

# Attendance and Support Policy, Procedure and Guidance 2021-22

## (Parents' and Students' Version)

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## Contents

• Expectations .....	1
• Students with identified Mental Health issues.....	2
• The Support Process .....	3
• Fast-Track Procedures .....	7
• Suspension and Exclusion – Disciplinary procedure.....	7
• Appeal Procedure .....	8
• Payment of Exam Fees .....	8
• Equality impact and monitoring the policy and procedure.....	8

### 1. Expectations

- Attendance at lessons is a basic requirement of learning, and will be a key focus for 2021/22.
- Monitoring student attendance and responding to absence is the responsibility of **all** teaching staff and personal tutors.
- All staff should acknowledge excellent attendance.
- Prompt intervention and response to student absence is crucial: timely support will help students to stay on course and improve retention. For some students, referral to Support4Learning, the Attendance Mentor, a Study Mentor and/or Student Services (to access pastoral services) will be part of this.
- The College sets out in the Student Code of Conduct clear expectations of students in relation to attendance and punctuality. The link between attendance and

achievement is emphasised to individual students at all stages. Students are expected to attend and be punctual for all lessons and tutorial sessions (ie 0% unauthorised absence). Reasons for absence/lateness must be reported to the College and/or explained to staff.

- Students or parents are expected to contact the college prior to the absence on each and every day that they are absent, unless it is a long-term absence of which the college is aware.
- All absences will be classed as 'unauthorised' unless there is a valid reason. It is the responsibility of the student/parent to ask for absences to be authorised, and Student Services will make judgements case by case (see appendices A and B). A form notifying the college of known/planned absences such as family holidays is available from Student Services. This 'Planned Absence Form' can also be used to request that an absence resulting from, for example, a medical appointment or a funeral be authorised. Holidays in term time are very strongly discouraged and will almost certainly be classed as 'unauthorised'.
- Information about attendance patterns will be available to staff on ProMonitor / IRIS so that any inconsistencies, worrying patterns of attendance etc. can be highlighted and discussed with the student. Parents/guardians will have up-to-date attendance information at all times on ProPortal (the Parent Portal), and text messages sent to the parent's mobile phone will refer them to ProPortal.
- Punctuality is a key aspect of attendance, and prepares students for life outside college. We have a 'Knock and Wait' policy for students arriving to lessons late. It is college policy that students arriving more than 5 minutes late to a lesson are marked in the register as 'late' (L). If a student arrives at a lesson more than 10 minutes late, they are marked as 'very late' (V) and the number of minutes is recorded.
- Itchen Financial Support (IFS) is a means-tested award designed to remove some of the financial barriers to post-16 study. It is administered by Student Services and is intended to contribute towards costs resulting from attendance at college (e.g. transport, books, educational trips). Eligibility for payment is based on household income, attendance and progress towards learning goals.
- It is college policy that students who fail to achieve at least 90% attendance in a course may be asked to pay a proportion of their exam entry fees and/or registration fees, and may be unable to progress to the next level or year of the course.

## **2. Students with identified Mental Health Issues**

A significant number of students start their courses at Itchen with Mental Health issues. We understand that we have a role to play in supporting these students to be resilient and mentally healthy. The support begins early, with applicants who may need additional support identified before enrolment through effective information sharing with partner schools.

The Lead DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) has established links with SENCOs from partner schools and meets them to plan the right approach for applicants with mental health conditions to ensure a smooth and successful transition to college. The Lead DSL and the Guidance and Support Manager will see all identified students at enrolment.

Our expectations of these students will be as high as other students, but they will be supported through a programme managed by the Lead DSL and the G&S Manager. The Wellbeing Hub in the College Centre supports students with the development of their wellbeing and resilience by signposting them to appropriate support. Our priority at all times is to support students to get to lessons and to improve their resilience.

### **3. The Support Process**

**The Concern Process has been renamed as the Support Process, to reflect the supportive nature of our working relationships with students.**

- Students should always be asked to explain absence and lateness.
- Persistent lateness should be treated as seriously as non-attendance.
- The following 4 stage process is in place to support students who are under-performing in terms of attendance, behaviour, completion of work or quality of work.
- At all stages, the emphasis must be on retention through positive action planning and support, and clear expectations/targets must be set.
- The aim is to keep the student motivated, in control of their workload, up-to-date with work and attending regularly.
- The tutor will be proactively involved at all stages in the process, working closely with the student, subject teachers, the Head of Faculty and possibly a Study Mentor. The tutor will continue to support and challenge the student, even when the level of support has been escalated to red or purple. Indeed, the support and challenge from the tutor is even more important when the level of support is escalated.

**General criteria for deciding to enforce the Support Process:**

#### **Attendance/Punctuality -**

- student has missed lessons or tutorials without good reason (good reason = illness, family crisis/problem)
- student is developing a pattern of patchy attendance (e.g. 'odd' lessons missed without satisfactory explanation) and/or attendance percentage falls below 90%
- student is persistently late

**Progress on course is causing concern due to -**

- consistent failure to keep to work deadlines
- consistent lack of effort, poor motivation
- unacceptable behaviour/poor attitude

### **Stage 1 Informal Support – Course Action Plans**

- **Under-performance** is dealt with routinely by teachers, ideally as a focus in a 1-1 progress interview. Students must be given a warning that they are under-performing and instructions as to what they need to do to improve. A Course Action Plan, including SMART targets, will be agreed and this will be recorded in ProMonitor so that all staff are 'in the loop' and aware of the bigger picture. It is possible that multiple Course Action Plans (CAPs) could be in place simultaneously, for different courses. CAPs can be drawn up with the student at any stage through the year, and at any stage of the Support Process.
- **Non-attendance** should be noted by teachers and personal tutors and discussed with students. The tutor's role is central to attendance and progress monitoring.
- Teachers and personal tutors are encouraged to contact parents/guardians at an early stage to discuss concerns, ideally through **email contact** which encourages quick and easy communication between the college and home. If email contact proves to be difficult, or if email contact fails to initiate a response from a parent, staff are asked to use parent mobile phone numbers, landline numbers or posted letters. A mail-shot to the parents of **all** students early in the first term, encourages parents to update details (including email addresses) held by the college to ensure effective electronic communication through emails and through the parent portal, ProPortal.

### **Stage 2 Formal Support: Amber Flag**

- **Where problems with performance persist or worsen** the member of staff should request that the tutor raises the level of support to **amber**. This alerts other staff to the possibility of an attendance problem and informs the parents of the College's concern. Once drawn up and 'saved' on ProMonitor, preferably with the student present, an e-mail is sent **automatically** to parents informing them that there is a concern (attendance or performance/progress) and that an agreement has been drawn up. An email is also sent to the student's college email address and to their personal email address, summarising the issue and the targets. Parents and students are then able to view the agreement, which is supportive and contains specific targets for improvement, via the parent portal, ProPortal. A text message is also sent automatically to both the parent and to the student, alerting them to the fact that the support level has been raised. An amber border will show around the student's image on ProMonitor. Agreements will be reviewed regularly and, on review, the student's status may be returned to green if they have met targets and are performing well. Alternatively where some improvements have been made but issues remain they may remain on amber with fresh targets. Should problems persist, then the agreement should be escalated to the Head of Faculty of the

relevant subject, but escalation should not take place until the tutor who initiated the amber support agreement, and the teacher who requested the escalation to amber, have done all they can to rectify the situation and the student has been given every chance to improve. **Any** member of staff (teaching or support) can request an escalation to an amber warning, perhaps for a disciplinary issue or non-compliance, but **only the tutor can open an amber support**.

**N.B. 1.** Where the student is having genuine learning difficulties in relation to either behaviour or completion of work they should be encouraged to seek support from Support4Learning, or from a Study Mentor or Attendance Mentor.

**N.B.2.** The action plan for a student with identified Mental Health issues should include appropriate early intervention support as suggested by the Lead DSL or G&S Manager. The 1-1 meeting with the tutor should include an offer to the student to meet with the Lead DSL or G&S Manager to discuss the various forms of support available.

### **Stage 3 Red level of support**

- If a student has been working with a member of staff and has not made improvements, or when problems have become more serious, the teacher, tutor or HoF may request escalation to the formal written warning stage (red). The HoF (or their assistant) will meet with the student and use ProMonitor to generate a **Red action plan**. This alerts other staff to the possibility of a serious attendance problem and informs the parents of the College's raised level of support. Once drawn up and 'saved' on ProMonitor, usually with the student present, an e-mail to the parent is generated, automatically informing them that there is a red progress concern and that an agreement has been drawn up. An email is also sent to the student's college and personal email addresses, summarising the issue and the targets. Parents and students are then able to view the agreement, which is supportive, but firm, and contains specific targets for improvement, via ProPortal. A text message is also sent automatically to both the parent and to the student, alerting them to the fact that the support level has been raised. A red border will show around the student's image on ProMonitor. A 'formal written warning' letter should always be printed and passed by hand to the student for signing. A copy of this written warning may then be sent by post to parents. Parents may be invited in to College to discuss the problem at this stage.
- Students will be made aware of the stages of the disciplinary support procedure and the consequences of failing to respond to their new targets.
- When an agreement on RED is reviewed, the Head of Faculty may mark the agreement as complete, putting the student back to green. Alternatively they can issue a further agreement at Red, or where the situation has worsened, escalate to purple. Alternatively where some improvements have been made but issues

remain, they may remain on red with fresh targets. Should problems persist, then the agreement should be escalated to the Assistant Principal (Students) or to the Deputy Principal, or in the case of students with known Mental Health support needs, to the Guidance and Support Manager.

#### **Stage 4 Purple Flag**

- At stage 4, the student will meet with the Assistant Principal (Students), but in some circumstances other Senior Staff such as the Assistant Principal (Transition and Engagement), the Deputy Principal or the Guidance and Support Manager may take the lead. The procedures for the purple agreement are similar to those detailed above for the red stage, with similar automated text message and email alerts to the student and the parent. Again, the student will sign a formal written warning, confirming that they are at the third and final stage of the Support Process
- Targets will be shown on ProMonitor in the usual way and will be indicated by a purple border to the student's image.
- If there is not an immediate and significant positive response from the student, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be invited to attend a formal Review Meeting. There will be 3 possible outcomes of the Review Meeting:
  1. The student decides to withdraw from College
  2. The student is required to withdraw from College
  3. Suspended Withdrawal, with very tight conditions set for the student's continuation at College
- In the event of the student failing to respond to a Suspended Withdrawal agreement, the student will be asked to leave college, without the need for another formal meeting. In the case of the student being required to withdraw at the Review Meeting, this will be confirmed by letter to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) within 2 days of the meeting or subsequent decision, with a copy to the Principal, who may subsequently be involved in an appeal. The student will be offered a careers interview.
- Students will receive a huge amount of support to address attendance and/or progress concerns, but if they do not respond to the support they WILL be withdrawn from college. We cannot allow the negativity of a handful of students to adversely affect the commitment and good habits of others. Our expectations will be high, and our aim is to develop a busy, supportive and purposeful learning environment.

#### 4. Fast-Track Procedures

- Where a student has committed an act of serious misconduct or abusive behaviour (see appendix C), they may be fast tracked to Stage 3 (Red) or 4 (Purple) of the Procedure at the discretion of the Head of Faculty in consultation with the Assistant Principal. Under all other circumstances, students may not be placed on any level of the Disciplinary Procedure without the previous levels being properly completed and documented.

#### 5. Suspension and Exclusion – Disciplinary procedure

- In cases of misconduct or abusive behaviour towards another student or a member of staff (see appendix C), the student's Head of Faculty, the Guidance and Support Manager, the Assistant Principal (Students) or the Deputy Principal may at their discretion suspend a student for a period of not more than 5 working days. This suspension may serve as a punishment in its own right, as a period to allow further investigation or as a cooling-off period. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be telephoned immediately and informed that the College is suspending in its "in loco parentis" role. They will be informed of the nature of the suspension in writing with copies to the Assistant Principal (Students) and the Deputy Principal, and also invited into College to discuss the suspension. The suspension will be recorded on the student's IRIS notes and a message sent to all staff teaching the student.
- In some instances, the Principal may need to be directly involved in a case of misconduct (for instance if it involves the police or members of the local community). In such cases he reserves the right at his discretion to require a student to withdraw from College or suspend a student for an indefinite period, but will always involve the Head of Faculty, Assistant Principal (Students) and Deputy Principal.
- After a period of suspension, the member of staff who suspended the student may at their discretion, and in discussion with the Assistant Principal (Students) or Deputy Principal:
  - a) reinstate the student with or without conditions, or
  - b) with the relevant senior manager's approval, impose a further period of suspension of no more than 5 working days, for example, to allow further investigation, an extension of the cooling-off period or by way of further punishment. The student and parent(s)/ guardian(s) will be notified of this decision in writing with copies to the relevant senior staff, or

- c) with the Deputy Principal's approval, require a student to withdraw from College. The student and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified of this decision in writing with copies to the Deputy Principal and Principal.

## 6. Appeal Procedure

- In all cases, where a student is required to withdraw from College, they shall have the right of appeal to the Principal. Students and parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be informed of this right in writing. Appeals to the Principal must be made in writing within 10 working days from the date of withdrawal. Once an appeal is lodged, the student shall not attend College until the appeal is heard. The appeal will normally be heard within 10 working days.
- All students required to withdraw from College shall have the right to present their case in person to the Principal with 2 other people, for instance a parent(s)/guardian(s) or a friend, in attendance if they so wish, to speak on their behalf. Students may invite witnesses to present evidence orally or in writing. During an Appeal, the Principal may receive representations from the student concerned, relevant staff and any other person they deem appropriate. Evidence may be received in writing or orally, as the Principal determines.
- The Principal may, at his discretion, either:
  - a) uphold the decision to require the student to withdraw, or
  - b) reinstate the student, with or without conditions as appropriate.
- The findings of the appeal will be communicated to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s), in writing, normally within 3 working days. **The Principal's decision is final.**

## 7. Payment of Exam Fees

- If a student's attendance is persistently unsatisfactory, a proportionate charge for examination entry fees may be made, if appropriate.

## 8. Equality impact and monitoring the policy and procedure

- In monitoring the impact of this policy and procedure, the College will have due regard to its Equality and Diversity Policy and its Single Equality Duty. It will consider any concerns raised or complaints received, based on student and staff data, feedback, surveys and/or professional judgement. If you have a question or a suggestion to improve the policy, please contact the Assistant Principal (Students).



## **Appendix A**

### a) Reasons for absence that would tend to be acceptable:

- A medical appointment that cannot be arranged outside of school or college hours.
- A particular need to look after a family member or another person for whom the student has caring responsibilities. However, where such responsibilities are regularly interrupting attendance patterns, the college will be unable to authorise absences, and will need to explore solutions personally with the student.
- A religious holiday.
- A visit to a University, either to attend an open day or for interview; or a career-related interview.
- An appointment with a member of the Student Services Team or referred external agency representative (although these should normally be scheduled to avoid disruption to studies).
- A work experience placement which is an integral part of a course, and for which the student does not receive a wage.
- Participating in a significant extra-curricular activity not organised by the college, such as drama; music; sport or volunteering. Authorised absence will only be granted where the activity reflects a significant level of personal achievement (for example, taking part in regional or national event); or for some other one-off event. Authorised absences under this criterion will only be granted occasionally; where a pattern of frequent participation in such activities is proposed, there is a need to explore solutions personally with the student.
- Participating in an activity organised by the college.
- Attendance at a probation meeting.
- Attendance at a funeral.
- Severe disruption to a student's mode of transport (for example, where a student commutes by rail and a rail strike means there is no practical way of getting to school or college).
- A driving test.
- A college representatives' meeting (e.g. Governors' meeting).

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and decisions will take into account such things as: the inherent reasonableness of any case; the number of absences taken by any one individual; repetitions of the same excuse; and whether the excuse is back up with evidence.

### b) Reasons for absence that are NOT acceptable:

- Holidays
- Part or full time work which is not part of the student's programme of study.
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Babysitting younger siblings
- Shopping

- Driving lessons

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

## **Appendix B**

### **Absences which cannot be foreseen in advance**

Where an absence genuinely could not be foreseen in advance, the student should nevertheless make arrangements to tell the college as soon as possible on the day in question that they will be missing classes. Where a student fails to do this, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. The only exception to this principle is where the student can supply a strong reason why they failed to contact the college. This might be because an event has been particularly disturbing or unpleasant, or because there has been a genuine practical barrier.

The following are examples of reasons for absence that would tend to be acceptable, provided that the college has been notified on the day:

- An emergency situation involving a family member or another person for whom the student has caring responsibilities. Sudden severe illness would be an example. However, while such cases will be treated sympathetically on a one-off basis, they are not acceptable as regular grounds for authorising absence.
- Transport problems, where these were not known about in advance, and where there is no alternative means to hand.