

Cavalry Primary School

Attendance Policy

Date of Policy: January 2016

Policy prepared by: Mrs F McCallum

Date of review: January 2019

1. Aims

Regular and punctual attendance is important to the educational progress of all of our children. As a school we will encourage parents to send their children to school regularly and on time. We will also require details of any absence and actively check should these not be forthcoming.

Our aim will be to reduce the incidence of absence and lateness to as low a figure as possible.

We will set targets for attendance and monitor progress towards these targets.

2. The responsibility of the school

We are responsible for supporting the attendance of our pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance. The Headteacher has the key responsibility in this area and will be supported by administrative staff and class teachers.

We will adopt a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and encourage parents to take an active role in the schooling of their children.

We acknowledge the legal requirement to:

- a) be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year;
- b) maintain attendance registers (either manual or computerised) in accordance with the relevant regulations
- c) accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness;
- d) clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DfE
- e) submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's prospectus and school profile
- f) set annual targets to reduce absence and, where required, submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

3. Procedures

- Registers will be taken twice a day, at the beginning of each session.
- Registers are taken electronically in each classroom using SIMS. If this is not possible, a hard copy is always available for use as a back up and will be sent to the school office for processing.
- The codes provided by the DfE will be used to indicate the reason for the absence. This will usually be done by the administrative staff. In incidences where there is doubt over the validity of the reason for absence, then the Head Teacher should be consulted.
- It is the final responsibility of the Head Teacher to authorise an absence or not.
- The reason for an absence may be reported verbally, either in person or over the telephone, or in writing, ideally before the absence. The written note or a log of the verbal message will be retained in the school office.
- Where no explanation for absence has been received by 9.15 a.m. on the first day, a member of the office staff will telephone the parent to attempt to establish a reason for the absence. She will remind parents that we ask them to phone the school on the first day of absence before 9.15 a.m..
- Long periods of absence (a week or more) or recurring patterns of absence (every Monday or swimming days) should be reported to the Head Teacher by the administrative staff or by the class teacher, and the Headteacher will investigate the cause.
- Any child arriving after 8.50 but before 9.15 am or after 1.10 but before 1.30 pm will be marked as late. If this is a frequent occurrence it should be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher, who will write to the parents of the child. The Education Welfare Officer may also become involved with children arriving late on a regular basis.
- Any child arriving after 9.15 am or after 1.15pm without good reason, will be marked as having an unauthorised absence. However, if there is a genuine reason for this, e.g. a medical appointment, the reason for the absence will be indicated in the register and the absence will be authorised.
- Children leaving or arriving in school during school time will be required to "sign in" or "sign out" at the secretary's office.
- A summary of these procedures will be recorded in the staff handbook.
- Details of the procedures to be followed, and the importance of regular and punctual attendance will be recorded in the school booklet "Information for Parents".
- Opportunities will be taken through newsletters, the website and other communications to stress the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents.
- Opportunities will be taken in the classroom and through assemblies to stress the importance of regular and punctual attendance to the children.

- Opportunities will be taken in the classroom and in assemblies to celebrate regular and punctual attendance of individual/and groups of children using a range of rewards and incentives.

4. Monitoring of Attendance

The Headteacher will monitor attendance data for all pupils every half term. The attendance of any pupil which falls below 90% will be closely scrutinised and may trigger the start of the 'Three Letter' system. For pupils whose attendance has previously been a concern monitoring will be carried out at least monthly and possibly more frequently according to individual needs.

The Headteacher will report overall figures and trends in absence to the Governing Body each term, and will also provide the Governors with an annual summary.

5. Action Prior to Formal Request for Education Welfare Officer Involvement

The Three Letter System

Where a pupil's attendance falls below 90% in the Autumn term, 92% in the Spring term or 96% in the summer term, the Headteacher will review the pattern of absence, any reasons provided by the family and any other relevant circumstances. The Headteacher will then make the decision as to whether or not to send the first letter as outlined in the Cambridgeshire County Council Three Letter system. (see Appendix 1 for model letter, which are adapted to suit individual circumstances).

Should the pupil's attendance improve but the improvement fails to be sustained, a further copy of Letter 1 may be sent.

This is recorded on the 'Record of Letters Sent' spreadsheet and a copy placed in the child's file.

Following the sending of Letter 1, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve or should it fall to a lower level, a copy of Letter 2 is sent to the parent and copied to the EWO (see Appendix 2). This requests a face to face meeting with the school's Family Worker. In some circumstances at this meeting the school may request that the parent provides a doctors' note to certify any future absence on the grounds of illness. If the parent does not comply with this, future absences may not be authorised even when the parent states that the child has been ill.

Should the pupil's attendance still fail to improve or should it fall to a lower level, then Letter 3 will be sent to the parents, with a copy to the EWO (see appendix 3). The case is formally referred to the EWO.

If a pupil has been absent for two continuous weeks without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns then the school may make an earlier referral to

the EWO. Should the child be the subject of Child Protection Plan, the child's social worker will be notified immediately.

6. Communication with Parents

We will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents so that our community clearly understands the value the school places on attendance and punctuality and that parents are specifically reminded of their legal responsibilities to ensure their children's regular and punctual attendance. The School Prospectus, newsletters, the website and parents' evenings will be used.

7. Family Holidays during Term Time

Parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday and the school actively discourages this. Where parents intend to request time off school due to special circumstances, a form is available from the school office to request that this absence be authorised. Leave will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances, and the Headteacher records the reasons for granting or refusing leave on the form.

Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- A parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill
- There may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the Headteacher considers that an immediate holiday might enable the child to better deal with the situation
- The holiday might be a unique, one off, never to be repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested, such as family wedding, funeral or graduation ceremony. The Headteacher may authorise such time as is deemed necessary for participation in the special event and travel to and from the location.

8. Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Penalty notices can only be issued by an Education Welfare Officer on behalf of the Local Authority. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

The *Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007* set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. Our school operates under the Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices drawn up by Cambridgeshire County Council. The code sets out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice, and the decision to issue a penalty notice rests with the Education Welfare Officer.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority. The parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made. The payment is not received by the school but is made to the Local Authority.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice.

APPENDIX 1

LETTER ONE

Name and address of parent

School ref

Date

Re: Name of pupil dob

Dear Parent

I am very concerned that your son/daughter's attendance has fallen to ...%.
A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

As I am sure you are aware, it is important that < pupil's name > maintains regular school attendance, as any absence may interrupt his/her academic progress and may have an effect on maintaining friendships. You should also be aware that regular attendance is a legal requirement.

It may be that there is an acceptable explanation for this of which I am unaware. I would be grateful if you could contact the school as soon as possible should this be the case.

< Pupil's name >'s attendance will continue to be monitored and I look forward to seeing a significant improvement.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Enc Record of attendance

APPENDIX 2

LETTER TWO

Name and address of parent

School ref

Date

Re: Name of pupil dob

Dear Parent

On <date> I wrote to you advising that your son/daughter's attendance had fallen to ...%. Unfortunately, there has been no significant improvement in his/her attendance and this is continuing to cause concern. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

I must remind you that regular attendance is a legal requirement and it is important that any issues that may be the cause of this poor attendance are addressed as soon as possible. Please contact me in the next few days so that we can arrange a time to discuss <pupil's name> attendance.

I enclose for your information a copy of a leaflet about the role of the school's Education Welfare Officer.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

Encs Record of Attendance
 EWS Leaflet

APPENDIX 3

LETTER THREE

Name and address of parent

School ref

Date

Re: Name of pupil dob

Dear Parent

I note that there has been no significant improvement in <pupil's name> attendance since <date>. <Pupil's name> attendance for this academic year has fallen to...%. Furthermore I have not received any satisfactory explanation for <pupil's name> absences.

It has now become necessary to refer <pupil's name> and the concerns around his/her attendance to the school's Education Welfare Officer. He/she will contact you in due course.

Should you have anything you wish to discuss concerning this matter, I will continue to be available. Please contact me on the above number should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer