

# Attendance Policy

August 2020

(To be reviewed August 2021)

## **1. Introduction:**

SupaJam is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent college attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending college regularly and on time will students be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Any absence affects the pattern of a student's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Student absence also disrupts teaching routines so may also negatively affect the learning of others.

The whole college community – students, parent/guardians and staff - have a responsibility for ensuring maximum college attendance and all have an important role to play to achieve this. The purpose of this policy is to clarify what everyone's responsibilities are around attendance.

## **2. SupaJam's roles and responsibilities:**

All staff (teaching and support) at SupaJam have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent college attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to college every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The Operations Manager at SupaJam will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the college's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the college.

SupaJam's Administration Team will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the relevant staff and students and parents will be regularly reminded about the importance of good college attendance. The Administration Team will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and will make sure that the correct support is put in place to deal with any difficulties the students are having. This will include:

- Operating a policy of first day calling to find out the reason of absence and support the student's welfare.
- Giving every student detail of their attendance within their termly review.
- Where student attendance falls below 95%, arranging a support meeting with that student to discuss the reasons of their absence.
- Where student attendance falls below 90%, sending a letter to the student's guardian where they will be invited to discuss support strategies in order to improve their child's attendance.
- Celebrating good attendance by rewarding the top 10% of student attendance with a free Costa coffee at the end of every month within the academic year.
- Rewarding good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings or events.
- Rewarding every student who achieves 100% absence with an instrument or Amazon voucher at the end of the academic year.

### **3. Registration:**

SupaJam is required by law to complete a register of its students and Teachers are responsible for completing these at the beginning of every lesson. Registers close after the first 15 minutes of each lesson and any student who arrives after this time will be marked as late after register closes. Students who arrive late but before the register closes will be marked as present but will be given a late mark.

A mark will be given for each student during each registration and any student who is not present at this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence, unless leave has been authorised by SupaJam in advance as a legitimate reason. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the college at a later stage, the register will be amended so that the original entry and the amendment are distinguishable. A written explanation from a student's parent/guardian must be given to SupaJam confirming the reason for any absence. However, this does not mean that an absence will automatically be recorded as authorised and the final decision will be made by SupaJam.

SupaJam will ensure that all staff receive appropriate training on the registration process, regulations and education law, and will monitor the registers regularly throughout the day. If a student is absent, SupaJam will take steps to locate them.

Students are aware that they must not leave the SupaJam bases outside of the lunch break, between 1 and 2pm. In the case that a student leaves the premises without permission and/or outside of the designated lunch break and is either unwilling to return or we have been unable to locate them, we will inform the parents/guardians immediately.

### **4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences:**

If no explanation about an absence is received by SupaJam within two weeks it will remain unauthorised. Absence will be authorised in certain circumstances where leave has been granted by the college in advance.

#### **Authorised absences include:**

- Participation in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.
- Exceptional circumstances, such as a funeral – in authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.
- Where SupaJam is satisfied that the student is too ill to attend, where medical evidence has been provided or where a previously diagnosed known medical condition exists. If a student's attendance falls below 95%, parents/guardians will be advised that SupaJam will no longer continue to authorise any absence due to illness without medical evidence unless a known previously-diagnosed medical condition exists.
- Where the student has a medical appointment supported by an appointment card/hospital letter (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of college hours wherever possible, and to return their child to college immediately afterwards – or send him/her to college beforehand).
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions.

- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student or student's parents belong.
- The Local Authority provided transport for the student fails to arrive.

Unauthorised absences are those which SupaJam does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes when a student does not arrive at SupaJam or leaves before the advertised leaving time, which is classed as truancy. Internal or post-registration truancy is classed as an absence and will be dealt with through the Code of Behaviour Policy for Students.

#### **Unauthorised absences include:**

- Parents/guardians keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive late at school after the close of registration
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

SupaJam discourages avoidable absences and as from 1st September 2013 changes in the Education Regulations 2006 Section 7 states that Headteachers may no longer grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. This will be at the discretion of the Director of Programmes. Family holidays do not come under exceptional circumstances and if a leave of absence is not authorised and the time is still taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Such an absence may lead to steps being taken to improve the student's attendance. If a holiday during term time is unavoidable, a holiday request form must be submitted to SupaJam's reception 6 weeks in advance. Taking holiday during term time will cause a student's attendance to decrease and could trigger the attendance support procedure.

#### **5. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the academic year. Absence at this level has a negative impact on a student's educational prospects and we need parents/guardians' full support and co-operation to improve this. SupaJam will monitor all absence thoroughly and any case that has reached or is in risk of reaching the PA mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

All PA students and their parents/guardians will be given an attendance action plan which will include allocation of additional support through a variety of interventions and individual incentive programmes. All PA students are monitored carefully by our pastoral team and we combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. If a student's attendance becomes a concern, we will not be able to authorise any absence due to illness unless documentation from a health professional is received to verify this. This can be a doctor's note, hospital letter or appointment card.

## **6. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

SupaJam follows the procedure outlined below when dealing with unexplained absences:

- SupaJam will send a text/email/Facebook message from the SupaJam Facebook account or call the parent/guardian on the first day a student is absent without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage the students who do not have a good reason for absence, or who may be absent without their guardian's knowledge.
- Should a student's attendance fall below 95%, parents/guardians will receive a letter in the first instance. This letter will be the first stage in the SupaJam three tier attendance support procedure and will make the parent/guardian aware of our concern. It will encourage them to support with improving the student's attendance from that point onwards.
- If the student's attendance fails to improve without good reason, an attendance meeting with their teacher, a member of the management team, the student and their parent/guardian will be called. Should the parent/guardian be unable to attend any of the suggested dates for the meeting then the meeting will be held with the student only. The parent/guardian will then receive a follow-up letter stating that the meeting has taken place.
- If a student fails to attend the scheduled meeting without good reason, they will automatically receive a final written warning letter.
- If after this meeting attendance still does not improve without good reason, the student will receive a final written warning letter which may lead to his/her place being withdrawn.
- The student will be required to attend every timetabled day. If they are absent for a day without good reason then they could lose their place immediately. This decision may be made by a panel of different members of SupaJam's Management Team.
- If a student's attendance falls below 85% and they receive bursary payments, their payments will stop with immediate effect until their attendance improves to 85% attendance or above.
- This procedure will begin after the October Half-term to allow for a settling-in period for all of the students. Should a student's attendance already be below 95%, the initial step of a letter will be bypassed and a meeting with the student's parents/guardians will be scheduled immediately.
- For any student with an EHCP, this process will include the student's Local Authority if their placement with SupaJam becomes 'at risk'.

Whilst any student may be absent from SupaJam because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend their college. Any problems with regular attendance are best rectified through communication between SupaJam, the parents/guardians and the student. If your son/daughter is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes matters worse.

## **7. Long-Term Absence**

If a student with a diagnosed medical condition has a period of long-term absence, parents/guardians need to contact the Operations Manager to ensure a designated key worker is identified. The key worker will be responsible for collecting work to go home and arranging for it to be brought/sent back into SupaJam for marking. If a student is absent for more than two weeks, the key worker will arrange regular contact with the parents/guardians to go through work that has been set and to discuss the next phase of support. If meetings are conducted at SupaJam, it is advised that the student should attend

so that they can ask any questions about the work and so that they can maintain their contact with SupaJam.

### **8. Student responsibilities**

Students are expected to arrive at college, and be in the correct room for registration, on time at the start of every lesson. It is not only very disruptive to their own education but that of others in their class, if they are late. All students should be aware of the importance of regular college attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending college regularly, they should speak to their teacher.

The college day starts at 10am and we expect every student to be in their teaching room at that time. Registers are marked at this time and students will receive a late mark if they are late. In accordance with regulations, if a student arrives after the register closes, 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.

If a student has a persistent late record, they will be asked to meet with the Centre Manager/Attendance Lead to resolve the problem, but parents/guardians can approach SupaJam at any time if they are having problems getting their son/daughter to college on time.

This absence will be unauthorised unless the college is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the student to be late. Legitimate reasons will not include things such as their alarm did not go off, their clothes were in the washing machine or they were waiting to catch a particular train. A student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with attendance concerns.

Students who receive travel reimbursements via a bursary will only have the reimbursement issued if they attend a significant amount of the day.

For health and safety reasons it is imperative that SupaJam knows who is in the building. Therefore, all students must sign in on arrival at reception. For the same reason it is important that students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment or at lunch times) must sign out at reception as well.

Post-registration truancy occurs when a student goes missing from college, having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the student will not be receiving a full-time education; it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. SupaJam takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen by taking the register and noting attendance in lessons. If, however, a student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, then we will contact their parent/guardians as soon as possible if we are unable to locate them or they are unwilling to return to the college.

### **9. Parent/Guardian responsibilities:**

Parents/guardians have a key role in ensuring students receive an appropriate and full-time education. SupaJam will endeavour to support them to address any concerns and we expect that parents/guardians will:

- Ensure students arrive at college on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day.
- Contact SupaJam reception before 10am, or as soon as possible after this time, on the first day of absence.
- Provide written confirmation from their parent/guardian or a health professional documenting the reason for their absence.
- Contact the college without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of the student's attendance or punctuality.
- Ensure students attend the college regularly and support student's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- Not expect requests for absence to be automatically agreed and will not condone unjustified absence from college.

There are times when we need to contact parents/guardians with various information, including absence, so we must have up to date contact numbers at all times. It is the responsibility of our students and their parents/guardians to inform us of any updated contact details.

#### **10. Summary:**

SupaJam has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/guardians and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/guardians have a duty to make sure that students attend regularly.

All college staff are committed to working with parents/guardians and students to ensure the highest level of attendance as possible.

#### **11. Useful Information:**

SupaJam Swanley Reception: 01322 660845

SupaJam Canterbury Reception: 01227 697976

Attendance Lead (Operations Manager): Sarah Lucas - [sarah.lucas@supajam-education.org](mailto:sarah.lucas@supajam-education.org)

Student Welfare Manager: Stef Hallett - [stef.hallett@supajam-education.com](mailto:stef.hallett@supajam-education.com)