: 03302 228200

Child Employment & Entertainment Advice Line: 03302 228384

Elective Home Education Advice Line: 03302 223300

Team Managers:

Vacancy - In interim contact Penny Austin - South of the County

Tel:

Email:

Nikki Humphrey - North of the County & Children Missing Education (CME)
Countywide

Tel: 03302 222120

Email: Nikki.Humphrey@westsussex.gov.uk

Penny Austin - Fixed Penalty Notices & Elective Home Education & Children in Entertainment & Employment

Tel: 03302 228322

Email: Penny.Austin@westsussex.gov.uk

Policy link:

Safeguarding

Reviewed May 2023

Reviewed May 2024

Review due June 2025