



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Reviewed: June 2019

Next Review: March 2020

Introduction

This policy was developed and agreed by the governing body and has the full agreement of the whole school community including the Education Welfare Service.

Aims

- To comply with the legal requirements of the Education Act 1996
- To monitor and identify patterns in individual children's attendance and punctuality throughout the year, pinpointing irregularities and cause for concern.
- To endeavour to provide support and guidance where appropriate to improve children's attendance and punctuality.
- To provide information on which to base target setting for future attendance returns.
- To provide evidence and information for reporting to Parents/Carers, Governing body, LA and DFE.
- To ensure each child has full access to all areas of the curriculum and the education they are entitled to.
- To improve attendance to a minimum of 96% and reduce lateness

Whole School Involvement

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the staff. However, in order to achieve aims, specific staff have had involvement in the implementation of this policy. These include – Class teachers and teaching assistants, Children, Parents/Carers, School Administration Staff, Head Teacher and Senior Management Team, along with Education Welfare Service, School Governors and Area 8.

The Legal Position

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the 'parent' is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude.

Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from the age of five when a child should attend school from the start commencing on or after their fifth birthday.

If it appears that a child is not receiving suitable education, then under section 437 of the Education Act, the LA / School must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order.

Since March 2001 a higher offence warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444 can lead to a custodial sentence.

Registers

Registers are STATUTORY LEGAL DOCUMENTS, which must be completed accurately by a member of teaching staff. Attendance registers are taken twice a day: at the start of the morning session and afternoon sessions.

Instructions for completing registers must be followed. The office staff will find out the reason for absences and enter the correct code. If they are in any doubt they will contact Head Teacher for clarification.

Absences

Absences can only be authorised once the attendance team or Head/Deputy head teacher are satisfied that an acceptable explanation has been provided by parent/carer regarding the absence. It is important that absences can only be authorised by the school and not by the parent/carer.

If a member of staff is in doubt about whether an absence should be authorised, then this should be referred to the Head/Deputy head teacher.

In order for an absence to be recorded as authorised the following evidence will be accepted:

- A GP appointment card (date, time and child's name)
- Prescription
- Medication packaging
- Medication
- Hospital Letters / Appointment Letters

Procedures for Authorising Absence

- Parents/carers are required to contact school before 9.30am on the first day of absence to confirm the reason of absence and its likely duration.
- If a child is not in school and no reason for absence has been supplied, parents/carers are contacted to clarify the reason for absence.
- Parents/carers who routinely fail to make contact with the school will have all absences unauthorised and a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.
- If an absent child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or is a Child in Need attendance staff should inform Head/Assistant head immediately that the child is absent.

Acceptable Reason for Absence

- Illness (evidence will be asked for)
- Days agreed by school as Religious observance

Unacceptable Reasons for Absence

- Truancy (absence without knowledge of Parents/Carers)
- Minding the House
- Shopping/running errands (e.g. buying new shoes clothes)
- Looking after sick relatives
- Looking after brothers or sisters
- School clothing in the wash
- Oversleeping
- Head lice
- Birthday
- Parent's illness
- Children in another school on an Inset Day
- Last day of term
- Child tells the parent/carer that they do not want to go to school
- Holiday: whole weeks and odd days
- Routine medical and dental appointments are discouraged in school time (school are happy to support parents if they are having difficulties obtaining appointments outside of school hours.)
- Any other reason that the head teacher deems unacceptable

Leave During Term Time

New legislation introduced in September 2013 stated that Head Teachers could no longer authorise 10 days holiday during term time.

We would actively discourage parents and carers from taking children on holiday during term time. We believe that every session missed from school is a missed opportunity for children to learn from new experience, Learning is progress, if a child misses a step; the next step of learning becomes much more difficult.

Special requests for leave of absence during term time should be made in person to the Head Teacher. A leave of absence request form will need to be completed by parent at least four weeks before the start of the holiday. The completed form must then be sent to school for approval. The school will then write to parents within seven days to confirm/decline the request.

Leave of absence during term time can only be authorised by the Head Teacher if they are satisfied, that there are exceptional circumstances that warrants granting the leave.

If the Head Teacher does not authorise the leave of absence but the child is absent during the requested time, parents will receive a letter detailing the implications and may receive a penalty notice (fine).

Monitoring Attendance

- All children's attendance figures will be printed weekly
- Attendance staff will meet weekly to analyse attendance patterns
- Individual and whole school attendance, punctuality figures discussed and ways forward suggested.
- Children causing concern will be discussed along with actions taken and progress towards targets.
- All parents receive a letter if attendance falls below 96%.
- Children with attendance less than 96% are identified as causing concern
- Children who are regularly later are also identified as causing concern

Procedures for when attendance is causing concern

- If at the attendance meeting the child's attendance/punctuality continues to cause concern. parents/carers are invited to attend an attendance/punctuality meeting in school where a Parenting Contract or EHA (Early Help Assessment) will be offered
- The pupils attendance/punctuality will be monitored until it is no longer a concern
- Regular meetings with the Education and Family Engagement Officer will discuss attendance issues and advise sort on appropriate action.
- If a child's absence remains a cause of concern and after intervention by the school which will include unauthorised absences then a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.
- The Education and Family Engagement Officer will ask to meet with parents and school along with other professionals such as the school nurse to discuss absence issues.
- If parents/carers fail to attend meetings to discuss attendance issues and attendance or punctuality does not improve within a specific time, legal proceedings may follow.

Children Missing Education

See Children Missing Education September 2016.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life. The school has robust procedures in place to ensure that children who have are at risk of missing or have missed ten school days or more without permission will be identified as children missing education. The Local Authority will be informed and procedures followed to locate the child.

Lateness

Lateness in attending school is an unauthorised absence. The school day begins at 8.50am and the registration period is for 30 minutes.

Children who are late must enter via the school reception and report to the school office. These children will be recorded in the late book as they will be recorded as absent in the class register and it will then be updates accordingly in the register by attendance staff.

Where a child is consistently late over a number of weeks, parents will receive a letter asking why their child is late and ask for cooperation in rectifying the situation.

If punctuality issues continue a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service who may take legal action which could result in a fine.

Celebrating Good Attendance

- Attendance certificates are awarded regularly by the school in assemblies
- Class teachers are encouraged to praise individual and class attendance regularly.
- Attendance staff will regularly report attendance to other school staff to raise awareness and encourage good attendance.

Setting Targets

The Local Authority sets target for all schools based upon past performance and national expectations. However the DfE and OFSTED have specific targets which place schools into national categories and tables which will be published for parental scrutiny each year.

Equality & Diversity

All children have equal access to a full education regardless of their gender, disability or ability. We are committed to providing a safe and happy school free from racist intimidation or harassment of any kind and for all our children to achieve their full potential.

Reporting Attendance

Attendance is reported to pupil and parents in a variety of ways:

- Annually on the annual written report
- Attendance issues will be addressed by teachers during parent evenings
- Through ongoing intervention throughout the year
- By publishing attendance and punctuality results on the school web site
- Letters sent home for under 96% attendance.

Information is transferred to other schools by way of;

- Electronic data systems
- Common Transfer forms
- National Curriculum assessment records
- Passing on of annual reports

The school is required to make attendance returns to the DfE and the LA

Roles and Responsibilities

The head teacher should:

- Ensure legal requirements are being met with regard to attendance and punctuality
- Be responsible for the operational management of the attendance policy
- To review policy and procedures at least annually with all staff
- To discuss attendance and punctuality with new Parents/Carers and children
- To Analyse authorised and unauthorised absence regularly with attendance staff and Education and Family Engagement Officer to discuss any attendance issues
- Reward and celebrate attendance
- Send letters home regarding attendance and lateness
- Identify and monitor individual absences and lateness, identifying patterns and trends and target improvements
- Make the school Attendance and Punctuality Policy available to parents
- Hold regular meetings to address attendance issues and implement strategies to increase attendance and reduce persistent absence

The Governing Body should:

- Know and understand the schools policy and procedures for absence and lateness
- Have a designated governor responsible for monitoring and supporting the school with attendance and punctuality.
- Our designated governor is Mrs K Jewkes

Attendance Staff Should:

- Monitor individual attendance and lateness daily, identifying any patterns and absences
- Liaise with the Family Support Worker, Head teacher and education Welfare officer regarding absence and lateness
- Produce reports for the head teacher and Governors summarising individual and whole school attendance.
- Communicate with Parents/Carers on attendance and punctuality
- Record and store contact with parents in an appropriate manner
- Follow up data and reports with regard to less than 96% attendance
- Follow up poor punctuality and communicate with parents and children to identify solutions
- Hold regular meetings with Head/Assistant regarding attendance.
- Update attendance log for children causing concern.

Class teachers should:

- Ensure that registers are completed in accordance with Attendance and Punctuality procedures
- Date any written letters received from parents/cares regarding lateness or attendance and file in register wallet
- Record any verbal messages from parents/carers regarding attendance or lateness and send to the Attendance Office.

- Raise any concerns regarding attendance or lateness with attendance staff.
- Complete register by 9.00am and 1.35pm and return promptly to the attendance office.

Parents and Carers should:

- Sign home/school agreement and follow the schools policy and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- Ensure children attend school on time every day
- Inform school of any changes in family circumstances particularly new addresses or telephone numbers