

ATTENDANCE POLICY

“Teach children how they should live and they will remember it all of their lives.”

Proverbs 22

Our Vision Statement

Our vision is to provide a secure, happy learning community based upon Christian values in which each child is encouraged to fulfil their potential.

As a Right Respecting school this policy reflects Article 28 that every child is entitled to an education.

Introduction

Regular School Attendance is important.

Every child has a right to learn and this involves attending school regularly. Every parent/carer has a responsibility to support their child's progress at school and this involves ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Parents should also ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. It is one of the school's general aims that parents will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school to provide the best education for the children. The school will be responsible for supporting attendance and will take seriously any problems relating to non-attendance.

Cumbria Children and Families Services Access and Inclusion Officers

The Access and Inclusion Officers work with schools and other agencies to identify pupils with school attendance issues. Any pupils whose attendance is less than 90% and where school interventions have failed to achieve an improvement in the pupil's attendance should be discussed with the Local Authority Access and Inclusion Officer (Attendance) for advice on next steps.

Cumbria Access and Inclusion Officers work within statutory frameworks to promote regular attendance at school.

Registration

Registers will be taken at 9.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m./1.15p.m. and pupils will be marked present or absent. A distinction will be made between authorised and unauthorised absence using the symbols recommended by the LA.

Reporting Absences

It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible. This can be done by telephoning the school before 9.00 a.m. or as soon as possible, or by sending a message with someone else. Where a child is ill, the school should be informed of the nature of the illness as soon as possible and, when this can be predicted, the date the child is expected to return to school. A written note detailing the absence may also be sent to the school on the pupil's return.

Lateness

Lateness can seriously disrupt not only the learning of the pupil concerned but that of others. Lateness will be actively discouraged. If a pupil arrives in the classroom after registration at 9.10a.m., he or she will officially be recorded as late. Where pupils miss registration and no adequate explanation is given, they will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Comments regarding punctuality are made on your child's yearly report.

Absences

Authorised Absence from School

If a child is ill or unable to attend school for some reason, parents should provide an explanation for this non-attendance. The school will determine whether the child's absence will be authorised or not. For repeated or regular periods of illness the school will request verification is provided such as a medical certificate from the family doctor prior to authorising any absence.

Only the School, within the context of the law, can approve absences. As a school we are actively trying to reduce unauthorised absence. All absences, especially unauthorised ones, are kept on a child's record. All absences must be notified to school on a Leave of absence form. The reason for the absence as well as the attendance rate of the child will be taken into account. **See Appendix 1.** An absence will be **authorised** for the following:

1. Illness, when the school is satisfied with the reason.
2. Medical/Dental appointments when the school is satisfied with the reason.
If a child is present for registration and then has to attend an appointment,

The school will record the fact for the purpose of emergency evacuation, in the office. Where there are doubts about explanations, parents will be invited to a meeting with the head teacher.

3. Family Bereavement – for a reasonable period.
4. Special occasions, that are a 'one-off' event, where advance notification is given, and where overall attendance is good. This includes days set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.
5. Family Holiday in *exceptional circumstances* – following the change in regulations (amendments to the 2006 regulations) in 2013 schools are no longer able to authorise term-time holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents are asked not to take holidays during term time. Cases will be judged individually by given criteria and authorisation granted by the Governing Body. This will normally be delegated to the headteacher. Exceptional circumstances are likely to include;
 - Forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting

- Parents employment restrictions, evidence may be asked for to demonstrate that leave is restricted by employer.
 - Significant family events or circumstances. These will be considered very carefully.
6. School directed off-site activities e.g. trips, sporting activities.
 7. Individually directed off-site activities e.g. examinations, special tuition, where leave has been granted by school.
 8. Exclusions.
 9. Attendance at Pupil Referral Units.

Unauthorised Absence from School

An unauthorised absence from school is any absence that is deemed not to be an acceptable reason for missing school. Unauthorised absences from school carry the risk of prosecution under section 444 or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

No Attendance Improvement

If the child's absence falls below 90% and there is no sustained improvement despite school intervention the school should consider a referral to Children and Families Services following the Attendance Protocol (Appendix 2).

Prosecution

Should the child's attendance fail to improve, the LA Access and Inclusion Officer will consider the use of legal sanctions and may in accordance with the Prosecution Policy decide to prosecute the parent(s) for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Absences will be **unauthorised** in the following situations:

1. When no explanation for absence is provided.
2. When there are doubts concerning the explanation.
3. A pupil arrives late with no satisfactory explanation.
4. A pupil is looking after brothers/sisters at home or similar (unless there is an emergency situation).
5. Shopping during school hours, unless a valid reason is given, e.g. no shoes to wear and the child has to accompany parent.
6. 'Special' occasions, e.g. birthdays, or those that occur regularly.
7. Holidays taken without advance permission of school.

Long term absence

If a pupil has been absent for an extended period for any reason, re-integration arrangements may be made.

Penalty Notices

Cumbria Children and Families Services Local Code of Conduct under The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and Subsection (1) Section 23 Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced Penalty Notices for Parents/Carers of pupils of compulsory school age with unauthorised absences from school.

The penalty is £60 from September 2013 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice (a notice served by post is deemed to have been received on the second day after posting it by first class post).

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period Cumbria County Council must **either** prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies **or** withdraw the notice. The prosecution is not for non-payment of the notice but is a prosecution for irregular attendance.

Prosecutions will be brought by Cumbria County Council, Children and Families Service's under section 444 Education Act 1996.

Schools must ensure that all literature provided to parents, such as Prospectus, Attendance and Behaviour Policies, Home School Agreements, Newsletters and website information include the warning that parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a leave of absence is taken without permission.

A letter to the parent confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised must be sent by the Headteacher and include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued.

If the leave is taken a Fixed Penalty Notice **may** be issued for the unauthorised leave of absence providing the following criteria apply:

- There have been 10 sessions (5 consecutive days) or more of unauthorised absence due to leave taking during an academic year.
- The overall attendance figures for a reasonable period (minimum half a term) would support the issuing of a penalty notice

Or

- It is the second leave taken in any one academic year totalling more than five days absence

If the head teacher would like the LA to consider issuing an FPN they should send a copy of the following documentation to the Access and Inclusion Officer (Attendance) for their school:

- A completed and signed witness statement including details of how the absence has impacted on academic progress
- A signed head teacher's certificate covering the academic year to date and a minimum of half a term and including the period of absence in question
- A copy of the leave request and the reply with reasons for refusal
- A copy of the advisory letter sent to the parent

- Attendance figures for the previous and current academic year, where available

Fixed penalty notices must be issued in line with the Cumbria County Council Code of Conduct contained within the school absence and enforcement policy.

If fixed penalty notices are issued the fine is paid to central government and not the school. If a fixed penalty notice is not paid and has been issued correctly follow up is undertaken by the local authority and must be a prosecution for the original offence of failing to secure regular attendance. If a prosecution is pursued school will be expected to contribute to the legal file and attend court. Within Cumbria the enforcement process requires an Attendance Review Conference (ARC) to be held prior to the issuing of a fixed penalty notice. In relation to holidays in term time fixed penalty notices are not an automatic sanction. The holiday should form part of a pattern of poor attendance. Prior to the ARC conference schools should try to address the absence through their own internal systems. At the point of referral for consideration of an ARC evidence of the action undertaken should be submitted to the Inclusion Officer. The evidence should include:

- a chronology of interventions
- a copy of assessment e.g. Early Help Assessment
- copies of letters to parents including written notification of the possibility of legal action
- notes of phone calls
- notes of meetings
- notes of home visits
- notes of attendance panels.

Poor attendance must meet the persistent absence criteria and should include absence other than holiday and not for medical reasons.

Monitoring School Attendance

Although the school has a positive attitude to school attendance, encouraging pupils to attend on time, etc., the age of the pupils in this school means that attendance is generally the responsibility of their parents. It is therefore necessary to have other strategies in place.

Absence

Attendance will be monitored on a daily basis by the school secretary, when registers are sent to the office. She will report any concerns to the head teacher as soon as possible. The head will monitor attendance on a monthly basis and on a termly basis comparing local and National absence figures.

If a child is not in school and there has been no message, the school secretary will make contact with the home to ascertain the reason for non-attendance. **If no contact can be made Children's services will be informed after 3 days.** If the child has more than 10 days absence (other than for illness or other acceptable reasons) the head teacher will contact the family.

Lateness

- (i) Patterns of lateness will be monitored on a weekly basis by the school secretary and she will report any accumulated lateness to the headteacher. The head will talk to the family concerned. If lateness persists, a formal letter will be sent to the parents reminding them of the Attendance Policy and their legal obligations.

- (ii) An Attendance action plan will be agreed.
- (iii) If the situation still does not improve Children's services will be contacted.

The policy will be reviewed annually. All parents will be made aware of this policy and it will appear on the school website.