

The Cumberland School Student Attendance Policy

1.0 The Cumberland School Mission Statement

As a school we are determined to improve the life chances of every one of our students. Determination and resilience are essential qualities for our students if they are to achieve their potential. Our curriculum, both in the classroom and outside of it, ensures that students are given opportunities to challenge themselves and develop confidence, independence and resilience.

Cumberland is ambitious as a school and we want all of our students to be ambitious for themselves and their community. We encourage all students to understand their responsibilities to each other, the school and the wider community. Pride, respect and high aspirations are valued and developed so that Cumberland is a safe place to take risks and grow.

The Cumberland School is above all a learning community. We believe that all students and staff have the right to flourish and we recognise that hard work, challenge and collaboration are vital to ensure exciting and effective teaching and learning in the classroom. We are an outward facing school, collaborating with other schools, colleges and business. We believe there is much we can and must learn from each other.

2.0 Policy links to school mission, aims and values

All of the work of The Cumberland School is intended to support the delivery of our mission statement in full.

At The Cumberland School we do everything possible to facilitate regular attendance at school. There are four main reasons for this:

1. For a student to reach their full educational potential, a high level of attendance is essential.
2. A key factor in raising levels of achievement in our school is establishing not only a regular pattern of full attendance but also a perfect record of punctuality. Students cannot achieve if they are absent from school and/or arrive late to school.
3. Positive attitudes towards attendance enable students to maximise their opportunities both at school and in later life.

4. The Cumberland School places a high priority on promoting equal access to the curriculum for all students. Irregular attendance may lead to disadvantage and inequality, place students at risk, isolate them from their peers and may result in unsettled and unhealthy behaviours.

Improving attendance is a whole school initiative. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility, including parent/carers, students and all members of school staff. TCS has specific staff who focus upon improving attendance and punctuality with a member of the school's leadership team having responsibility for attendance. The attendance and punctuality of all students is regularly monitored by the pastoral staff, the Education Welfare Officer and attendance reports are submitted to the school's Local School Board every term.

3.0 Unauthorised absence

If a student is absent from the school, it is vital that a parent/carer contacts the school at the earliest opportunity to provide a sufficient reason for absence. If no sufficient reason for absence is provided, attendance will be recorded as unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised where there is good cause. Parents cannot authorise absences. This is the decision of the school, in accordance within the boundaries set by The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1996. Whenever a student is absent due to illness, the school reserves the right to request medical evidence.

Any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be reported to the Local Authority. This is a legal requirement and we will include details of any action the school has taken to address the absence.

The Cumberland School values all pupils. We will work with all families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Our Student Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Safeguarding, Anti-bullying, Behaviour management, Equal opportunities, Race equality, Inclusion and Special Education Needs. As a school community, we are committed to the Equality Act 2010 within the structure of the school and to providing learning opportunities for all our pupils in all aspects of school life. The Act protects pupils from discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics. The protected characteristics for the school are:

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The school recognises that a small number of students might suffer from significant and serious

conditions which might affect their attendance. For students with long term medical issues the school will work with the family and professionals to support any additional needs.

4.0 Legal action

All parent/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school on a regular and punctual basis. Should any student's attendance or punctuality become a concern, they will be subject to an Education Welfare investigation. Where necessary, the school's Education Welfare Officer may recommend further action that could result in a penalty notice and/or referral to the London Borough of Newham (LBN) for further action that could lead to legal action. The school and local authority's education welfare service work together in partnership where legal action is required.

Letters are sent home to parent/carers in the first instance and if there is no improvement, parent/carers are requested to attend a formal meeting at school during which concerns about attendance and punctuality are raised. An improvement timeline is set, and if there is no improvement, school will refer the matter to the Court Officer for possible prosecution.

Legal action includes:

- **Penalty Notice:** A penalty notice may be issued for each student who has unauthorised absence or lateness. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- **Prosecution for unauthorised absence:** It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered student at the school. This can lead to a fine or, in very serious cases, a term of imprisonment.

5.0 Absence from school due to family holidays and/or extended trips

Under Regulation 12 of the Education, Schools and Further Education Regulations 1981 no parent can demand leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday as a right. The power is discretionary. At The Cumberland School we do not authorise holidays and/or extended trips overseas in term time as regular attendance is a key factor in a child's achievement at school.

6.0 Lateness to school

The school expects all students to arrive at school by 8.30am ready for a lesson start at 8.35am. A student arriving late will disrupt not only their own continuity of learning but also that of others. Any student who arrives after 10.00am will be recorded as absent for the morning registration session unless there is an acceptable explanation. In cases, for instance, where the absence is for attending an early morning medical appointment which could not be taken at another time, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Parents will be expected to attend meetings in school to discuss their child's poor attendance. Students will be issued a detention every time he/she arrives late to school.

7.0 Rewarding good attendance and punctuality

The school recognises the vital importance of good attendance and punctuality to their success in exams and in their future lives. In consequence, the school celebrates and rewards the good attendance and punctuality of students. This includes celebrating collectively in assemblies, rewards evenings and the issuing of certificates and badges. The school understands the importance not only of sanctioning poor attendance, but of rewarding good attendance.

8.0 Policy documentation control

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