

Venture Learning

Attendance Policy

Venture Learning

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Introduction

This policy is set out in accordance with the expectations for schools laid out in the DfE guidance *School Attendance* (2018):

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

It is acknowledged that as an alternative provision, Venture Learning will only be responsible for the attendance of the pupil to the agreed number of sessions as contracted by the pupil's school or local authority. The responsibility for ensuring any additional sessions to meet the requirements of a full-time education will remain with the contracting school.

This policy, in conjunction with the Home School Agreement, lays out the expectations for students and parents to promote regular attendance, as well as Venture Learning's procedures for monitoring attendance and addressing absence.

Key Staff and Contacts

Provision Based Contacts

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Section 1: Rationale

At Venture Learning, we aim to change young people's perceptions of education. We can achieve this vision for our students most effectively when they maintain high levels of attendance.

We recognise that our students will have missed learning opportunities and may have spent time out of education before they arrive with us. Statistics across educational provisions show that regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically. We are committed to ensuring that our students have access to the education they need to bridge the gaps in their learning and prepare them for their next steps. It is vital that our young people attend every session, on time, to take full advantage of the educational opportunities we offer.

Regular attenders find the routines, relationships and expectations of education easier to cope with. The attendance of our young people underpins the work we do to improve their engagement with education. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve 100% attendance for every student. The routines young people develop around attendance and punctuality at Venture Learning will promote their success beyond their time with us: whether reintegrating into a mainstream school or pursuing further education to support the achievement of their goals.

Staff and parents share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent attendance and punctuality for all. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. Referring School

Students' attendance is ultimately the responsibility of the school at which the child is registered. Venture Learning may be used as a part-time provider and referring schools may choose to source additional providers to meet a child's requisite hours of education. The school is overseeing the child's whole educational package and will be required to collate their attendance data and address significant issues.

Venture Learning will support schools by promoting students' regular attendance to its sessions and communicating a child's attendance or absence promptly to the referring school.

2.2. Attendance Leader

A named member of the team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate all work relating to the promotion of regular attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied. This person will also ensure that attendance is recorded accurately; that attendance issues are identified at an early stage; and that appropriate support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, the attendance leader will liaise with the student's school attendance officer and 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 student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the student's school.

2.3. All Staff

All staff are expected to support Venture Learning's commitment to good attendance by:

• Ensuring that all students are registered accurately

• Promoting and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities

• Liaising with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality

• Communicating any concerns that may account for a student's absence

• Supporting pupils who have been absent to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

2.4 Students

Students are expected to strive for good attendance by:

• Attending every session unless they are genuinely ill or have an authorised absence

• Arriving at Venture Learning at the agreed times

• Ensuring that they are on time

• Taking responsibility for informing a member of staff if they have arrived on site late or need to leave site.

2.5. Parents/Carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance in education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence that is not authorised by the child's educational provision creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers will:

• Support their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year

• Inform Venture Learning on the first and all subsequent day/s of absence

• Discuss with staff any planned absences well in advance

• Avoid taking their child out of sessions for non-urgent medical or dental appointments

• Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Section 3: Operation of the Policy
Venture Learning is committed to working collaboratively with parents and students to promote good attendance. The Home School Agreement contains details of how we will together and clearly lays out our expectations for regular attendance from students and what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child achieves this.

To help us all focus on this Venture Learning will:

• Regularly update information on all matters related to attendance on our website

• Report to parents/carers on students' attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their attainment during progress and review meetings

• Ensure that students are made aware of their own attendance and punctuality rate

• Celebrate and reward good or improving attendance

• Set attendance targets and share these with students and parents, keeping them informed of progress towards meeting these.

2.1. Recording Attendance
Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 9;15am, and again for the afternoon session at 1.30 pm.

Venture Learning's day begins at 9:15am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 9:15am and it closes at 9.30am.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information may be required for future educational placements or by the courts if a prosecution for non-attendance should be necessary.

Registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years.

2.2. Types of Absence
Students are expected to attend Venture Learning for every agreed session, unless there is an exceptional reason for their absence.

There are two main categories of absence:

• Authorised absence: Venture Learning has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for the absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

• Unauthorised absence: Venture Learning has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:

- Parents giving their children permission to miss sessions unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- Truancy for all or part of a session
- Absences which have not been explained

An authorised absence can be changed to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated with parents/carers.

The decision as to whether an absence is authorised will ultimately rest with the school at which the child is on roll. Venture Learning will liaise with the school to ensure that both agencies have all the relevant information about a student's attendance.

2.3. Addressing Absence
A young person not attending their educational provision is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Parents/carers are expected to contact Venture Learning as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

We have a duty to ensure our students' safety as well as their regular attendance. If a student is absent we will:

• Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them

• Invite parents/carers and a representative from the young person's school in to discuss the situation if absences persist

• Refer the matter for legal action if absence is persistent and unauthorised

Parents/carers will be required to provide accurate contact details and the address of the child's current residence as part of the admissions process.

2.3. Third Day Absence
If a student has not been seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence Venture Learning will start Children Missing Education procedures.

N.B. In the following circumstances CME procedures and external agency referrals will be initiated on the first day of absence:

• the child may be the victim of a crime;
• the child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
• the child is subject of s47 enquiries;
• the child is looked after;
• there is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
• there is a history of the family moving frequently;
• there are serious issues of attendance.

Venture Learning will liaise with the school at which the student is on roll to organise a home visit. Where there is a safeguarding concern, this information will be promptly communicated with the relevant agencies.

2.4. Ten Days Absence
We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. The last known address will be visited and key services alerted to locate the child.

Parents/carers must update their address and/or contact numbers with us if they change throughout the year. Venture Learning will support this by providing half-termly reminders and checks.

2.5 Continued or On-going absence
If a student misses 10% or more sessions across the year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a young person by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the school, local authority and Department for Education. If a student has had absence and their attendance is falling towards 90% Venture Learning will liaise with parents/carers and the young person's school to agree an attendance improvement plan.

2.6 Requests for Leave of Absence
Requests for leave of absence must be made to the student's school as it retains ultimate responsibility for the student's attendance. The school's policy should be referred to for guidance on this process.

If the school grants a leave of absence in term-time, parents/carers must inform Venture Learning of the dates of the absence. At this stage, Venture Learning will discuss with the student and parent/carer options for making up lost learning.

2.7 Lateness
Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness can lead to unauthorised absences which will affect the student's overall attendance.

Parents/carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If the problem persists Venture Learning will call a meeting with the young person's school and parents/carers to discuss the problem and agree an improvement plan.

2.8. Legal Action for Non-attendance
Parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Attendance to agreed sessions with Venture Learning will be recorded as 'educated off-site' at the student's school. However, non-attendance of Venture Learning sessions will have the same legal ramifications as non-attendance of school.

The school at which the child is registered will be responsible for taking legal action for non-attendance. Venture Learning will support this process by communicating attendance data with the schools promptly and accurately.

Parents/carers should consult the school's attendance policy for details of the legal measures for tackling non-attendance if they are concerned that they are at risk of prosecution.

Section 3: Useful information

National Guidance

Guidance for schools and local authorities from the DfE to help maintain high levels of school attendance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

Statutory guidance on parental responsibility and school's role in enforcing this: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance

Statutory guidance for identifying children missing education: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education

Local Guidance

Nottinghamshire County Council's advice for parents: http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/school-discipline-and-exclusions/attendance-absence-truancy

Nottingham City Council's advice for parents: http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/education-and-schools/problems-at-school/school-attendance/

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board's guidance for children missing education: http://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_ch_miss_care_home_ed.html?printMe.x=0&printMe.y=0#agency_roles