

LEAVENING C P SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

All children of compulsory school age have the right to full time education regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs they may have, in order for them to realise their full potential.

The school has a significant part to play in communicating their values and expectations, as well as outlining good practice and procedures for promoting attendance. Leavening school takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts the continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, and can lead to underachievement and low attainment as well as impeding children's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

Aims

- To maintain a high level of attendance so that pupils can achieve their full potential.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secured and valued.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- To promote opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements.
- To raise the awareness of the importance of good attendance.
- Good communication with home is a fundamental ingredient in our school's success in promoting good attendance and punctuality.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and other agencies, and where appropriate to use the Common Assessment Frameworks process to address issues preventing pupils attending school and impacting on life chances.
- To recognise the needs of an individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absence are recorded promptly and consistently.
- To ensure that systems are in place to identify and respond to the needs of different children's reasons for absence.

Statement of expectations

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities on offer.

What is expected of Pupils?

- To respect themselves and others.
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually.
- To be well prepared for the school day.
- To inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- To remain in school at all times unless permission has been agreed by school to leave the premises.
- To recognise that their achievement depends on very good attendance.

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is in school for every lesson after they have registered. Under the 1996 Education Act parents may be prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly or punctually. If a child is in the care of foster parents or the Local Authority it is important that their carers

recognise their role where attendance and punctuality is concerned. This will be supported by close co-operation between the School, Education Welfare Service and other relevant agencies.

Parents need to know

- We recognise that individual children and families may from time to time have problems. Our aim is to support regular attendance.
- Lateness will be investigated and parents made aware of our expectations regarding prompt attendance.
- Where a child is absent without prior authorisation, an explanation is required on the first day of absence. If the office has not received a message by 9.30am then they will contact the family directly. If a valid reason is not received then the absence will be unauthorised and the register marked accordingly.
- The school are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered.
- Parents need to be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as SATS and the first two weeks in the new school year that are an important settling in time.
- Families should see themselves as partners with the school and instil respect for education and those who teach their children.
- Parents need to support their child and recognise their successes and achievements.
- Parents need to work closely with the school and EWS to resolve any problems that impede their child's attendance.
- Parents need to ensure their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment, and ready to learn. A reason should be offered for lateness.
- No parent or carer can demand leave of absence as a right. An application for pupil leave in exceptional circumstances during term-time should be completed as far as possible in advance and at least 6 weeks before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Each application will be individually considered. *See Appendix 1.*

What is expected of the School?

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of.
- To meet the legal requirements set out by the Government.
- To give a high priority to attendance and punctuality.
- To develop and maintain procedures that enables the school to identify, follow up absences and lateness with effective monitoring and intervention.
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absence and lateness.
- To develop a range of effective strategies to support children and families where absence and punctuality is a problem.
- To encourage open communication between school and home.
- To celebrate good attendance.

The Local Authority (LA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Education Welfare Service the LA provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The EWS is the enforcement agency of the LA and as well as providing guidance and support, through its officers it may take a parent/carer to court for not fulfilling their duty under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The court may fine the parent/carer and put in place a School Attendance order, an Education Supervision Order or a Parenting order.

School procedures and systems

Registration

An accurate and consistent registration system to monitor attendance and lateness is essential. The register will be taken each day at 9am and 1pm. Whilst doing so the teacher will be checking the emotional health and well-being of the child. Pupils who arrive after 9am should report to the main office. All late comers will be asked to sign the late book which records name, class, and time of arrival and reason for lateness. If the child arrives unaccompanied by an adult then a member of staff will complete the book. All staff are aware that any child arriving late MUST report to the office for the purposes of fire safety regulations. School starts at 9am. Registers close at 9.10 am. For children arriving after 9am but before 9.10am, the register will be marked with an L (authorised late). Pupils arriving after 9.10am will be marked with a U (unauthorised late) unless there is a valid reason e.g. medical appointment.

All absences are shown as either authorised or unauthorised using the symbols agreed and indicated in the Local Authority guidelines. The registers are legal documents and the school may be asked to produce them in any judicial proceedings.

A reason for absence is always required. Reasons for absence may be offered verbally in person or by phone or by email or letter. The school will then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence. This decision will be made within guidelines set out in the 1996 Education Act which identifies the following acceptable reasons for absence.

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending school by unavoidable cause.
- The child lives over a certain distance from the school and either the LA has failed to make appropriate arrangements to register the child at a nearer school or failed to make appropriate transport arrangements.
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith.
- The child is absent with "leave" due to exceptional circumstances.

Monitoring Non-attendance and Lateness

- School will encourage all families to telephone school by 9.30.a.m. on the first day of absence.
- Attendance officer will contact home, in the morning of the first day of absence informing them that the child is not in school and enquire as to a reason. If necessary school staff will visit home.
- If, after the child has returned to school, there has been no reason given for absence, the attendance officer will write to the parent/carer requesting that they complete and return an absence note.
- Attendance officer and head teacher will monitor registers and identify poor attendance/punctuality patterns and advise families accordingly. Attendance at or below 95% will trigger referral to the attendance panel (head teacher, attendance officer and educational social worker).
- School will offer support to pupils and their families - this may include a referral to other appropriate agencies.
- School will refer where necessary to the EWS.
- Persistent lateness will result in a letter home in the first instance.
- Pupils who are late more than 10 times in a four week period will automatically be referred to the EWS.

Members of the Inclusion team and the EWS will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a regular basis and identify any pupils causing concern. A letter will be sent to parents outlining this concern and offering support. The pupil's attendance/punctuality will be monitored closely. If there is no improvement after a two week period the parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the head teacher and other appropriate staff to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the child from attending school. If the parent/carer does not attend the meeting or if there is no improvement after the meeting then the school will make a formal referral to the EWS.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality

- Staff will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Good and improving attendance will be rewarded.
- Each week the class with the best attendance will receive a class reward.
- Each term pupils with 100% attendance are awarded a gold certificate, 95% and above will be awarded a silver certificate. Merits will be awarded for 100% attendance every half term.
- Pupils will be consulted, through the school council, on the type of rewards they would like and the impact of these awards will be evaluated periodically.
- Individual pupil attendance rates will be published for each class every half term by the attendance officer. Pupils will be placed in to one of three categories – Green – 96% and above; Amber 95% to 86% and Red – 85% and below.
- Positive reinforcement will be given to those pupils who have been off school for a period of time and if necessary an action plan will be developed to help them catch up with the curriculum and promote future attendance.
- School will provide support and guidance to pupils and their families.
- The head teacher will ensure that information is shared with parents through newsletters. Individual pupil level absence data will be provided to parents/guardians when attendance of individual pupils becomes an issue.
- The attendance rate and number of unauthorised absences will be included systematically on monitoring reports.
- The leadership team and governors will review progress with attendance regularly throughout the year and a designated governor will liaise with school on all issues relating to attendance.
- Each half-term school will compile a list of children they feel may need to be supported to improve their attendance to ensure they maximise their learning potential. The action school takes will depend on the % level of attendance.
 - For attendance between 90% and 95% parents will be encouraged to get their child into school as much as possible and avoid absence due to medical or dentist appointments.
 - For attendance between 85% - 90% attendance will be monitored by the head teacher and attendance officer and discussed with the Education Social Worker. Parents will be informed and support will be offered.
 - Below 85% a referral will be made to the EWS as they are at risk of persistent absence. The EWS and head teacher will monitor daily and make regular contact with the family.

Policy drafted: April 2014

Agreed by Governors: June 2014

Review date: June 2015

Signed: S Mitchell

Appendix 1.

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DURING TERM TIME

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and preferably at least **6 weeks** before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission **before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances; otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.**

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right.

The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

Please note: Head teachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional.

This is not an exhaustive list and head teachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Where a Head teacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Head teacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term time without the permission of the school risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application form parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Name of pupil(s):

School:

Class(es):

Address:

Telephone No:

Siblings (if different school) Schools attending:

I request permission for my child to be absent from school

From.....To.....Total school days.....

Exceptional circumstances for request:

(this section must be answered in full and against stated criteria)

Signature of parent/carer.....Date.....

For school use only

Seen by Head teacher (signature).....Date.....

Decision reached.....

Date reply returned to parent (s).....