



ATTENDANCE POLICY
Approved October
2020

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statement of Intent:

Sutton Primary School aims to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality by all pupils. This will enable all pupils at the school to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Aims of the Policy

To promote regular school attendance thus offering all pupils equal access to learning.

Objectives of the Policy

- Meet government attendance targets
- Create a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents/carers
- Ensure pupils are in school for the maximum number of days

This policy is designed to help all concerned adults to enable children to attend school regularly and thus be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible.

Good attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. 100% attendance is possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that you inform the school of the reasons for the absence.

The Department for Education states that an attendance record of 96% or above is good. Where a pupil's attendance falls below 96% the school is obliged to notify the pupil and their family to improve the overall attendance.

School Responsibilities

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school
- Maintain appropriate attendance data
- Have appropriate registration processes in place
- To follow up absences and lateness if parent/carers have not communicated

with the school the reason why their child is not in school

- Inform parents of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness
 - To report to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and support their work with pupils as necessary
 - To report to the Governing Body on attendance at least three times per year
 - To consistently administer the attendance procedure
 - To ensure the registers are taken twice daily at the start of the morning and afternoon session
 - To promote good attendance

Parent Responsibilities

- To have children in class ready for teaching by the start of the school day at 08:55am
- To inform school **every day** of any absence
- To make appointments for leave in writing on the school's **Leave of Absence Form** giving the reason for the request.
- To work with the school and EWO to improve lateness and attendance
- Where possible to avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day

If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should

- Talk to their child, it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving
- Talk to your child's class teacher in the first instance.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Education states that 'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. It has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences, which are through unavoidable causes.

Parents may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this on the basis of an explanation provided by the parents, should the parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention – the school follows the most recent NHS advice regarding the return of a pupil after they have suffered from sickness or diarrhoea. Currently this is for a return to school 48hrs after the last bout of illness.
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments – we expect absences to be kept to a minimum:
routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible
- Days of religious observance notified in advance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement of a very close relative, serious illness.

There are other absences, such as 'Approved Sporting Activity' that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absences are those which staff at the school do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the parent/s. Unauthorised absences are where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by the parent(s)/carers
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- Shopping
- Over sleeping
- Birthdays or family celebration
 - Taking

- unauthor
ised
holiday
- Returnin
g late
from a
holiday
- Unexplai
ned
absence
- Truancy
- Minding
the
house
- Avoidabl
e
transport
issues
- Caring
for
relatives
- Awaiting
repair
people
- Keeping
children
off
school
without
good
reason

The Process for Monitoring Attendance

Each school will have a person responsible for recording the instances of absence and lateness and discuss weekly with the Headteacher. Where issues persist the following will be initiated:

1. If concerns persist the school will write to the parent/carer using the three tier letter system.
2. If the concerns persist the school will arrange a meeting between the parent/carer, school representative and where possible the EWO

3. If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority's Educational Welfare Service to deal with the on-going issues. Should concerns persist the EWO will agree action (as above) and where necessary meet with the parent/carers. Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action (See Appendix 1).

Absences during Term Time

The Department for Education makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, amended in September 2013, made it clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued a separate Notice will be issued to each parent of each child.

As of January 2018 the rate per parent per child will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time'. These may be obtained from the school office or website.

Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

There are approximately 190 school days within a year (380 sessions) which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 13 weeks of school holidays; please ensure your holidays are taken during this period.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

Children must be in class by 8:55am each day (adjustments may be made in light of

COVID restrictions that will be communicated separate to families outside of this policy). Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time. Pupils will be marked late if they arrive at school after the registers have been taken by 9:05am. The school gates will be shut at 9:05am. Children who arrive after that time must come into the building via the main office, where they will be entered into the late book.

Lateness will be monitored and the EWO will follow up persistent lateness.

If the arrival at school is after 9:15am the pupil will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with Health and Safety.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence code 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during the school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents or carers will be invited to attend a meeting at the school to discuss the problems they face.

Sickness
absence

Please notify the school on each day of the absence. We reserve the right to request a doctor's note or proof of appointment regarding recurring and frequent illness.

Promoting Good Attendance

We celebrate good attendance throughout our school by:

- Awarding a certificate to individual children who have 100% attendance each term
- Celebrating through the Weekly Newsletter the numbers of children who achieve 100% attendance in a term
 - Awarding certificates to the children who achieve 100% attendance during an academic year
- Celebrating through the Weekly Newsletter the names of the children who achieve 100% attendance during an academic year

The Role of the Education Welfare Officer

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that 'if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence.

Cambridgeshire County Council through the Education Welfare Service may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued as long as the following criteria apply:

- At least 10 sessions (equivalent to five school days of unauthorised absence by the pupil during the current school term or 20 sessions (ten school days) in the previous four months.
- Other than in specific circumstances the parents will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given 15 school days to affect improvement. Within the 15 day period further unauthorised absence will trigger the issue of a notice without further warning.

In exceptional circumstances the Local Authority reserves the right to:

- Issue a Penalty Notice for a first offence
- Issue a Penalty Notice without warning

Governors

It is the Governing Body's legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

Appendices

Appendix One Three Tier Letter System

Appendix Two Copy of Leave of Absence Form

Attendance Letter One:

Name and address of parent

School ref

Date

Dear

Name of Pupil – DOB

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> attendance will continue to be monitored and I look forward to seeing a significant improvement.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Cc Education Welfare Officer

Enc Record of Attendance

EWO School Attendance Leaflet

Attendance Letter Two:

Name and address of parent

School ref:

Date

Dear

Name of Pupil – DOB

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 that 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

Headteacher

Cc Education Welfare Officer

Enc Record of Attendance

Information about Education Welfare Officers in Cambridgeshire Leaflet

Attendance Letter Three:

Name and address of parent

School ref:

Date

Dear

Name of Pupil – DOB

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 the matter, I will continue to be available. Please contact me on the below number should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Cc Education Welfare Officer

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY

As a parent or carer you are strongly urged to avoid leave of absence from school during term time. Should this be absolutely unavoidable then you should fill in this form and return it to the school office prior to the absence.

The Government implemented new legislation that came into effect from September 2013 which means that schools may only authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances. A parent or carer does not have any right to leave of absence during term time and if your request is refused, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This could result in legal action being taken or a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

A Penalty Notice involves a fine of £60 per child, per parent/carer if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per child, per parent/carer if paid within 28 days. Should a parent/carer on whom a notice is served fail to pay the full amount within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates Court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the terms of the County Council's local code of conduct, a copy of which is retained by the school.

Should leave of absence be taken after permission has been withheld, then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child's report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and possible legal proceedings.

I request that.....(name of child)

be granted leave of absence from Sutton CE (VC) Primary School

from to

Total days absent from school

Please explain the exceptional circumstances that require a leave of absence during term time:

.....
.....
.....

.....
Signature of parent

.....
Date

.....
Please print name of parent completing this form

Office use only:

Authorised / Unauthorised

Headteacher.....