

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

- It is the personal responsibility of every individual referring to this policy to ensure that they are viewing the latest version; this will always be published on Cygnet's SharePoint. For Cygnet Hospitals Bury, Sheffield and Woking, these will be available on the local network.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children and young people admitted to hospital for treatment of mental disorder should be admitted to an environment that is suitable for their needs, and be provided with 'a routine which allows them to continue their social, personal and educational development and ... equal access to educational opportunities as their peers'. (S131a Mental Health Act / Mental Health Act Code of Practice - paras 19.90/1)

DfE Statutory Guidance States (November 2017):

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf

- Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.
- The government expects schools and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.
 - Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
 - All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

- Local authorities have a legal requirement to arrange education for any child of compulsory school age whose illness prevents them from attending school.
- Cygnet provides an education service to young people in Tier 4 CAMHS services in Sheffield, Woking, Bury and Sevenoaks. The school service is for 12 to 18 year olds.
- Cygnet schools are independent schools. Ofsted are responsible for inspecting the quality of education provided. The Care Quality Commission also plays an important regulatory role in assuring quality.
- For children and young people admitted to an inpatient child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), education is usually provided alongside a programme of therapeutic activities. This is the Cygnet

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approach and timetables and attendance tracking reflect this.

- By law, young people must stay in school until the last Friday in June if they turn 16 before the end of the summer holidays. They must then stay in full time education, start an apprenticeship or work or volunteer until they are 18. <https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school>
- The local authority must make sure young people continue to get a full time education - unless part time is better for their health needs. <https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

Cygnnet believes that:

- Education is a key component of the therapeutic process.
- Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, absence means missed learning; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory.
- Young people in Tier 4 CAMHS provision often have a long history of being unwell and may have missed significant parts of their education. They may be looked after and/or also have an Education and Health Care Plan.
- It is our duty to do our very best for these vulnerable young people.

At Cygnnet, we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all of our students.

Cygnnet expects young people:

- At Key Stage 3 and 4 to engage in education & other therapeutic activities (either in class or on a 1:1 basis) on a full-time basis whenever possible.
- Post 16 to engage in education or training on a part-time basis.

It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this means regular attendance at school (or 1:1 provision).

3. AIMS

Our policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to all of good attendance at school as an essential component of improving the well-being of young people.
- Make explicit to all relevant parties (all hospital staff, parents/carers and students) Cygnnet Health Care's expectations on attendance levels.
- Promote a consistent approach across the schools towards all matters relating to attendance.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.
- Stress the need for hospital and school staff to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

4. WHAT IS AN ACCEPTABLE ATTENDANCE RATE?

Attendance is a national priority. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance.

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At Cygnet schools we expect:

- All staff to promote good attendance.
- That young people will engage in education unless they are deemed too unwell by a Doctor.
- Young people to engage in education every day during term time.
- That young people who are granted home leave engage in school activity back 'home' if this falls in term time.

4.1 Authorised absences

The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences and one of the key reasons is when a child is ill or receiving medical attention. At times young people will be too unwell to access learning / attend school in the hospital.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; authorised home leave should be arranged out of school hours whenever possible unless the student is attending their own school as part of a managed transition.

Occasionally young people may need to visit a new school or foster placement for example. These visits should always be coordinated with the education lead to minimise the impact on the young person's education.

4.2 Unauthorised absences

These are absences at Cygnet schools where no acceptable explanation is provided by a doctor.

All absences that are not agreed by a Doctor should be treated as unauthorised for reporting purposes.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Education staff will monitor persistent late comers and analyse attendance data to identify themes.

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and wards to work closely together.

To this end, we expect:

Ward staff to:

- Do all they can to ensure that young people arrive on time for morning or afternoon school sessions.
- Notify the school as swiftly as possible if a young person is medically unwell.
- Support young people to engage in learning in class or on a 1:1 basis.
- Support young people to undertake self-study and complete homework.

The school team (including Education Officers) to:

- Contact wards on day one of medical absence if no message has been received from the ward.

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- Contact ward staff over any unexplained absences.
- Follow up promptly any concerns ward staff pass on to the school that may be affecting a young person's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school.
- Involve the education officer to help pupils re-integrate into school after a period of illness or other individual circumstances.
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Headteachers to:

- Ensure this policy is implemented.
- Monitor, analyse and report on trends of attendance.
- Ensure all students have access to high quality education.
- Ensure that the promotion and rewarding of good attendance is a key priority.

Local Education boards to:

- Challenge and support all staff to ensure that young people access education and learning whenever they are well enough to do so.

National Education boards to:

- Set and update policy on all matters relating to attendance.

Head of Education:

- To assure the proprietor that this policy is compliant with legislation and guidance and being implemented at all school sites.

National Attendance and Billing Officer:

- To produce national reports on attendance on a weekly basis

6. PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Students are encouraged to attend all lessons whilst resident at the hospital.

The learning support assistant visits the wards between each lesson to ensure those who may have missed a lesson can attend the next.

Students with the best attendance in KS3/4 and in KS5 after three weeks are rewarded with a £10 Amazon voucher and celebrated in community meeting.

Students who achieve the highest attendance over a term in KS3/4 and KS5 receive an MP3 player and the choice of purchased music to add to it. They are also celebrated in community meeting

Students who persistently do not attend are visited by the school liaison officer to examine the reason for non attendance and create a plan to reintegrate (if needed) back into KDC.

Pupils who may be unwell have the opportunity to create an individually tailored plan to help gradually increase attendance over an appropriate period of time