Attendance Policy

ATTENDANCE POLICY

 Introduction

1.1 COLPAI is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.3 The policy has been drawn up based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

School's roles and responsibilities

2.1 Teaching Standards

All staff (teaching and support) at COLPAI have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality. This is now part of the National Standards for Teachers.

2.2 Registration

i)   The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the electronic registers. The admin officer completes the registers using the prescribed codes.

ii)   The register will be called promptly at 8:30 am and 1.00 pm by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

iii)   The registers will close at 8:45 am and 1.15 pm. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will be marked as absent (U). Any child arriving late but before the closing of the register will be marked as late (L).

2.3 Categorising absence

i)   A mark will be made in respect of each child following the close of the registers. Any child who is not present will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head Teacher.

ii)   COLPAI recognises the clear links between attendance and achievement; and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at COLPAI will challenge parents about 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.

iii)   If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 7 days, the absence will remain unauthorised;

iv)   Absence will typically be authorised in the following circumstances:

    (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example, a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority;

    (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;

    (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible), and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand;

    (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;

    (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parents belong (1 day per year only);

    (f) In other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a very limited period of time (typically 1 day).

v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **NOT** authorising absence would be:

(a) no explanation has been given by the parent;
(b) the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
(c) the pupil or parents are staying at home to mind the house;
(d) the pupil or parents are shopping during school hours;
(e) the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday, wedding;
(f) the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday;
(g) the pupil has travelled abroad with the family to visit relatives (including sick relatives) during term time;
(h) the pupil has low attendance over time.

2.4 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.5 Absences after close of class registers

Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the class teacher school office and reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team

2.6 Staff Training

The School Admin Officer and School Business Manager will ensure that all staff responsible for taking electronic registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and analysis of data

3.1 Attendance is monitored by the Admin Officer and Learning Mentor by year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed for gender, ethnicity, pupils / students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.2 Accurate attendance returns are made to the Education Welfare Service (SIMS) within the stipulated time frame.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at COLPAI. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

4.2 COLPAI has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. Typically, the Admin Officer and/or Learning Mentor will contact the families for an explanation of absence and refer to the Education Welfare Officer, Head Teacher or Assistant Head if necessary.

4.3 Texting and Calling

COLPAI will text and if necessary call parents when a child is absent. This means that parents will be telephoned or texted if a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first or second day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

4.5 Pupils who arrive late for school but before 8:45 am must report to the Admin Officer and they will be marked as late. Parents may also be contacted to enquire further as to the reasons for the late arrival.

4.6 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving exceptionally late (after 9.45am) should report to the school office.

4.7 For the same reason it is important that parents of pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, inform the school office. The school office will record that the child has left the school site and will mark them back in when they return.

4.8 Attendance Review and Actions: Procedure

Parameters used to determine serious concerns are below 92% attendance to date. These pupils are at risk of becoming Persistent Absentees (below 90%). In addition, we also track all pupils whose attendance is below average and intervene, as appropriate, where it is felt that support and action may lead to improvement. We

want to ensure all pupils below 94% improve to at least 95% in the first instance and then continue to close the gap to 96%.

Each situation will be managed appropriately on a case-by-case basis and will take into account such issues as any serious issues that have recently influenced the family situation and patterns of attendance over time. Where there is a long term pattern of low attendance, this may escalate the concern. The 'typical' procedure for intervention in most cases will involve:

Step 1 HLTA/Education Welfare Officer Action:

- HLTA or Education Welfare Officer will contact parents to advise them of the concern, state expectations, give advice and offer support as needed (re EWO, Early Help Assessment etc). Depending on the level of concern, the parent may be invited in for a meeting.

- If this pupil was a previous concern (or has already been discussed with the parent) then parent will always be invited for a brief meeting with HLTA/EWO. Parent will be shown printout of attendance statistics and the reasons for low attendance will be explored, along with what support might help to improve the situation. The impact on the pupil's education will be made clear. HLTA/EWO will outline possible next steps if attendance does not improve, including penalty notices or further action.

- In most cases, where there is a concern, the HLTA/ EWO will begin monitoring attendance every two weeks and regularly communicate with the parent (including requests for evidence to explain absence) as required.

Step 2 Formal Meeting with Education Welfare Officer and/or Senior Member of Staff

- Where attendance is a persistent concern, a more formal meeting may be called to discuss attendance & academic concerns. The school may request medical validation from this point onwards if applicable (prescriptions, appointments cards etc, but not medical certificates/notes).

- If relevant, inform parent we may write to the GP to make them aware of child's poor attendance, however, we will not and cannot request any information.

- If there are wider ongoing concerns, the school may also consult children's social care.

- Any further actions to be decided on case-by-case basis.

- Monitoring period agreed.

Step 3
– If no improvement is shown, refer to EWO for more serious action depending on the above outcomes.

EACH CASE WILL BE TREATED ON ITS OWN MERITS. EARLY STEPS MAY BE SKIPPED AND SPECIFIC CASES MAY BE ESCALATED MORE QUICKLY, DEPENDING ON THE SEVERITY OF THE CONCERN. EG, CONTEXT OF FAMILY, CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (UNAUTHORISED WITH NO CONTACT, INADEQUATE REASON ETC)

Attendance Metrics to be used with parents to describe attendance of individual pupils:	
100%	**Outstanding**
98%/+	**Excellent**
97%/+	**Good**
95-97%	**Average (minimum accepted by both the school and Islington)**
95-95%	**Below average**
90-94%	**Poor and Requires Improvement**
85-90%	**Persistent Absenteeism and Cause for Concern. At risk of penalty notice.**
85% & below	**Persistent Absenteeism and Serious Concern. At risk of penalty notice.**

Term-time Holidays and Requests for Absence

5.1 No time off for holidays during term time will be authorised for any reason, including home country visits or visits to relatives. Requests for term time absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

5.2 COLPAI will consider every application individually. In line with guidance from Islington Local Authority and City of London Academies Trust, our policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a home country visit. Typically, visiting a sick relative in another country also does not constitute exceptional circumstances. Time off school for this purpose is not a right. An application must be made in writing using the appropriate form, with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended trip. Where parents take pupils out of school during term time for unauthorised holidays and leave, it is the school's policy to issue a penalty notice unless exceptional circumstances can be proven.

5.3 COLPAI will respond to all requests for a leave of absence using the appropriate form, giving the reasons for the decision.

5.4 Parents should request the appropriate form from the school office. At the school office, they will be handed the 'request form' – and they will be respectfully reminded that the term time holidays are not allowed; and that school does not grant term time absence except in the most exceptional circumstances. The pupil's attendance to date will also be noted on the request form so that parents are aware of how much school the pupil has already missed during that academic year.

5.5 If parents do feel that they have exceptional reasons for the request, they may also be invited to speak to the Head Teacher to discuss this further

Parents' / carers' responsibilities

6.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and fulltime education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child). COLPAI expects parents / carers will:
- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

6.2 Parents will also be expected to:
- notify COLPAI on the first day of absence
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, in full uniform and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, overseeing homework when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. COLPAI will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

Pupils' responsibilities

7.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher, or Learning Mentor.

7.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for reporting to the school office if they arrive late.

Governors' responsibilities

8.1 The governing body shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation:
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013