

# **Elysian**

## **Attendance Policy**



**Date Agreed: March 2024**

**Date of next review: August 2024**

***Elysian is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.***

This policy is applicable across all sites on which Elysian operates.

***Introduction***

This policy accords with “Working together to improve school attendance” (DfE September 2022) and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.

At Elysian, we recognise the strong link between attainment and attendance and the important role that Elysian, Learners and parents/carers play in ensuring that it is as high as possible; we are committed to maintaining the highest levels of attendance and to reducing levels of absence. At Elysian, we recognise the relative starting points of learners when they start their journey with us. Anxiety, Mental Health and Emotional based school avoidance are the key needs learners demonstrate when they join us. These are also significant factors which impact on attendance. We understand that achieving optimum attendance may be a challenging journey, but we are committed to working together with parents, carers and young people to overcome these barriers. This requires trust, mutual respect and good communication between all, as well as high expectations and continuous encouragement for the learners involved.

Attendance is pivotal in keeping young people safe, academic achievement, promotion of social inclusion and to equal opportunity.

<b>ELYSIAN attendance definitions</b>		
Below 69%	70% – 87%	88% and above

Elysian has used the DfE website – Pupil Attendance in Schools (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>) to inform the chosen percentage rates in the table above. This will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure we are remaining ambitious in our aspirations, compared to the average for state-funded special schools.

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

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- 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 are more successful in transferring between secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

***Responsibilities of the School’s Attendance Lead***

The Head of Education and Learning will oversee, direct and co-ordinate Elysian’s work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout Elysian.

This person will work alongside all staff, including the administration team, to ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where it is evidenced that a learner is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the reasons for their child/young person's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum.

A note or explanation from a learner's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether to authorise an absence will always rest with Elysian.

### ***Responsibilities of Parents and Carers***

Ensuring a learner's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility.

#### ***Parents will:***

- Inform Elysian in writing by email (or by phone if email is unavailable) on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with staff any planned absences well in advance, providing evidence when requested.
- Support Elysian with their young person in aiming for maximum attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for with reasons given and predicted return date where possible.
- Avoid taking their child/young person out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Where appointments are taken during the school day, ensure the learner will be in school before and after, where possible.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Communicate openly and honestly about any challenges faced, engaging with support where required.

#### ***Learners will:***

- Attend every day.
- Communicate with parents/carers or staff about the reasons why they may be struggling to attend.
- Engage with support plans where these are implemented to improve attendance.

### ***Recording Attendance***

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the day (9:30am) and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm. DfE-approved codes will be used and data will be shared with the DfE and Local Authority, as required. For Looked After Children in Hampshire, attendance is also logged on their Virtual School online register. For Looked after Children in Surrey, the Virtual School regularly checks attendance through a commissioned service called Welfare Call.

### ***Punctuality***

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, although we recognise that some learners travel a significant distance, and this may impact on arrival times.

If a learner is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of provision hours or during holidays.

### ***Parent/carer process for reporting absence***

If your young person is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- Email on the first day of absence before 8:30am. This is because we have a duty to ensure your young person's safety as well as their regular attendance. If email is not available, you must call and leave a message on Elysian's main phone line.

Please give the following information:

- Name of learner.
- Reason for absence.
- Likely return date.
- Request for contact to discuss challenges faced if required.

If you are unsure when your child/young person will return, for example, if they have a cold or upset stomach, you must contact Elysian each morning by 8:30 am, giving the information above.

### ***Process for Elysian when absence is not notified by parent/carer***

If a learner has not arrived within 15 minutes of the usual start time, Elysian staff will use all known contact details to attempt contact with the parents/carers. This may include contact with wider family and friends, taxi companies and any other known contacts.

Unexplained absence can be a serious safeguarding concern. If contact cannot be made within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the circumstances, Elysian staff may visit the home address, or contact the police or children's services to carry out a welfare check.

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any learner who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the learner is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the Local Authority is notified that the learner is 'at risk of missing'.

Parents/carers can help us by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number.

There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### ***Continued or Ongoing Absence***

If your child/young person misses 10% (3 weeks) or more of their expected registrations across the school year for whatever reason, this is defined as persistent absenteeism. If a child/young person has missed 10% or more of their expected registrations across one term or more for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees.

### ***Supportive Measures***

At Elysian, we understand the significant challenges faced by children, young people and their families within the context of attendance. Historic factors such as unmet needs, bullying and trauma all play a part in reasons why our learners may find attendance difficult. We take a non-judgemental approach to working with young people and their families, always seeking to understand and overcome barriers, rather than apportioning blame and taking a 'sanction-based' approach.

### **Falling attendance – still in the green zone**

The most effective methods for addressing attendance issues are based on early identification and intervention. Where we have a concern around attendance, this will be raised at the earliest opportunity with the learner concerned. Parents and carers will also be informed and we will work together to address low-level issues which are currently affecting the ability of the learner to attend. This may include problem-solving challenging peer relationships, liaising with taxi companies and transport teams or working with learners to problem-solve their daily plans and activities. Listening to the learner will be pivotal in success.

### **Falling attendance – in the amber zone**

If a learner's attendance rate falls into the amber zone, the attendance lead for Elysian will be notified and a meeting with parents/carers will be called. This should include the learner where appropriate. If this forum is not accessible for the learner, their views should be sought prior to the meeting from a trusted staff member or the parent/carer. This meeting may be on teams or in person and will be attended by a member of the Management Team at Elysian. Potential barriers will be discussed along with possible solutions. An Attendance Action plan will be written and shared with the learner for their views. The action plan will be reviewed regularly, along with attendance data. The regularity of this review cycle will be agreed at the meeting.

### **Falling attendance – in the red zone**

Where a learner's attendance falls into the red zone, a weekly meeting will take place with parents/carers and the learner. The Head of Education and Learning will attend this meeting. It will also be necessary to inform the local authority at this point. The local authority will be invited to the meeting to offer any further support or resource that may be helpful.

Where a learner remains in the red zone, despite all interventions and efforts, for a period of 6 weeks or more, the following actions may be taken, dependent on circumstances:

- Annual review may be called.
- A referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team may be made.
- A referral for Early Help may be made, with the permission of parents/carers.

### ***Positive Interventions***

Continued positive discussions and activities will take place throughout the year, promoting attendance and educating learners in the importance of attending. Although we recognise that anxiety often plays a part in school refusal, we also know that attending Elysian and working with the animals to overcome anxiety will be the key to success. Sometimes we have to support anxious learners in sitting with a difficult feeling, in order that they learn to take control of their anxiety. The animals and farm environment is ideally suited to this and the space that is available means that learners can attend, but not be overwhelmed with demand. Where possible, it will always be better to attend, even for a short while in a session to discuss the anxiety or issues, than to not attend at all.

Check-ins with trusted staff can be made available during the day to promote problem-solving.

**This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Education and Learning.**