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**Portland School**

**Attendance Policy**

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**Introduction**

Whilst Portland School continually strive for exemplary attendance to school, we have to recognise that a significant proportion of our pupils have individual needs, and in many cases, historical and ongoing challenges that impact upon attendance for a variety of reasons. Therefore, we take the decision that each point for intervention will need to be individual to the pupil based upon existing knowledge of that child and their prior attendance. Decisions around support and strategies to improve attendance will be made in consultation with the parent/carer.

In line with the Department for Education Guidance (Working together to Improve School Attendance 2024) our policy and strategy towards attendance management is built around the guidelines six key principles:

* Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
* A clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
* Accurately completed admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
* Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
* Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
* Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

**Aims of our Policy**

Portland School understands the positive impact that good school attendance can have on a pupil’s whole development and is committed to ensuring that pupils who are placed in a school have the opportunity to:

* Feel safe, secure, well looked after.
* Fully participate in school life and enjoy and achieve.
* Feel a valued member of the school community.
* Trust in staff to continuously look out for their safety and welfare.
* We will try our best to listen and understand regarding barriers to attending school.
* We will aim to be empathetic and supportive but we cannot tolerate poor attendance.

**Persons Responsible for Attendance in Portland School**

* The Governing Body - Strategic Oversight
* Executive Headteacher - Operational Oversight
* Head of School - School Attendance Leader
* DDSL - Attendance Officer

**School Routines:**

**Reporting a pupil’s absence at school:**

Parents/carers should notify Portland School on the first day of any absence before the start of the school day to explain the reasons why their child will not attend.

Contact details to report a pupil’s absence:

School reception – 01782 882020

School may agree with parents/carers an appropriate contact arrangement if attendance is likely to be more than one day.

If parents/carers are in need of support regarding their child’s attendance they should call the school and ask to speak with Charlotte Finney-Inskip or email them on Charlotte.finney-inskip@portland.set.org.

**Daily Attendance Routines:**

* Registration is taken twice daily and recorded via ARBOR. The registration times for AM and PM are as follows
  + AM: 9:00am - 9:30am
  + PM: 12pm - 12.30pm
* We do understand that some of our pupils travel a significant distance to Portland School and sometimes there are unforeseen traffic delays. If a pupil arrives after the start of the school day they will be recorded as either:
  + Late (Code L), if they arrive no longer than 30 minutes after the registration period (Either AM or PM).
  + If a pupil arrives more than 30 after registration then they must recorded as absent. This may be through a specific code or by using a U code. *Please see DfE guidance on code usage.*
  + Any pupil not present for registration will be followed up by the Attendance Officer, this will usually be through a phone call. School will continue to attempt contact throughout the day, initially, our priority is to ensure the pupil is safe and there are no immediate safeguarding concerns. The school may also conduct a visit to the pupil’s home. *Additional guidance is outlined in Appendix B*
* Where appropriate staff will conduct home visits, safe and well checks and attendance management meetings. These can be unannounced visits but will usually be prearranged. Such visits will be recorded on CPOMS.
* Portland School will make contact with external agencies and partners where appropriate i.e. Social Workers, Early Help Support Workers. If safeguarding concerns are present a formal referral through the local procedures will be completed.

**School Systems for Promoting Regular Attendance**

Portland School will:

* Benchmark pupil’s attendance upon admission to school via data transfer or written confirmation from previous setting.
* Use the school registers, and ARBOR reports to analyse individual pupil attendance data to identify patterns of absence causing concern, and to recognise and reward improved and/or good attendance.
* Log all calls and communication between school and home on ARBOR to ensure clear records are kept for monitoring, evaluation and review purposes.
* School leaders will hold regular attendance management meetings to review whole school and individual attendance data and review individual progress against any attendance improvement targets.
* Promote good attendance with incentives and rewards.
* Recognise good or improved attendance with awards and rewards.
* Provide a full, diverse and engaging curriculum to inspire and motivate pupils, including work in Personal, Health, Social, and Economics (PHSE) to promoting personal health and well-being along with Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) at age appropriate levels.
* Work proactively to frequently engage with parents and carers to resolve any difficulties which may be affecting school attendance.
* Analyse school data and report to governors at least termly on school attendance.
* Where individual attendance is below expectations we follow a school absence support plan, regularly monitor attendance and review every two weeks.
* Liaise closely with any alternative providers used, to monitor attendance.
* Work with other agencies when attendance issues persist, such as Early Help service or family intervention services, Children’s Social Services, Local Authority Education Welfare Officers, Probation Services, and Police. We will share attendance data and information about your child with these agencies in order to support them to fulfil their duties
* Use local systems of referral to escalate concerns for safety and welfare.

**Legal duties:**

**Parental Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

Parents who fail to secure their child’s regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences:

* section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child’s regular attendance; and
  + The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000)
* section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so.
  + the section 444(1A) offence my result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

**School Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

The Head teacher is the Portland School attendance leader. The attendance leader of the school will ensure:

* Registers are accurately marked and maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
* A whole school approach to encouraging good attendance.
* Ensure all staff follow and apply the School Attendance Policy in line with up to date government guidance.
* Work in partnership with individuals and their families to support improving attendance.
* Set individual or group attendance improvement targets ensuring they are understood by staff, parents and pupils.
* School leaders and Governors are responsible for ensuring that the importance of attendance is regularly encouraged and monitored.
* School leaders and Governors must ensure staff have had appropriate training in attendance management and understand the link between absence and safeguarding concerns.
* Ensure the school escalates attendance and welfare concerns to the appropriate authorities in a timely manner.

**Parental Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

Parents/Carers **must:**

* Ensure your child attends school as regularly as possible and arrives on time.
* Contact the school on the first day of any absence to provide a reason for nonattendance.
* Update the school daily, unless otherwise agreed with the school, if the absence is expected to continue.
* Request leave for exceptional circumstances in advance (where possible). The Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher determines the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
* Work in partnership with Portland School and any other agency to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance.
* Provide evidence to school for absence due to planned appointments. (i.e. dental appointment card, NHS appointment letter etc.)

**Registration and Lateness**

The School Attendance Register is a legal document and will be inspected by Ofsted (England) and can be called on as evidence in a court of law. It is therefore essential that it must be marked accurately and legibly and contains all relevant information. It is the Head Teacher’s responsibility to ensure that the register is marked twice daily.

* Parents should ensure pupils are in school in time for the start of the morning and afternoon registration.

The late arrival of pupils disrupts the smooth running of the school and impacts on the learning of the late child and their peers.

* Where a pupil is arriving persistently late for school without valid reason, the parent/carer of the pupil may be liable for a fixed penalty notice and fine. Portland School will contact you if there are concerns about the number of late marks your child has received and will inform you if they, or the local authority intend to issue a fixed penalty notice. If the notice remains unpaid after 21 days the penalties can increase. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority may commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court.

**Categorisation of Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

The parent/carer has a responsibility to provide an explanation for any period of absence from school, it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised based on the individual circumstances.

Portland School will usually authorise absences where a pupil is:

* Unable to attend school due to genuine illness.
* Attending emergency dental/medical appointments - evidence may be requested. Wherever possible routine dental/medical appointments should be made after school or during school holidays.
* Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes.

Examples where school will not normally authorise absence:

* Shopping trips.
* Family holidays.
* Birthdays.
* Days out.
* Caring for a family member.
* Lack of availability of transport.
* Siblings or friends schools are closed.

**A Child Missing From Education**

Portland School promotes good attendance and understands that poor attendance can be an indicator of concern for the safety and wellbeing of pupils, and thus ensures that information is shared between the School Attendance Officer, Pastoral Leads, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and Head teacher in regular attendance management meetings. Attendance management meetings take place in the weekly DSL meetings which include the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher.

The school has a duty to investigate unauthorised absences to establish if safeguarding concerns are evident.

Portland School appreciates that the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all children and young people of compulsory school age receive suitable and appropriate education. The school will therefore support the Local Authority in ensuring that this duty is carried out effectively. There are specific duties in respect of Children Missing Education (CME) and there are strict guidelines in respect of both the definition of CME and the legalities of deleting a pupil from a school roll.

The Local Authority will be informed when a pupil has been added or removed from the admissions register at non-standard transition times, within five days of them joining.

(DfE Guidance on Children Missing Education - September 2016)

**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachme nt\_data/file/550416/Children\_Missing\_Education\_-\_statutory\_guidance.pdf**

(Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024)

[Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

Where a pupil leaves the school**,** the Local Authority will be notified as soon as grounds for the deletion are met but no later than when the name is deleted from the register. The grounds for deletion are where a pupil:

* Has been taken out of school by their parents/carers and is being educated outside the school system e.g. is in home education.
* Has ceased to attend Portland School and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered.
* Has been certified by a medical practitioner as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither they nor their parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
* Is in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the School does not reasonably believe they will be returning at the end of that period and has been permanently excluded.

Portland School will contact the Local Authority to inform them a pupil is missing from education where any pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive days without a reason being provided for the absence. The school will then work with the local authority and follow the local authority procedures for a child missing education.

**Training Requirements**

Where appropriate Heads of School will ensure that familiarisation with this policy is a part of the induction process for all employees. Pastoral Leaders and School Attendance Officers will receive appropriate training to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

**Equality Impact Statement**

All relevant persons are required to comply with this policy and must demonstrate sensitivity and competence in relation to diversity in race, faith, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. If you, or any other groups, believe you are disadvantaged by this policy please contact your line manager. Portland School and/or Keys Group will then actively respond to the enquiry.

**Appendix A -** Our School Attendance Support Plan

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| **Attendance Thresholds** |  | **Contact/Support** |  |  | **Support Strategies** |  |
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| **90 -100%** Excellent  Increase by 20% or more | Attendance Officer  Teacher | |  | * Attendance updates through end of term reports and/or annual reviews. * Good attendance awards, rewards. | | |
| **80-90%** Good – but still a risk of under achievement  Increase by 10% or more | Attendance Officer  Teacher  SENCO | |  | * More frequent attendance support contact agreed – i.e.   weekly phone call updates.   * In school 1-1 meetings with pupil & attendance officer * Attendance Improvement * Target setting with pupil. * Increased internal attendance monitoring. | | |
| **70-79.9%** Persistent absence - cause for concern high risk of under achievement  Increase by 5% or more | Attendance Officer  DSL  External Agencies  SENCO  LA EWO | |  | * All strategies above plus; * Meetings/home visit with family (possibly other support agencies) to discuss barriers to attendance and set clear targets. * Attendance improvement plan or parenting contract agreed and shared, Review date set. * Two weekly monitoring of attendance. * Termly monitoring of absence by local authority welfare officer | | |
| **69.99% & below** – Severe absence – Extreme risk of under achievement, greatest potential of risk to the child’s wellbeing and development.  **(missing at least two months education per year and at least one full year across the secondary age range)** | Attendance Officer  DSL  Head Teacher  SENCO  External Agencies  LA EWO | |  | * All Support strategies above plus; * Regular home visits and safe and well checks. * Further meetings to review Attendance Plan/parenting contract with Local Authority, update targets. * Further referrals to external agencies considered. (CAMHs, Early Help, Social Services etc) * If no improvements over agreed period referral to local authority for formal support. * Local authority will consider formal actions. | | |

**Appendix B - Attendance Management Plan (Stages)**

Every two weeks the whole school attendance will be reviewed by the attendance team and any pupils who have been absent form school during this period will be checked against their individual targets to ensure they are receiving the right level of support. All support plans and correspondence should be approved by the Head teacher.

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| Stage 1  Any student whose attendance continues to fall below their individual attendance target (and is below 90%) will receive a letter informing the parent that the attendance of their child is now below their target and the impact of low attendance on future development. |
| Stage 2  Any student who has continued to be absent from school, their attendance is continuing to decline and has already received the Stage 1 letter will receive an invite to attendance clinic at the school with the attendance officer and the local authority education welfare officer. This will inform the parent that their child’s attendance is a concern and the meeting has been made to discuss the impact of low attendance and to create a plan to ensure regular attendance. |
| Stage 3  If a pupil records further absence or their attendance or their attendance continues to fall behind the set target after receiving the Stage 1 and Stage 2 letter, then an attendance meeting will be called. The attendance plan will be reviewed by the chair of the meeting and direction shared with parents that the LA EWO will now be consulted. |
| Stage 4  If a pupil records further unauthorised absences and their attendance continues to fall below target after the Stage 2 meeting, parents could be issued with a Penalty Notice Letter, only as authorised by the Head teacher and the local authority education welfare officer. |
| Stage 5  On occasions, children will continue to be absent from school despite receiving a penalty notice. Where this is the case, the school will follow the local authority guidance and request that further action and support be taken, this may be in the form of prosecution. |





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