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## **ABSENCE POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

Eagle House School is committed to working with parents, children and other stakeholders to ensure that, wherever possible, all children enrolled at its schools receive an education that maximises the opportunity for every child to achieve his / her full potential.

Staff in schools, the Authority and in school support services will work with pupils and families to ensure that each pupil attends regularly and punctually.

All children are likely to be absent from or late to school at some time in their school career. However, persistent poor attendance and poor punctuality is disruptive to the individual and to the work of the class and may be an early warning of other difficulties. Where there are genuine reasons for absence, the Authority will work with stakeholders to ensure that the child's education is provided by means other than school attendance.

### **Aims of Eagle House School Policy and Guidelines**

To improve overall attendance of pupils at school.

To make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with schools including parents /carers, pupils and teachers.

To provide a framework defining respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders that ensures consistency in dealing with issues of attendance and absence.

To ensure the accurate recording of attendance and absence in accordance with SEED guidance, thereby promoting the gathering and analysis of reliable attendance related data.

### **2.1 Parental Duty**

Parents / carers have a legal duty to secure an efficient education for any child of statutory school age for whom they are responsible. Most parents / carers seek to do this by enrolling the child in a Local Authority managed school.

### **2.2 "Reasonable Excuse"**

For the purposes of this section, a child who has been required to discontinue, for any period, his attendance at school on account of his parent's refusal or failure to comply with rules, regulations or disciplinary requirements of the school, shall, unless otherwise determined, be deemed to have failed without reasonable excuse to attend regularly at school.

**reasonable excuse is defined as:**

‘The child has been ill and therefore unable to attend school’.

‘There are other circumstances which in the opinion of the education authority or the court afford a reasonable excuse’.

**2.3 Pupil Records and Recording of Absence**

Every school is required to keep an **attendance register** of every pupil. It is the information from this record that constitutes the certificate of attendance presented in court proceedings. It is also evidence provided to the Children’s Reporter and may constitute grounds for compulsory measures of supervision. It is therefore very important that registers are completed accurately and timeously.

Every absence is categorised as either authorised or unauthorised. Schools are required to submit data on authorised and unauthorised absences. Accurate and timely recording of attendance and absence is a prime responsibility of schools. As well as being a legal obligation, such records are used in the generation of management information, in the event of legal action against parents / carers and in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils.

Copies of all relevant information, notes / minutes of meetings, referrals, records, references, reports and correspondence, including those relating to non-attendance and truancy from school, must be retained in the Pupil Progress Record. There is no requirement to retain parental notes of explanation for absence after the pupil attendance record has been correctly amended in the school’s MIS.

**2.4 Medical absences**

In circumstances where a parent claims that their child is absent for medical reasons and there is concern about either the authenticity of these claims or the number of such absences;

- 1) the school may request the permission of the parent to allow a medical examination by the Community Paediatrician from the Area Community Child Healthcare Department. This would normally occur where there is concern about the pattern of medical absences.
- 2) the Attendance Committee may require the parent to permit the child a medical examination by the Community Paediatrician.

**2.5 Reason for Absence**

It is the duty of the Education Authority to require the parent / carer to explain the reason for the absence of the child from school. That is, the parent / carer can be summonsed to an Attendance Committee meeting to explain the absence.