

Cotherstone Primary School



Attendance Policy

Reviewed Date: December 2018

Reviewed: Every two years (due 2020)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately.

All children should be at school, on-time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

☑ Parents are required to telephone and inform school on the morning of the first day of Absence and on each day thereafter.

☒ The school operates a first day contact system which means that should we not have been informed of a child's absence before 9.30am, we will telephone parents to identify why their child is not in school. This is part of the school's commitment to safeguarding the safety and welfare of children. Parents may also be prompted to contact school via a text message from the Teachers 2Parents service the school utilises.

☒ Absences should always be followed up with a letter to school when pupils return.

☒ Unexplained absences are followed up with a letter from the school office. No reply to this results in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

☒ When pupils arrive late, they are required to report to the main office and parents are asked to sign them in to record their arrival.

☒ Leave of absence forms are available in the main office for requests such as holidays during term-time.

☒ In appropriate circumstances, entering into Parenting Contracts and issuing Penalty Notices will be considered.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence;
- It is proposed that use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to one per pupil per academic year;
- In cases where there is more than one poor-attending pupil in a family multiple notices may be issued. This decision will involve careful consideration and consultation with schools by the EWS regarding the family's current circumstances;
- There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent or carer may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a Penalty Notice.

To ensure that Durham County Council has a consistent approach to the issuing of Penalty Notices the Education Welfare Service will apply their current criteria to each case, i.e.:

- There must be at least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil, effectively an 85% attendance trigger; attendance should be calculated cumulatively.

Holidays

As a school we have adopted the standard authorisation of holidays protocol. Where parents fail to comply with procedure contained within the protocol a Penalty Notice may be considered.

The Headteacher is responsible for the operational management of the policy. Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way supported by the Office Support Managers where appropriate. If there is concern about a child's absence, class teachers will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher by the class teacher, who will contact the parents or carers.

The Headteacher, with the Office Support, analyses attendance data to identify trends for individual pupils' classes and year groups enabling the school to target efforts. Wherever possible action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance, investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to Local Authority.

When an individual pupils attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, a referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments, which must be in school time.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

School administrative staff (Office Support Managers) contact parents on any day a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation ('first day contact'). By contacting the parent the school also ensures that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. Parents have access to their child's latest attendance by contacting the school office. This includes percentage attendance, recorded reasons for absence and registers taken at the beginning of a morning and afternoon session.

The school sets attendance targets each year. The Headteacher and Governors agree these. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

The absence target includes unauthorised absences and holidays taken during term time.

The school takes an active part in initiatives such as local spotlight weeks working closely with Education Welfare Officers, the local Police and others.

Rewards for good attendance

All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term will receive an excellence letter for certificate, awarded at the beginning of the next term; also for children whose attendance improves significantly from one term to the next.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. They also receive an update each term through the Headteacher's Report to Governors. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.