

Box CE VC Primary School Attendance Policy

Status statutory

Rationale

Excellent education is vital to the lives of all children and to our society as a whole. Whilst it is known that the life chances of children may not be equal from the outset of their lives for various reasons, education can help to redress this imbalance and help to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential.

Regular attendance is an essential foundation of raising pupil attainment. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils' continuity of learning. Not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up when they return to school.

Poor or irregular attendance places children at risk and in some cases can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the school's legal responsibilities, with regard to pupil attendance, are fulfilled by staff, parents and pupils.

Roles and responsibilities

Parents and carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

Parental Responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' i.e. not too tired or too hungry to learn.
- Work with the school to help their child gains an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly and punctually.
- Make medical, dental appointments etc. out of school hours, where possible
- Notify the school if their child is absent by phone or in writing on the first day of absence, ideally first thing in the morning.
- Take holidays and day trips in school holidays except in exceptional circumstances
- Complete an 'absence from school form' (see appendix) for planned absences and return it to the office in advance of the absence. Absences, such as holidays, will not be authorised retrospectively
- Work with the school to take an active interest in their child's school life, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work with the school and other agencies to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.

- Parents must seek permission from their child's headteacher prior to any holiday in term time and give advance maximum notice for such a request. See holiday absence.

Pupils

As pupils become older and more independent they also have a responsibility to make sure they follow school procedures made known to them for receiving their registration mark, in particular when arriving late.

School

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems which may lead to non-attendance.

School responsibilities:

- To maximise attendance rates
- Support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance
- To respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non-attendance or irregular attendance
- Provide formal written notification explaining the actions that may be taken and ensure parents understand the consequences of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance, in particular that the case could result in a penalty notice and/or court.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent.
- Produce a whole School Attendance Policy which is consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents.

The **headteacher** will ensure that:

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Attendance targets and that attendance statistics are reported to the LA and governing body
- Each child's attendance record will be reported to parents as part of their child's annual report
- Parents or carers are contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised
- Pupils attendance and lateness are monitored regularly
- Good attendance is rewarded
- Pupils absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate learning support
- Parents are strongly advised to take holidays outside of term time; if a holiday is taken in term time parents will be expected to give a reason why they are not able to go during school holidays. If a reduction of the cost of the holiday is given as the reason, the holiday will not be authorised. Holiday requests for April and May will not be approved as this is when we carry out annual assessments of pupils.
- Where the circumstances for an absence appear to be avoidable such as shopping, day trips, visiting friends and relatives, a birthday treat, too tired after a late night, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised
- Where appropriate the head teacher will work with the LA, parents and pupils to set individual attendance targets

- In the case of poor attendance where there is no explanation for the absence the school will follow the LA's procedures for 'fixed penalty notices for poor school attendance' (see appendix)
- If high levels of absence continue a request may be made to the Education Welfare Officer to begin procedures for fast 'track to prosecution'

All **teachers** are expected to:

- Register pupils accurately and efficiently
- Record known absences in the register e.g. where the parent has informed the teacher
- Report pupil attendance and lateness daily
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and inform colleagues if there is a problem e.g. social or emotional problem that may lead to absences
- Inform the head teacher of any unusual absences

Administrative staff will:

- Check registers daily
- Ring the parent/guardian of any child who is not in school who has not already made contact with the school on the first morning of absence to ask the reason for their child's absence
- Inform teachers of the reason for a child's absence
- Record weekly attendance figures electronically
- Highlight poor attendance figures to the headteacher and teachers

The Education Welfare Service

The Local Authority discharges its statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance through Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) within the Education Welfare Service. The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance of all pupils in Wiltshire, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment. The Education Welfare Service will work in close partnership with all maintained schools in Wiltshire and other statutory and voluntary agencies to promote regular school attendance

Attendance registers

Attendance registers are legal documents which may be required as evidence in court. Schools are required to take an attendance register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Taking the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by both staff, parents and pupils.

The following action must be taken:

- On each record whether every pupil was present, absent, present at approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- If a pupil of compulsory school age (over 5) is absent the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or not.
- Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification.
- The law requires absences not agreed in advance to be recorded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming

Reception Age Children

Children do not reach statutory school age until they are five years old. However, we want to establish good attendance patterns for children from an early age so our expectations will be that they follow the same procedures as the rest of the school.

Holiday absence

The Wiltshire Council policy states that:

Time off school for family holidays is not a right. Schools have discretion to allow up to 10 days in the school year for a family holiday if they believe that the circumstances warrant it.

Schools may agree up to 10 days "holiday leave" in special circumstances such as:

- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time *if* the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.

In general terms, the Local Authority would expect a school to consider the potential negative impact that any absence can have on a child's academic progress, even if a child's attendance is good, for example at 95% or above.

The Local Authority would not, however, expect schools to agree holiday leave if:

- the pupil already has poor attendance and the Education Welfare Service (EWS) is involved;
- the pupil would miss public examinations such as National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests.

Holidays for the following reasons should not be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with the beginning or end of term.

In **exceptional circumstances**, schools can approve more than 10 days holiday, called extended leave of absence or extended holidays.

In all circumstances of holiday leave, a written application must be made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides in advance of the holiday and a date for the pupil's return to school agreed. Holiday/ Leave of Absence forms should be obtained from the school office.

The **governing body** will ensure that the LEA is informed about the long-term absence of any pupils.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The headteacher will, on a termly basis, provide data on pupil attendance against the number of sessions taught, and will provide comparisons with previous terms and years. The headteacher and governing body will evaluate the data and decide what, if any, further action is required.

Appendix

Fixed penalty notices for poor school attendance
Wiltshire County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct
Holiday/leave of absence from school form
Letters authorising/declining absence request
Attendance codes

Policy and curriculum committee: 20/5/10

Ratified by governing body:

Date for review: May 2013

Written and adopted
May 2010

Next Review
May 2013