Within this policy, Doucecroft School Services relates to the school day and residential services.
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1. **Ethos:**
   We welcome individuality and provide a safe and positive learning environment, to enable our children to thrive and meet their full potential preparing them for their future.

2. **Our Mission:**
   At Doucecroft School Services our mission is that our children are/ have:
   - Developing – Independence and life skills
   - Opportunity – to experience and learn new things
   - Understanding – to be understood and valued as an individual
   - Creativity – to express myself as an individual
   - Encouraged – to try new things and realise my potential
   - Confidence – to achieve and develop my self esteem
   - Respect – to feel accepted and accept others
   - Openness – to share experience and feelings with others
   - Fairness – to be recognised for achievement
   - Tolerance – accept that everybody is different

3. **Introduction**
   3.1 It is the duty of the parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age to ensure that he or she receives efficient full-time education. Schools are required to keep an attendance register within which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, the presence or absence of every student on the school roll is recorded. Schools have a responsibility to inform the local authority of details of any registered student who fails to attend regularly or who has been absent for a continuous period of ten or more school days, except where such absences are covered by a medical certificate or where the student has been granted leave of absence.

   3.2 This policy, which draws upon DfE guidance November 2016, aims to provide parents and carers with details of Doucecroft School Services’ procedures when reporting or requesting absence for a child, and the circumstances under which the school can authorise absences.

   The term ‘child’ or ‘children’ is used throughout this policy and refers to students at the school and FE departments.

   3.3 The school maintains an admission register; each child admitted to school services is entered into the register in line with DfE guidance. Children may start at school at any point throughout the school year.

4. **Principles of School Attendance**
   4.1 For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. Children should come to school every day.
   - A child should only be absent if the reason is ‘unavoidable’.
• Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents can be fined.

4.2 Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school, not by the parents, as either authorised or unauthorised.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

5.1 Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

5.2 A student’s absence can be treated as authorised for the following reasons: -
(a) Because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause.
(b) Because of a day of religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.
(c) Because of attendance at another school at which he or she is registered.
(d) Because he or she has been granted leave of absence.

5.3 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given by the Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teachers or Head of Further Education. Unauthorised absences would include keeping children off school for trivial reasons, or due to truancy, absences which have never been properly explained, and children who arrive at school too late to get a mark. Parents providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not unavoidable. Children should never be kept off school for reasons such as going shopping or for an activity that could be considered a ‘treat’.

5.4 Parents have no right to authorise the absence of a registered student of compulsory school age. This may only be done by the school.

5.5 Some students may have a history of poor attendance at school and may need encouragement to attend regularly. Specific problems relating to a child’s reluctance to attend or make the transition from the home to school environment are best resolved between the school, parents and the child. Should any difficulties arise, parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage to address the problem together.

5.6 If problems cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Office from the Local Education Offices. He or she will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement, but where other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.
5.7 Parents or children may wish to contact the Attendance Officer themselves to ask their advice. Attendance Officers are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

6. **Procedure for Reporting or Requesting Absence**

6.1 If a child is unfit for school, parents must contact the school office directly by telephone, by 9am of the first day of absence. Passing on a message via a third party or e-mailing the school to register the absence is not acceptable.

6.2 Telephone calls can be taken during normal school office hours, or a message may be left on the answering machines outside of these hours.

6.3 If the anticipated period of absence is unknown, parents/carers will need to contact the office daily.

6.4 Upon returning to school a written note, in the Home/School Book, confirming the reason for the absence and signed by the parent must accompany the child.

6.5 School holidays, non pupil days and total school closure days are advised in advance. Parents should aim to ensure their child attends school every day. Holidays, family activities and medical appointment should, where practicable take place during school closure times.

6.6 Permission for planned absence must be sought in advance of the absence or the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. For any planned absences, such as medical appointments, days of religious observance, family holidays or proposed absence for any other reason, even if only for part of a day a ‘Request for Absence’ Form (available from the school) must be completed and forwarded to the Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teacher or Head of Further Education.

Wherever possible, medical appointments should be made outside school hours. However, if an appointment falls within school time, the child would normally be expected to return to school after the appointment. Requesting absence for any other reason should be discussed with the school.

6.7 As a school for children with complex autism we recognise that it may be in the child’s best interest to go on family holidays during the less busy times of the year and that this time spent with their families can have a positive impact on a child’s well being. All holiday leave during term time is at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Provided the request is made, using the appropriate form, in advance by the parent looking after the child, leave for up to ten days per school year may be granted as long as the child’s attendance record is otherwise satisfactory. Requests for leave beyond ten days a year will only be granted in exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis.
6.8 The school is required to report the absence of any ‘Looked After Children’ to the Welfare Services through daily telephone contact.

7. Lateness

7.1 The majority of students are transported to school by taxi / minibus arranged by their Local Education Authority. Students are expected to arrive at 10.30am each Monday (or the first day back following school closure) and at 8.45am from Tuesday to Friday inclusive.

7.2 Children must attend on time to receive a mark in the register unless the lateness is unavoidable. Whilst it is recognised that some students travel considerable distances to get to school, arriving more than 15 minutes after the start of the session at the beginning of the school day / week would warrant further investigation.

7.3 Frequent lateness due to transport problems will be reported to the local authority transport contracts officer.

7.4 The school’s registers and absence records are monitored by the Governors (under section 33, National Minimum Standards), and absence figures, both authorised and unauthorised are made available to the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

8. Contents of Attendance Register

8.1 Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:
  • Present;
  • Attending an approved educational activity;
  • Absent; or,
  • Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

8.2 The times of the first attendance is to be marked at 10:45am each Monday (or the first day back following school closure) and at 9:00am on a Tuesday to Friday inclusive.

8.3 The Second session starts at
  • 1pm for Transition, Rainbow, Blue and White
  • 1:30pm for FE2, Orange, Red, Purple and Green

9. Absence and Attendance Codes

The School will use electronic registers for keeping the school attendance records.
The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Present (AM)</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\</td>
<td>Present (PM)</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Educated off site (NOT Dual registration, such as college/ PE activities)</td>
<td>Approved Education Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)</td>
<td>Approved Education Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Approved Education Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Late (arrives after start of morning or afternoon session)</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Approved sporting activity (such as attendance of Special Olympics, not school PE activities)</td>
<td>Approved Education Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Educational visit or trip</td>
<td>Approved Education Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>Approved Education Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Authorised Absence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Authorised holiday (agreed)</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Medical/Dental appointments</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Religious observance</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence</td>
<td>Authorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Unauthorised Absence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)</td>
<td>Unauthorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>No reason yet provided for absence</td>
<td>Unauthorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description and school is not satisfied with the reason given)</td>
<td>Unauthorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Late (after registers closed)</td>
<td>Unauthorised absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Administrative Codes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Not required to be in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Enforced closure (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances)</td>
<td>Not counted in possible attendances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Pupil not yet on roll</td>
<td>Not counted in possible attendances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>School closed to pupils</td>
<td>Not counted in possible attendances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. **Child Missing from Education**

The children missing education that are:

- Children of compulsory school age who are on a school roll but have not attended for a period of 20 consecutive school days (recorded as unauthorised absence) and the whereabouts of the family is unknown

In the event of a child missing from education, the school will follow Essex County Council's “Children Missing from Education Policy” (Updated September 2016)

This does not apply to children who are registered at a school who are not attending regularly.

The school should consider making a referral to the MECES for irregular school attendance. Missing Education and Child Employment Services investigate issues around lack of attendance and may visit a pupil’s home if they are absent from school without authorisation.

If unauthorised absences continue, penalty notices may be issued to both parents or legal action could be taken.

**Prosecution**

If a parent is prosecuted for failing to ensure their child attends school regularly, the maximum penalties are a fine of £2,500 and / or three months imprisonment.

**Parenting orders**

Parenting orders may be issued by magistrates following the conviction of parents or carers for failing to send their child to school regularly. As part of the parenting order, each parent will be required to:

- fulfil certain tasks such as taking their child to school each day
- attend parenting guidance sessions

**Education supervision orders**

The local authority may apply for an education supervision order (ESO) instead of, or as well as prosecuting parents. This would be heard in the Family Proceedings Court and, if granted, a supervising officer will be appointed to support parents in exercising their parental authority.

An ESO places children under the supervision of the local authority for a prolonged period (usually 12 months but can be extended for up to three years) and empowers the supervising officer to direct the child and parent in matters relating to school attendance. ESOs also remove certain rights such as where the child is educated. Parents may be prosecuted if you fail to cooperate and follow directions.
School attendance orders

School Attendance Orders are issued (SAO) if a child is not enrolled at a school and the local authority does not believe parents have made arrangements to provide an alternative, suitable, full-time education.

Parents are given 15 days to provide evidence that the child is registered at a school or that they are receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school.

If this is not received, a SAO may be issued which will require parents to send their child to a specific school. If this does not happen the matter will proceed to magistrate’s court for breach of order.
11. **Appendix: Request for Absence Form**  
(available from the School Office)

**DOUCECROFT SCHOOL AND FURTHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**REQUEST FOR ABSENCE**

This form is to be completed by the parent/ carer and forwarded to the Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teachers or Head of Further Education at least one week before the period of absence.

Name of student:

Period of absence:

Reason for absence:

Date:

Signature of parent/carer:

Please note – the school’s attendance policy details the circumstances for which the school is able to authorise absences. Leave of absence is granted in accordance with the 1981 School and Further Education Regulations.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD TEACHER

I am able/ unable to authorise this absence.

Comments:

Date:

Signature:
12. References

- Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006
- DFE Guidance “School attendance: guidance for schools”
- The Head’s Legal Guide (Croner)
- Essex County Council Children Missing from Education Policy (updated September 2016)