



## THLCIC Attendance Policy

Treasure House (London) CIC was founded in order to successfully engage hard to reach young people who are vulnerable and at risk of becoming Children Missing from Education (CME).

Most students at Treasure House have a history of low or zero attendance rates. Treasure House has a proactive attendance policy that seeks to ensure that all students are safe and well and engaged in the learning process. We work closely with schools and other professionals to ensure that attendance is closely monitored and excellent attendance figures are promoted for every student.

**All attendance and punctuality figures will be recorded in each student's file and used on references and applications for college. Having a high rate of attendance and punctuality will be favourable in terms of any application.**

### Treasure House responsibilities

Treasure House has a duty to ensure that all students on roll who are of compulsory school age are attending, in line with the DfE guidance updated in November 2016 'School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' and the Education Act 1996 (2002, 2011) and, as such, the following principles form the basis for this policy:

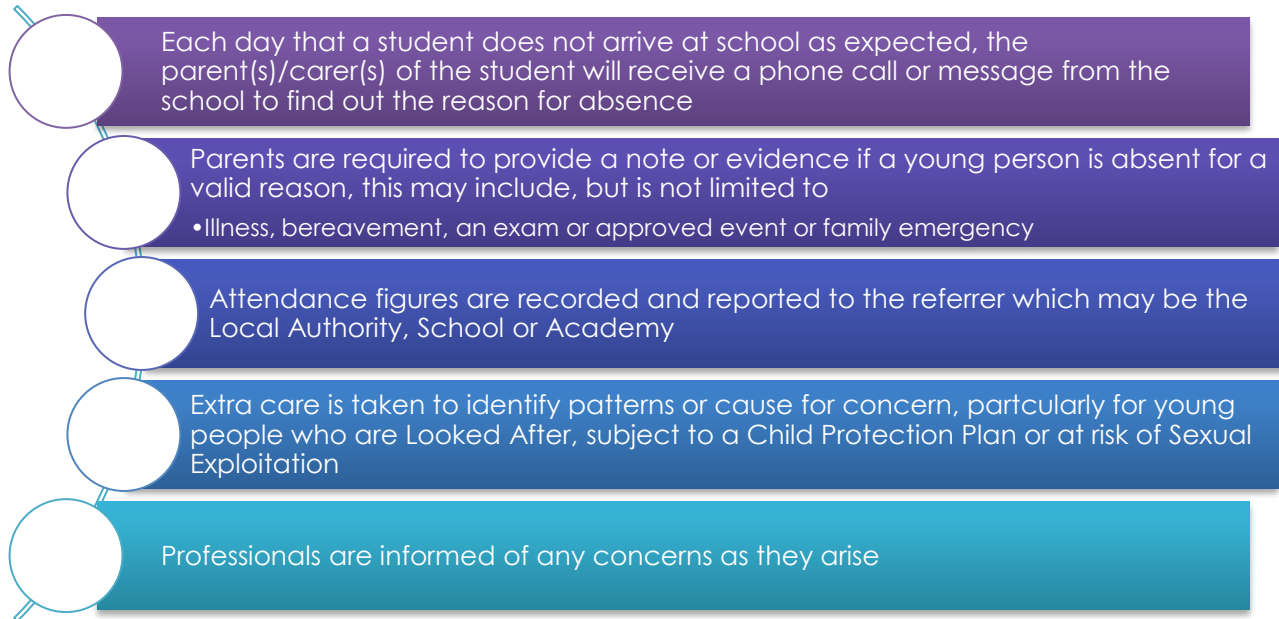
- Local Authorities and Schools must:
  - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (currently defined as <90% attendance);
  - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
  - Act early to address patterns of absence;
  - Report to the local authority any young person's absence, without explanation from a parent or guardian, for ten days or more or where the school does not accept the explanation offered by the parent or carer
- Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly (above 95%)
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

### Daily Attendance Tracking

The school day starts at 10am. Any students arriving after 10:10 are marked as late. If a student arrives at school after 10:30 they are marked as Late after registers have closed.

At 10:15, the parents of any students who have not yet arrived at school will receive a phone call or text message to find out the reason for the student's lateness or absence. This information is recorded on our registers and is usually fed back to the referring school or local authority. In cases where lateness and absence occur regularly, this is monitored closely and may result in the case being referred to an Educational Welfare Office or social services.

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## Parents' Responsibilities

Parents play an important role in ensuring that their child has good attendance. A high rate of attendance ensures more time for the student to learn and therefore better results and attainment levels. We appreciate that parents have their own difficulties and this may impact on their child's ability to attend school. At the very least it is extremely important that parents communicate with us to inform us of any reasons why students will be late or absent. We have worked successfully with many families to try and ensure that the climate is right for great attendance.

### **We do this by:**

- Phoning home and arranging meetings at school if necessary
- Signposting or referring on to other organisations such as young carers, CAMHS, The Local Offer or Victim Support
- Arranging for later start or finish times (under exceptional circumstances)
- Referring young people to Southwark Travel Training
- Applying for funding for transport or an escort to school
- Informing the parents periodically via letter and report about their child's attendance
- Offering mentoring or counselling sessions at Treasure House for students who are struggling

### **We require parents to support good attendance by:**

- Ensuring that their child gets to school with enough time to be ready to start work at 10am
- Where appointments have been booked in advance, letting Treasure House staff know as soon as possible and providing written evidence
- Phoning school by 10am if their child will not be attending

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- Providing a note for any absence detailing the length of, and reason for, absence within 5 days of the student's return to school, it is the school's prerogative to determine the legitimacy of any explanation
- Letting us know if they have any concerns about their child's attendance or behaviour or if anything has happened outside of school that would affect the student's education

## Absences

### Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- A student not attending school because it is their birthday
- A student accompanying extended family members, during school time, to medical appointments, where they are already being accompanied by an adult family member
- A student who arrives later than 10.30am for the morning session or leaves during the day without permission
- A student not attending school after returning late from a family holiday
- A student who does not attend school in the morning because they have a medical appointment in the afternoon, or does not return to school for the afternoon after a medical appointment in the morning

### CODES FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:

According to the DfE guidance (November 2016) the following codes are to be used for unauthorised absences on the register:

**Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period** – If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents still take the child on holiday, or if the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

#### **Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided**

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely matter. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a student's absence.

#### **Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the school is **not satisfied** with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

### CODES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE:

In March 2013 the DfE issued the following codes, to be used for authorised absences:

#### **Code I: ILLNESS**

Schools can request medical evidence from parents/carers if they feel the authenticity of illness is in doubt

#### **Code M: Medical or dental appointments**

Parents/carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.

#### **Code C: Other authorised circumstances**

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This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, ie – family funeral

## **Code D: Dual Registered**

This code will be used if a student is registered at two schools

## **Code J: Interview**

This code will be used when it has been agreed that the student can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam

## **Code P: Approved sporting activity**

This code will be used in terms of approved sporting activities in school times, ie – training sessions, trials and sporting events

## **Code R: Religious Observation**

This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events

## **Code V: Educational visits and trips**

## **Code W: Work Experience**

## **When things go wrong**

If a student leaves school without permission during the school day then their parent(s) or carer(s) will be contacted to inform them of the problem and to find out whether a student has gone home. Most often the parent is able to contact the child on their mobile phone and inform the school what has occurred. We appreciate parents' support in ensuring that they explain to their child the severity of his/her actions and work with school to explain that the behaviour is unacceptable and breaks school rules. If there is a reason for the young person's absence then the school will try to support the young person by offering counselling, external support or mediation.

## **Exam Entry**

If a student fails to attend lessons for a prolonged period or does not complete Controlled Assessments necessary to gain the qualification, the Head teachers, in conjunction with the subject teacher, will be likely to take the decision not to enter the student for the qualification that they have been studying.

## **Persistent Lateness**

Lateness not only disrupts your child's learning but also the learning of everyone else in the class as disrupting the lesson makes it difficult for all the children to settle. Your child being late will also put them at a disadvantage if they have missed their teacher's instructions for the activities to complete. There is a legal requirement to ensure your child attends school on time and failure to do so could result in legal proceedings being taken against you.

- All children are expected to attend school on time everyday
- Any child with more than 10 lates would be inspected by the Education Welfare.

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If there is a reason behind your child's lateness, we encourage you to both discuss this with your child and to inform us so that we can better understand what is happening. We acknowledge that some young people with Special Educational Needs have problems with time-blindness where they are unable to judge the passing of time. This can lead to lateness, but we would take action on this with intervention if we know that this is happening.

## Persistent absence

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education\*<sup>1</sup>

Where a young person of compulsory school age<sup>2\*</sup> is consistently not attending the provision, arriving later than 10am each day or leaves the premises during the school day on more than one occasion, then in most instances the parent will be asked to come to Treasure House for a meeting. The matter will also be brought to the attention of the referrer. If intervention from the parent and Treasure House (such as a reward system or therapeutic intervention) is unable to secure good attendance (above 95%) by a student then the matter will be taken further and a pre-meeting with the relevant Education Welfare Officer will be sought via a CAF request to the Early Help Service. The CAF would indicate the work already completed by the school to address the attendance and a holistic assessment of the needs and situation of the young person(s) being referred.

If the attendance is persistently poor, despite injection of multiple support methods from the Early Help Service, then the parent(s)/carer(s) may be issued with a School Attendance Order by the Local Authority. This may result in the Local Authority pursuing a prosecution in accordance with the **Education Act 1996** and the parent may be liable to pay a fine of up to £2,500 or a prison sentence. Before this happens, the Local Authority must consider other interventions, which might include an Education Supervision Order (ESO), Penalty Fine or a Parenting Contract.

## Education Welfare Officer Procedure (Southwark)

The Education Welfare Officer is required to attempt a minimum of six meetings with parents/carers, to address the continued poor attendance before arranging a Legal Planning Meeting. The parent(s)/carer(s) would be invited to attend the meeting as the last attempt before legal action, to discuss methods to improve the attendance. To conclude the meeting a court date could be agreed; also a period of time would be set and agreed by all stakeholders attending the meeting to analysis the attendance outcomes. At this stage we will consider Education Supervision Orders and Parenting Contracts/Orders.

Following this meeting any non improvement will immediately result in Interview Under Caution (IUC) at the next available date.

The IUC invitation letter will instruct the parent(s)/carer(s) they are entitled to bring legal representation to the interview, due to the fact they will be officially cautioned under The Education Act 1996 section 444 by the Court Officer. All communication at the interview will be audio recorded and could be used as evidence in court. If at this interview there is an admission of guilt the IUC is stopped and adjourned to consider next actions. Attendance is then tested for two weeks and if improved the parent(s) are invited back in and given a formal caution. This

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<sup>1</sup> DfE, School attendance parental responsibility measures, Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police, January 2015

<sup>2</sup> Section 2 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen. From September 2013 all 16 year-olds will be required to continue in education or training, until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. From September 2015 they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday.

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lasts for 5 years and is admissible in any future prosecutions. It does however avoid giving the parent a criminal conviction.

If guilt is not admitted the complete interview is given and tested for two weeks – if there is no improvement then a prosecution may be brought. If it is improved the EWO works with the parent to maintain this for a period of time and then the case will be closed. If it falls again during that time, then prosecution is immediately brought.

At court parent(s)/carer(s) will have the opportunity to access legal support via a duty court solicitor. The parent(s)/carer(s) and solicitor will be provided with all the evidence against the family and given time to prepare before the hearing. If the parent(s)/carer(s) are entitled to legal aid they will be able to complete the necessary forms at the court.

**If found guilty, the parent(s)/carer(s) would receive a criminal conviction, this could affect their present employment or any future employment. They could also receive a parenting order which could involve imposing a curfew that would be monitored via electronic tag. Parent(s)/carer(s) could receive up to a three months custodial sentence and £2500 fine.**

## Medical absence

Students are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illnesses. But they should not be kept away from school when they are well enough to go to lessons or when they have minor ailments or whilst prescribed antibiotics (like coughs or colds), which do not prevent them from taking part in their education. A useful rule of thumb is whether the ailment would keep parents and teachers away from work.

The school will ask you the nature of the illness, expected length of absence if you call in sick for your child. We will also call you to check that the young person is recovering well and expect them to be back in school as soon as possible.

We have the right to consider whether to accept your position with regards to medical absence. If we are concerned that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence accruing, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence.

All students should continue to have access to education when they are ill or unable to attend school for other medical reasons. The nature and amount of educational activity that they must do must always be dictated by their medical condition, but it should be balanced with the need to help them keep up with their studies and maintain the momentum of their education. For this reason we may offer to send work home if a student is absent due to medical reasons. We can send this through the post or it can be collected by a parent. If work needs to be marked before the student returns to school then parents can send it to us or drop it off, as necessary.

When a child has missed 15 days or more of school due to their medical need a referral should be made to the Local Authority to arrange suitable education. The 1996 Education Act places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements for children who are unable to attend school to continue their education unless arrangements have been made. Schools must adhere to the most recent statutory guidance in relation to supporting pupils with medical needs:

- January 2013, Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs, Statutory Guidance for Local Authority:

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/269469/health\\_needs\\_guidance\\_-\\_revised\\_may\\_2013\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269469/health_needs_guidance_-_revised_may_2013_final.pdf)

## Children Missing from Education (CME)

In January 2016 the Department for Education published statutory guidance for Local Authorities on Children Missing from Education (CME). We recognise that we have a part to play in ensuring that young people referred to us are accessing full time, high quality education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and taking into account any Special Educational Needs that they might have. Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the vulnerable young people that are referred to Treasure House have been missing from education, some for the period of several years. It is vital that school staff have knowledge of the whereabouts of all of our pupils in order to ensure that they are safe and well. Should the school deem any young person to be vulnerable and 'at risk', the Designated Person for Safeguarding will, in accordance with the THLCIC Safeguarding Policy, contact the Southwark Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and inform the relevant referrer.

If **any** child is missing from school for **five days**, without any confirmation from parents, this will initiate a referral to Early Help at Southwark Social Care. If the child is deemed to be at significant risk, the Police will be called immediately. If a child is subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection plan, and is absent for more than **two days** without confirmation from the parents then the relevant agencies will be contacted. We will contact referrers on a daily basis if deemed necessary due to the vulnerability of their referee. A period of reintegration may be necessary after an extended absence. This will be planned in conjunction with parents and other professionals.

## Fear or anxiety around attendance

If your child is experiencing problems around attending, please contact us as soon as possible to arrange a time to sit and talk about the issues. We will attempt to provide support in any way possible. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Referral to CAMHS for counselling or other services
- Offering an opportunity to see our counsellor on site
- Arranging mentoring sessions
- Working with other students or teachers to get to the bottom of the issue
- Negotiating different ways of working such as sitting in the office or working in a quiet space away from the group

**This policy was last reviewed in November 2016 and will be reviewed every three years or as changes in legislation dictate.**

Signed ..... Date .....

*Helen Webb*

**Director**

Signed ..... Date .....

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<sup>3</sup> DfE, Children missing education, Statutory guidance for local authorities, January 2015

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