Attendance & Engagement in Lessons

A Position Statement

Our Attendance at School Policy has been written to comply with DfE Statutory Guidance "Working Together to Improve Attendance". The guidance records physical attendance on site at school and does not reflect attendance and engagement in lessons. As such that policy should be read alongside this "Attendance and Engagement in Lessons" position statement.

As an alternative provision, we know that physical attendance in a school building/on a school site, does not equate to active engagement in lessons/learning. It is possible for children to be physically present in a school building but not actually go into lessons for a variety of reasons (internal truancy). This does not support their learning yet as far as the statutory guidance is concerned, they are "attending school" even if they are not attending lessons; in fact, in extreme cases, children could have 100% attendance at school yet not attend a single lesson that day.

We also know that there are numerous and often complex barriers to physical attendance on a school site: for some this is due to SEND needs; others due to physical and/or mental health needs such as anxiety or to having lengthy, unavoidable periods of absence.

Some learners just find it harder than others to attend school for a huge variety of reasons that often have little to do with school itself but are often symptomatic of deeper barriers to learning e.g. safeguarding issues, family difficulties, substance misuse and addiction.

Ideally learners should be physically present on site and in lessons, on time, every day that Three Towers is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. However, we recognise that for some learners physical attendance at school is not always possible and reasonable adjustments to accommodate their particular circumstances are made for them to access their lessons in a different way, or example remotely, where learners access live, synchronous teaching via TEAMS; at other venues where learners feel comfortable; or from their hospital ward if they are fit enough to join in lessons.

Sadly, in line with the new statutory guidance, learners who are accessing their learning remotely for any reason, including as a reasonable adjustment for health/disability reasons must be marked as absent from school because they are not physically present in the school building.

We do not believe this is fair or right; it is disheartening to learners and their families that they can have 100% engagement in their lessons/learning yet as far as the statutory guidance is concerned, they are absent from school.

What we do to address this

Our Attendance at School Policy outlines what we must do to comply with statutory guidance and is applied to all learners. This policy outlines our normal day-to-day routines, which include recording and monitoring learners' attendance in each lesson whether that is on site or remote/online using ClassCharts.

We believe that this second set of data is a much fairer and more realistic measure of school attendance as it is applicable to all learners irrespective of how the access their education – either onsite or remotely.

When we analyse and report on attendance, we will provide data for both the statutory attendance at school and the actual attendance/engagement in lessons/learning.

How the registers are coded for Remote / Online Learners

In-house		Statutory	
Lessons Attendance		Attendance at School	
Actual Attendance & Engagement		Legal attendance in line with statutory guidance	
ClassChart (Staff to mark)		ARBOR (Office staff to mark)	
Present online	/	Authorised absent	C *add note "online provision"*
Late (<30 mins of start time)	L	Late (<30 mins of start time)	
Late (>30 mins of start time)	U	Late (>30 mins of start time)	
Sick	I *add note "sick"*	Sick	Codes as per the Attendance at School Policy
Medical	M *add note "medical appointment"*	Medical	
No acceptable reason given	O	Unauthorised absence	
Outreach session	B *Once confirmed they have attended or if absent use appropriate absent code*	Outreach session	
Vocational placement day	Leave blank	Vocational placement	