

De La Salle College



Attendance Policy

Compiled by: The Head of College	Date: May 2016
Policy Holder: D. Sharrock	Revision date: May 2017

National guidance

This policy provides a framework which underpins the role of parents and De La Salle College with regard to the importance of school attendance. It upholds the principal that children attend school regularly as stated in the Education Law (Jersey) 2000, article 12, Para 1.

'A parent of a child of compulsory school age shall ensure that he/she receives full time education appropriate to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school at which he/she is a pupil or otherwise, in accordance with Article 13.'

This policy reflects this law and the guidance produced by the department for Education in the 'School Attendance policy' and 'Children Missing Education' documents.

This attendance policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Counter Bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Educational Needs Policy
- Study Leave Policy

Section 1

Rationale/statement of intent

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

De La Salle College is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our college so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- *statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%*
- *regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically*
- *regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with*
- *regular attenders find learning more satisfying*
- *regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.*

Section 2

2.1 Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- *provide information on the term dates and calendar events on the college website*
- *report to you on how your child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is. Attendance reports will be attached to interim and full written reports for pupils of compulsory school age.*
- *celebrate good attendance through assemblies and House competitions.*
- *set targets for the school and for individual students for attendance and punctuality.*

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

A member of the senior leadership team (Mr David Sharrock) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the college's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- *Ensure that all students are registered accurately.*
- *Promote and reward good attendance with students' at all appropriate opportunities.*
- *Liaise with the Head teacher (Primary) or the Heads of House (Secondary) on matters of attendance and punctuality.*
- *Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.*
- *Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.*

Section 2 continued

Responsibilities of students

- *Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.*
- *Arrive in school on time.*
- *Go to all their lessons on time.*
- *Take responsibility for registering at the college office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.*

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Article 12 of the 2000 Education Law) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in Parents will:

- *inform the school on the first day of absence*
- *discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance*
- *support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year*
- *make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable*
- *avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments*
- *only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.*

Section 3

3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. Once at the start of the school day and once in the afternoon. In the primary school this is completed at 09:00 for the morning session and 13:15 for the afternoon session. In the secondary school the morning register is completed at 08:45 and 13:40 for the afternoon session.

Section 3

3.2 Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- *The school day begins at 08:45 and all pupils are expected to be in school sufficiently before this time as to allow the student to be fully prepared to learn. Morning registration is at 08:45 and it closes at 09:15.*
- *All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the Education Welfare Service (EWS), should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.*
- *Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Education Department guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.*
- *If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.*

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be referred to the EWS.

Parents or guardians of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate, is declined or punctuality does not improve following support the college will refer the matter to the EWS.

Section 3

3.3 What to do if my child is absent?

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- *contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence either via telephone (754100) or email (absence@dls-jersey.co.uk) and on any subsequent days of absence providing a clear reason for the absence.*

If your child is absent we will:

- *telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child’s safety as well as their regular school attendance*
- *send a letter asking for verification of the reason for absence when none has been received. If a response to the letter is not forthcoming, parents will be invited in to the college to discuss the absence.*
- *invite you in to discuss the situation with our pastoral leaders or assistant head teacher if absences persist*
- *discuss the matter with the colleges assigned Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the EWS if absence is unauthorised and/or falls below 90%.*
- *Contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) if we have not heard from you and we have concerns for your child’s welfare.*

Third day absence

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by the States of Jersey Children Missing Education (CME) guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquires to known friends and wider family and inform the EWO of your child’s absence. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number.

Ten days’ absence

If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer by either the College or the EWO then then MASH is notified that the child is missing education. Children’s Services staff and/or the police will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Section 4

Request for leave of absence

De La Salle College has a discretionary power to grant leave for holidays in accordance with the policy of the Department for Education, Sport and Culture.

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and must request permission in advance from the head teacher via letter or email.

Parents must make a strong case to justify taking pupils out of school during term time as the absence can seriously disrupt continuity of learning. It is expected that parents will support their child's education by arranging family holidays to coincide with school holidays. Parents wishing to appeal against a decision should do so in writing. This appeal will be reviewed by a senior member of staff not connected with the original decision. If following the result of this appeal parents are still unhappy the school complaints procedure should be followed.

The head teacher will consider each request carefully, taking into account:

- *The age of the child*
- *The time of year*
- *The nature and purpose of the trip – e.g. maintaining family ties and cultural links*
- *The duration of the trip and the effect on the continuity of learning*
- *The family circumstances **
- *The attendance pattern of the child*
- *Previous requests*

Where leave is approved by the college, the absence is considered authorised. If a child is away from the college longer than the approved period, the excess will be treated as unauthorised. Similarly, if permission is not requested in advance or a pupil is absent from the college when permission has been refused, the absence will be unauthorised.

Parents should be aware that if they remove a pupil from the college for a period of six weeks or more, that pupil may be removed from the school roll. In such cases parents would be required to re-apply for that placement.

** If parents or guardians with 'parental responsibility' are separated they should discuss the request beforehand. Both parents must send a request via letter or email to the college indicating their request or approval of it. Failure to do so will significantly delay a response from the college as it seeks the opinion of the other parent.*

Section 5

Understanding types of absence – authorised and unauthorised

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- *authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised*
- *unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:*
 - *parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings*
 - *truancy before or during the school day*
 - *absences which have not been explained.*

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Section 6

6.1 What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

Schools may wish to add further comments, such as:

Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher (primary school) or Head of House (secondary school), immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

6.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school other than when transferring between the junior school/secondary school parents are asked to:

1 Give the college comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school address and contact information, and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing. De La Salle will inform you by letter when the pupil file has been transferred to the new educational establishment.

2 One terms notice of the intention to leave to be provided to the college bursar.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education

6.3 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the college for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the college to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

6.4 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

6.5 Study leave

Study leave should be used sparingly and only for pupils sitting public exams. Study leave should not normally exceed 15 days prior to the exam period starting. Parents will be informed of the date on which study leave will commence. Regard will be given to the individual pupil's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it.

Section 7

7.1 Pre Reception

School attendance is non statutory for Pre Reception pupils. Pupils' hours of attendance vary for each individual but are agreed in advance and between the parents/carers and the Head teacher of the Primary school. Paper registration of pupils is undertaken by the parent/carer who signs the pupil in/out (staff member supervision) Register is submitted to the bursar on a regular basis.

Parents are requested to inform the College of any absence (see main policy). If there is extended absence through illness the College will inform the Education Department so that any adjustments to NEFF funding can be considered. Requests for holiday absence should be made to the Primary Head teacher (see main policy). If this absence is in excess of 15 school days the College will inform the Education Department so that any adjustments to NEFF funding can be considered.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.