

SWANMORE COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Attendance Policy

Introduction

This is a successful college and each child plays his or her part in making it so. The college motto 'Supporting Each Other to Succeed' is about ensuring that the college community works together to help every pupil achieve their potential. In order to do this it is vital that all pupils attend regularly. All children should be at college, on time, every day the college is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how the college can work with parents to achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affecting the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of college staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents details on whole college attendance each term via Parentmail and the college website
- Give details of each child's attendance and punctuality on interim and full reports.
- Celebrate good attendance in Year 7 and House Assemblies and by displaying House and House Group achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through House Competitions and awarding of certificates.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the college (not by parents), as either

AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings and/or afternoons away from college for an acceptable reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in college time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the college does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off college unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the college day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at college too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been approved by the head teacher

Whilst any child may be absent from college because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend college. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the college, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is best not to cover up his or her absence or to give in to pressure to excuse him or her from attending. Condoning unnecessary absence gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when he/she misses 20% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the Pupil Support Manager and the Head of Year 7, Key Stage Directors or the House Teams.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an action plan which may involve the help of outside agencies e.g. Connexions.

All PA cases also are automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent parents must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence. This must be done even if parents have already telephoned us;

If a child is absent we will:

- Record the absence and ensure that a written explanation is provided by parents.
- Monitor attendance and contact parents if we become concerned about a child's attendance.
- Invite parents into college to discuss the situation with our Pastoral Leaders if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 87%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so parents must ensure that we have up-to-date contact numbers at all times.

The Education Welfare Officer

Parents are expected to contact college at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any attendance problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the college may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the college or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the college and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the college office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. When pupils miss the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence in others.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.30am** and we expect pupils to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **8.40** in the morning and by **1.40** in the afternoon. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.00** in the morning and **2.00** in the afternoon the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if pupils arrive after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. Parents of those pupils who have failed to register will be sent a text message via Parentmail.

If a child has a persistent late record parents will be contacted by a member of the pastoral team to discuss how to resolve the problem. Parents can approach the college at any time if they are having problems getting their child to college on time.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect children's schooling as much as any other absence and parents are expected to help the college by not taking children away in college time.

Savings made by taking a holiday in college time are offset by the cost to the child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in term time to go on holiday.

All applications for holiday leave must be made in advance. At the discretion of the Headteacher, a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision the Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is important that parents understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed:

- When a pupil is starting new to the college. This is very important as children need to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- At the start of the college year.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods detailed on the college calendar
- At any time during Years 10 or 11
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the college, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

The college has targets for attendance and each pupil has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **94%** attendance and we will keep parents updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares.

Remember: Good attendance supports good progress and high achievement.

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People responsible for attendance matters in the college are:

Mrs Case - Pupil Support Manager

Mrs Newcombe – Director of Year 7 (Year 7 only)

Mrs Frost/Mrs Franklin - Whittle House Members

Ms Sainsbury/Mrs Halliday – Hawking House Members

Mrs Barker/Mr Morgan – Attenborough House Members

Mrs Whitfield/Mr John – MacArthur House Members

Mr Middleton & Ms Miller - Key Stage Directors (pupils with serious attendance issues only)

Mrs Chadderton - Assistant Headteacher

Summary

The college has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All college staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: Summer 2009.

Date for Review: September 2010.