



## - The School at Hackney City Farm –

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

#### 1. Introduction

Most young people attending The School at Hackney City Farm have, for a variety of reasons, a pattern of disrupted education. The majority have poor attendance prior to joining the School.

Our young people are more vulnerable and have greater needs than most of their mainstream peers. They may have more genuine absences from school for medical reasons or experience greater social need than others. It is our responsibility as educators to maintain an expectation of regular attendance and to do all we can to encourage and support our young people to aim for 100% school attendance and punctuality.

Where there are problems which affect a young person's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/ carers and the young person to resolve those problems as quickly and effectively as possible.

#### 2. Parents' and Carers' responsibilities

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

We are committed to ensuring that families understand how important this is. We give high priority to conveying to parents and young people the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance.

Parents are expected to notify the School on the first day that their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness or a medical appointment.

#### 3. Attendance protocols and procedures

Young people who are admitted to the School at Hackney City Farm will be interviewed with parents or another appropriate adult. Expectations about attendance and strategies for improving attendance will be made clear.

The School is open to students from 8:15 am to 2:30 pm (2:00 pm on Friday) including a supervised 15-minute break in the morning, and a 45-minute supervised lunch break. Breakfast is available from 8:15 to 8:45 am.

- The register is taken by the School Manager twice a day, once at the start of the day, for the morning session which starts at 8:45 am and once during the afternoon session which starts at 1.30pm. Registers are recorded electronically on our bespoke attendance system.

- The School Manager has the main responsibility for ensuring that each student's register mark is accurate, and that all students have a valid mark recorded before the register is completed.
- If a student is absent and the parent has not contacted the School, then the School Manager will telephone on the first day of absence, from 9.00 am onwards. This is of particular importance for safeguarding reasons in cases when a student may have left home but has not come to School. We will follow up unexplained absences by phone calls, emails or letters from the first session of absence.
- If a young person is absent for two or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be conducted by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) at New Regents College, or other referring institution.
- Students who arrive before 9:30 am will be marked present and those arriving after that time, will be coded L (Late) which is a present mark. Arrival after 10 am will be coded U (late after close of registration), which is an absent mark.
- We will communicate attendance/non-attendance to New Regents College and other referring school Attendance Officers on a daily basis;
- Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding punctuality and attendance and we will publish students' attendance records on her/his school reports;
- Attendance statistics are monitored by the School Manager, the Leadership Team at New Regents College and individual schools where they have referred a student directly to us;
- Parents and carers, students and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;
- The School Manager will work closely with attendance staff at the referring institutions and Education Welfare staff where a student is a persistent absentee (attendance below 90%)

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

#### **Authorised absence**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences. For example: if a young person is ill, family bereavement or religious observance.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

There are times when young people are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as 'unauthorised absences. Examples of unauthorised absence are (this list is not exhaustive):

- Waiting in for a delivery
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is the young person's birthday
- Term time holiday/cheap flights

- A parent or carer's illness

Where there is no explanation for an absence, or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

Unauthorised Absences are reported to the Local Authority. Where unauthorised absence and persistent absenteeism (attendance below 90%) does not improve, the Local Authority may prosecute parents.

### **Absence due to illness**

The School will consider instances of student absence due to illness on a case by case basis and decide whether the absence will be deemed authorised or unauthorised.

If a young person is absent frequently due to illness, medical evidence will need to be provided by the family. This evidence can include medical appointment letters, prescription bottles or boxes, doctor's notes etc.

In some complex cases, the School may seek the support of the School Nursing Service. The School actively discourages parents colluding with their children in claiming illness where none exists.

### **Sanctions for persistent lateness and non – attendance**

A Penalty Notice can be considered for unauthorised leave of absence taken without permission after the third day of absence. It will be issued by the Education Welfare Service in accordance with Local Authority policy.

A penalty Notice can also be considered for any unauthorised absence where there is no justifiable cause. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The Local Authority may also impose an Education Supervision Order, Parenting Contract or Parenting Order in certain circumstances.

### **Punctuality**

- It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest that day.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

### **Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence**

We are concerned about the amount of school time students miss as a result of term time leave. There is **no entitlement** to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the School Manager.

It is our policy:

- Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be allowed. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to apply to the School Manager in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements.
- If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the School, the absence will be unauthorised and parents may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action.
- Parents will be helped to understand that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a young person by creating gaps in his/her learning.

## **4. Children Missing Education**

**Children missing education** refers to children or young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, in independent schools or in alternative provision). These young people are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

We have a safeguarding duty in respect of our students and as part of this we will jointly investigate any unexplained absences with New Regents College and referring schools (where these have referred students directly to us).

We monitor students' attendance through the daily register and will inform local authorities of the details of students who fail to attend regularly or have missed ten school days or more without permission.

When a student is referred to the School, a home visit will be conducted if the student fails to attend two interviews. If the School has been unable to make contact with the family during a five-day period after they are due to start, the student will be treated as a Child Missing Education (CME). The School

(via New Regents College or the referring school) will refer the student to the local authority CME Officer for further checks.

## **5. Vulnerable Students**

Young people who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), or identified as Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with the highest priority. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, or a home visit.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in the School can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

## **6. Information for parents**

See below

## **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

### **At Hackney City Farm we aim to:**

- Maintain good attendance and punctuality;
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

### **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between good achievement and good attendance;
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically;
- Regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier to cope with;
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attenders settle into their next school, college or work placement more easily.

### **As a parent you can help us by:**

- Ensuring your child attends our school regularly (absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty);
- Telephoning on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the young person is likely to return to school;
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays;
- Sending us a note confirming the reason for your child's absence when s/he returns to school;
- Providing medical evidence for any frequent absence attributed to illness;
- Keeping us updated by telephone, email or letter if your child has any extended period of absence;
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, child minder and emergency contact details.

We ask all parents to consider the following:

A whole year has 365 days  
A school year has only 190 days.

- Missing 10%, or about 18 days, may affect academic success;
- Attendance is an important life skill that will help a young person succeed, either at college, or to keep a job;
- A young person who is 10 minutes late every day will miss 30 hours of learning over a school year;
- 90% attendance is equal to one day off every 2 weeks;

Attendance can be summarised as:

96%+	<b>EXCELLENT</b> – Well done!! This will help all aspects of progress and life in school. This gives a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
94-95%	<b>AVERAGE</b> – Well done, strive to build on this.
85-93%	<b>POOR</b> – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work with the school urgently to improve the situation.
Below 85%	<b>UNACCEPTABLE</b> – Absence is causing <b>SERIOUS CONCERN</b> . It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting learning. The Education Welfare Service and ourselves will work with you to help improve your child's attendance. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can authorise absence. The school will not accept all reasons as valid.