

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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.

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 or unauthorised

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 is 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.

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 will be made.

Penalty Notices

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced Penalty Notices for Parents/Carers of pupils of compulsory school age with unauthorised absences from school. Penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose child has accumulated 20% or more unauthorised absences during a 4-week period. They will be given 15 days notice of the probability of this.

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

The guidance relating to fixed penalty notices makes clear that the fine is fixed at £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days. If fixed penalty notices are issued the fine is paid to the local authority 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.CAF
- 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 headteacher 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.