

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. VLC fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

This policy applies to all students that attend VLC, whether they are part time or full time.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents and carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal, Deputy Principal and Centre Leads, alongside commissioners and schools, and other agencies, work together to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Students who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Students who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, students, commissioners, and parents and carers are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

- Improve pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued at VLC by all.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to every student.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and carers, staff, commissioners and local agencies so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise a key role of all staff is promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality.

- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and referring parties on attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

“An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.”

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

VLC are unable to ‘authorise’ an absence through CLM; commissioners are primarily responsible for this.

Unauthorised absence

“An absence is classified as unauthorised is when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.”

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. It is essential for VLC and commissioners to complete investigations when there is an unauthorised absence and update CLM upon receiving information regarding these absences.

Procedures

VLC will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes through CLM
- To maintain appropriate attendance data complied through CLM
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness complied through CLM
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with VLC
 - All absences will be followed up with a phone call and or text message to parents and carers for each day their child is absent
 - If this absence is for more than 3 consecutive days and VLC has not been able to communicate with the parent, the commissioner will be informed and a meeting will be arranged
 - Further absence will be handed over to the commissioner for further investigation, ACE will also be informed

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Principal

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorized and unauthorized absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues

- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at VLC.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absences
- To refer to commissioners and the ACE Team any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.

Centre Leads

- Keeping an overview of individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, abnormalities in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Liaising with other staff in regards to the overall monitoring of attendance
- Informing the Principal or Deputy Principal where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals to commissioners and other agencies
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising the importance of good attendance and promptness to the students.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted on CLM
- To discuss with parents what constitutes as authorized and unauthorised absences
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents and pupils to improve individuals attendance and punctuality
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.

Registration

VLC opens at 9:30am, students are considered as late if arriving later than 10:00. This time is sufficient for all pupils to arrive on site, and make their way to their desks.

Each Senior Team Leader has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance.

Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

The attendance must be clearly passed on from the Centre Leader to the Business Manager by 10:10am and by 1:40pm.

All attendance records are documented using CLM software, which is supported by the Local Authority.

Absences

Parent and carers should contact VLC on the first day of their child's absence either via text or phone, and everyday thereafter. It is important that parents and careers notify us of the details for their absence.

All absences are recorded as unauthorised absences on the CLM tool (with parents reason), then commissioners are able to change this to authorised where appropriate and where appropriate evidence is shown.

Absence Communication

Where a child is absent from VLC and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a process of communication, whereby the Centre Lead and or Business Manager will contact the parents or carers for the reasons as to why their child is absent.

Illness

VLC operate a 48 hour sickness and diarrhea policy, whereby a child should have not had such symptoms for at least 48 hours before returning to VLC.

When a student has an illness, which means they will be away from VLC long term, VLC will make commissioners aware of situation and activate a 'keep in touch' process, which would involve the following:

- o Weekly update visits or calls.
- o Work being sent home for the student to complete.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right for Principals and Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Applications must be made to the commissioner or VLC to authorise this.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

VLC expects attendance of at least 95%. In addition to the support VLC provide parents and students improving their attendance, support might be sought by VLC from the LA through the Magistrates Court as an Ancillary Order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a Schools Attendance Order. This will be in conjunction with an ACE referral.

Monitoring Attendance

The Principal, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the CLM attendance software with the support of VLC's Business Manager. Weekly meetings are held with the Principal to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.