



THE DISTRICT

CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Chair of Governors	Mr J Mitchell
Headteacher	Mrs L Shelford
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The caring path to achievement, reflecting the values of Christ.

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The District CE Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time with access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Parental Responsibility

Parent/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office before 9:30am on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we require evidence from the doctor or dentist, e.g. appointment card/letter.
- Making requests for leave in term time and providing school with evidence of any exceptional circumstances. Parents should give the school a minimum of a 4 week notice period of any leave.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that a problem can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. We will endeavor to provide an environment where all children feel valued, welcome and secure.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. We will work with children and their families/carers to ensure that each child attends school regularly and punctually by:

- Reminding parents/carers regularly of their responsibility in ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Making parents/carers aware of the impact of poor attendance on academic progress. Attendance of less than 90% is known to compromise pupil attainment.

Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. The school takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

School attendance is subject to The Education Act 1996 and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education. Our school attendance target of 96.6% reflects the national attendance target.

Aims and Objectives

The attendance policy ensures that all staff and Governors in school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.

- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to our two year old provision, Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer, e.g. if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance.

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give details of any absence or lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parent/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.

- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parent/carers have not responded to school incentives to improve.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head of Safeguarding and pastoral team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of the school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parent/carer.
- Informing the pastoral team where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referral to the pastoral team (APDR).
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

Head of Safeguarding

The Head of Safeguarding is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been an issue.
- Making referrals to the EWS service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absences.
- Collating and recording registration and attendance data.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parent/carers.
- Initiating Early Help Assessments and leading on Family Action Meetings where attendance is a persistent concern.

The pastoral team and administration team

School office staff and the pastoral team are responsible for:

- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/late book is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

The importance of registration

- Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity

[attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. **If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.**

- School acknowledges punctuality as the responsibility of the parent/carer. Punctuality is essential to ensure that the start of the teaching day is uninterrupted and that there is optimum teaching and learning time for all pupils. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others.
- Electronic registration facilitates the easy analysis of attendance data, highlighting patterns of lateness or absence which would be reported to parents/carers if necessary.

The importance of parents/carers contacting the school with reason for absence cannot be emphasised enough. We need to ascertain that nothing has happened to the child on his/her way to school.

School Procedures

- Attendance is recorded electronically using SIMS. Morning registration will take place at the start of the school day at 9.00 am. Children who arrive at school between 9.00 am and close of register at 9.30 am will be coded as L, late prior to the close of registration.
- In cases where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.
- Morning registration will close at 9.30 am. Children who arrive after the close of register will be marked as a U and will be classified as any unauthorised absence.
- The afternoon registration will begin at 12.55pm, registration will close at 1.30 pm.

First Day Absence

Parents must contact school explaining the reason for absence by 9.30 am. If parents do not contact the school to indicate the reason for their child's absence school will automatically send a text message to parents. A response to the text message is expected. If there is no response received by school the pupil will automatically be marked as an unauthorised absence. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that school is always updated with new contact numbers. A home visit may take place by either school staff or the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer if there is a cause for concern.

Third Day Absence

If a pupil is still absent from school on the third day school will again make a follow up telephone welfare call to the home. A home visit may take place if there is a cause for concern by either school staff or the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer.

Continuing Absence

Absence is marked as unauthorised and a visit from the Education Welfare Officer will be arranged.

Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is missing education without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Education Welfare Officer. *This is a legal requirement.* The school will include details of any action that they have taken to address the unauthorised absences.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of the class teachers and Head of Safeguarding to be aware of and bring attention to any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absence the school will try to resolve the problem with parent/carers. In all cases the school will seek advice from the school's Education Welfare Officer. Parent/carers will be requested to attend a school

attendance meeting with the Head of Safeguarding, and the school's Education Welfare Officer to discuss the absence. A plan of support will be discussed and offered at this time. Parents may be requested to provide school with medical evidence before school will consider authorising future absences.

Procedures for recording attendance for learners accessing alternative education provision.

- In line with the recommendations of Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance 2013, all children accessing, provision through PACE will be dual registered on referral from the school.
- Registration will be marked as D on SIMS, as dual registration, i.e. pupil attending other establishment.
- The recording of alternative attendance will be led by the Behaviour and Inclusion administration staff who will collated attendance from all allocated provision on a twice daily basis and inform school attendance leads for their information and school attendance recording.
- Safeguarding responsibility, although joint will be primarily lie with PACE on the days that children attend the alternative provision.

Returning to school after an absence.

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence will be logged onto the school's SIMS system and will be kept for the remainder of the time that the pupil is enrolled at the school. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation the information will be used as potential evidence/support.

Pupil Registration Regulations (England 2006)

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove reference to family holidays and extended leave as well as the Statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from the school if the leave is granted. The new law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

Leave in term time

- Holidays in term time and extended leave are not allowed as a rule and parent/carers are discouraged from arranging any holidays or absence during term time as they are not in the best interest of children.
- Information for parent/carers clarifying their legal responsibilities regarding attendance and highlighting the impact of avoidable absences during term time will be made available via the school prospectus, Home School Agreement, Parent evenings and induction meetings.

- **Leave during term time will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.** Each case will be viewed individually by the Headteacher. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.
- **Parents must apply for permission by using the notification of absence form at least 4 weeks prior to requesting leave of absence (see Appendices).** Where unforeseen circumstances occur, e.g. bereavement, parent /carers are still required to contact the school to request leave of absence. Our school will operate a formal process of application and agreement. In addition the number and frequency of absences taken for this purpose will be recoded throughout a child's school year.

As part of the application process parent/carers will be expected to demonstrate a willingness to make arrangements that cause least disruption to their child's learning. This might involve:

- a) Wrapping days of absence around existing school holiday periods to minimise time out of school.
- b) Considering whether it is wholly appropriate for a child to accompany adults in some circumstances.
- c) Weighing the benefits to the family against detriment to educational process.
- d) Avoiding entirely periods of public examinations and National Curriculum Assessments.

The Headteacher will consider the following factors when considering term time absence requests:

- The age of the pupil.
- The time of year.
- The nature and purpose of the trip.
- The impact on the pupil's education.
- The pupils ability to catch up on work missed.
- The pupils educational needs.
- The general welfare of the pupil.
- The overall attendance patterns of the pupil.
- History of previous trips taken.
- Evidence/proof of unavoidable circumstances e.g. parent/carer leave is during a fixed workplace closedown or an inflexible leave allocation in the parent/carers profession.

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances where a parent/carer requests extended leave totaling more than 10 days per school year each case must be carefully assessed on its merits. Whilst the presumption is to discourage any leave in term time there are circumstances in which the Headteacher might consider such applications sympathetically.

Managing Failure to Return to School by an Agreed Date

Failure to return to school by the agreed date without acceptable cause will jeopardise the pupil's place at school. Where a pupil has been granted 10 days or more days leave and fails to return by the agreed date, a further period of 10 days is allowed for the School and Local Authority to investigate the circumstances before de-registration is considered. This 10 day period of investigation is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If a pupil is unavoidably detained from returning to school by the agreed date the parent/carer must contact school and request an additional period of leave. Such cases will be considered on an individual basis.

Pupils Taking Holidays/Extended Leave without Permission

Where parent/carer takes a pupil out of school in term time without asking for or receiving permission, the absence will automatically be marked as unauthorised. The school will notify the Educational Welfare Officer and may consider a Penalty Notice being issued under the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Failure to return to school within 20 working days places the pupil at risk of losing his/her place.

Penalty Notices

The 2013 regulations set out the procedures for issuing Penalty Notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school **or** fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents who receive a Penalty Notice must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 after 21 days but within 28 days.

Parents who do not pay the fine within the 28 day period can be prosecuted in the Magistrates court for the original offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

St Helens Local Authority will support schools through use of Penalty Notices and other legal sanctions, for periods of unauthorised absence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A letter is sent to parent/carers at the beginning of each academic year making them aware that The District CE Primary School has adopted the use of Penalty Notices for unauthorised school absence in line with the Education (Penalty Notices)(England) Regulations 2007, which were amended in 2012 and 2013.

Removing Pupils from the School Roll

Where a pupil fails to return by the agreed date, or where permission was not originally given from a holiday in term time the school will make every effort to contact the family and establish the circumstances, including visits to the registered address.

Where contact cannot be made and no acceptable cause can be established and the school has followed procedures by informing the family in writing of the possible consequences of non-return, then that pupil may be taken off the school roll at the conclusion of the 10 day investigation period, although in most cases the school will continue to liaise with the Local Authority to establish the location of the family.

The school will inform the Local Authority of the removal from roll, which will be backdated to the last actual attendance of the pupil and the local authority, will continue enquiries about the pupil's future schooling arrangements. The school will always work with the Local Authority in advance of a possible case of deregistration as it must be agreed that every effort to locate the pupil has failed.

Where a pupil is known to have left the area with the school's prior knowledge, but an alternative school has not been identified, we will contact the Local Authority Children Missing Education Team and liaise with them to support the identification of an appropriate school place. Once this is successful the pupil will be removed from roll and backdated to the date of actually leaving with the agreement of the Local Authority.

The Education Welfare Service

In the promotion of regular attendance the school works closely with the Local Authority Education Welfare Service.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated Local Authority officers, Headteachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absences from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27th February 2004. A Penalty Notice may be issued in the following circumstances.

- Overt truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Excessive holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed at 9.30 am)

In School Processes

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern a meeting with the Head of Safeguarding will be arranged to discuss what support can be offered. A 'Action Plan Do and Review Plan (APDR) (see appendix a) will record an agreed action plan between the school and parent/carers which will be monitored and reviewed over a period of 6 weeks.

If poor attendance or punctuality persists following additional interventions and support the pastoral team will use other strategies to ensure a pupil attends school on time, e.g. holding regular late gates and phoning parents prior to the start of school.

The partnership between parents/carers and school

- Parent/carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive full time education and so are primarily responsible for ensuring their children attend and stay at school.
- It is the responsibility of the school to support good attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.
- Our home school agreement reflects our understanding that regular and punctual attendance is essential for maximum pupil progress to be attained.
- Parent/carers are also responsible for ensuring that their child arrives at school by 8.45 am, properly attired and ready to learn.
- Parent/carers must see themselves as partners with the school in the education of their children. This means encouraging a respect for education and those who deliver it.

Informing parents/carers

- Our school prospectus and website contains information regarding the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Our Home-School Agreement reinforces the importance of regular attendance and that this is shared responsibility of school, home and where appropriate the child.
- Newsletters, information sheets and letters are sent out on a regular basis to remind parents/carers of their responsibilities and the impact of poor attendance.
- Parent/carers are informed of the common procedures followed by the school and the Local Authority relating to requests for absences other than sickness in term time. Research suggests that children taken out of school may never catch up with the learning they have missed and this may affect test results and can be particularly harmful in the run up to the end of year examinations. Children who struggle with English and Maths may find it even harder to cope on their return. Younger children may find it more difficult to renew friendships with classmates.
- While the issue of leave in term time is unlikely to be entirely resolved, there is strong evidence that where systematic and consistent approaches are adopted these result in a reduction in the frequency and duration of such absences.

Attendance Awards

The school will use the following systems to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance:

- Class weekly attendance award.
- Certificates.
- Attendance badges.
- 100% attendance club.
- Letter to parents.
- Postcards home
- Weekly class attendance trophy.

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work.

Our schools target is: 2017/2018 – 96.6%

The registration system

The School will SIMS online registers entered into a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years. Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes. Alternatively electronic back-ups or micro-fiche copies

can be made. These also need preserving for at least three year. Entries in paper registers must be in ink. All corrections must be visible (no correcting fluid).

Register Security

The registers must be safely stored in the school office.

Appendices

1 The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
 - [b] To any special needs he may have.
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

