College Road
Primary School

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Attendance Policy in Plain English

We recognise that policies can be long, difficult to read and hard to understand, so we have written this Attendance Policy in Plain English to give an overview of the important information covered in the main policy.

Why is good attendance important?

If a child does not go to school regularly, this will affect how well they do at school.

Any time a child is not at school is a missed chance to learn something new. Learning often happens in a sequence of lessons, which means that if a child goes on holiday for a week in term time, they will miss learning that will be the building blocks for more learning. This will then mean they have a gap in their knowledge.

Think of learning like a child building tower of bricks. If they miss a few bricks out, the tower will be wobbly and may collapse. Equally, if a child misses a few lessons, their learning will be wobbly and they may struggle.

Even one missed day of school can make a big difference.

Our school needs to do everything it can to make sure that every child goes to school so that they can learn as much as possible.

Who is responsible for a child's attendance at school?

Good attendance is the responsibility of the child, the child's parents, the school, the Local Authority and the police.

Good attendance means that:

- Children are safe
- Children can learn a lot and achieve well
- Children will have the chance to socialise with their friends and develop their social skills
- Parents and School are working together to make sure children are at school
- The school is taking action when children are not attending regularly

If a child is not attending school enough, the Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service, known as IAWS may get involved to help make the child's attendance better.

IAWS have a **legal duty** to make sure children are attending school and will work with the school and the child's parents to make sure this happens. It is **The Law** that children go to school, so IAWS can fine parents who do not send their children to school and can even take parents to court.

What does the school expect parents to do?

- To make sure their children attend school regularly (it is the law)
- To make sure their children are on time in the morning (it is the law)
- To contact the school first thing in the morning if their child is unwell
- To make sure their child has everything they need for their school day (PE kit, reading book, completed homework)
- To avoid taking their child for a medical appointment during the school day and to collect them/return them to school so they don't miss too much learning if the appointment cannot be changed

- To tell the school office about appointments before they happen, giving proof, such as a hospital letter
- To tell the school if there is a problem that means their child can't come to school
- To not take holidays during term time, except for special (exceptional) reasons
- If a holiday must be taken during term time, parents must give evidence for why it is an exceptional reason
- To work with the school to follow school policies about homework, behaviour and attitude to learning
- To attend parent teacher evenings and other important meetings
- To work in partnership with the school and/or other people like the Education Welfare Officer to improve their child's attendance

What can parents/carers and pupils expect from the school?

- To make good attendance one of the school priorities
- To follow up non-attendance and/or lateness in a consistent way
- To tell the Governors about attendance
- To have a Senior Leader as the person in charge of attendance
- To use different ways to deal with lateness and absence
- To support parents to get their children to school on time every day
- To act quickly to sort out problems that may cause attendance issues
- To be sensitive to the needs of individual parents/carers
- Be understanding when a child returns to school after a period of absence that was linked to a traumatic event or a long-term illness
- To provide broad, balanced learning which depends of children being in school every day
- To encourage good attendance from the children
- To check attendance regularly and act quickly if a problem is spotted
- To contact parents on the first day their child is absent if there has been no message left with the office
- To share children's attendance levels with their parents in their annual report and at other times in the school year
- All staff have high expectations that children will come to school every day unless they are too ill
- To reward good attendance
- To meet with parents when a child's attendance drops below 95%
- To plan with parents how to make their child's attendance better
- To refer families to the Education Welfare service if attendance is below 90%
- To seek advice from the Education Welfare Service if attendance is below 95% or if the school has not been able to get hold of parents for 5 days of a child's absence

Which absence is Authorised or Unauthorised?

The School register is a legal document which records whether children are in school or not and uses special codes for different types of absence.

Authorised absence is when a child is **allowed** to miss school

A child is allowed to miss school when:

- They are ill
- There is an unavoidable reason
- They are observing a religious observance with their family
- They are the child of Traveller parents and special conditions are met from Education Act 1966 Section 444(6)
- A holiday in term time has special/exceptional reasons and the school has agreed with the evidence
- The child is excluded from school
- The child is taking part in a sporting event representing their county/national team

Unauthorised absence is when a child is **not allowed** to miss school

A child will be marked in the register as having an **unauthorised** absence when:

- Parents do not give a reason for their child's absence
- The school is dissatisfied with the reason given
- The parents have not given medical letters as proof of appointments
- The parents have not given evidence confirming their child is ill when they have been asked to do this (in the cases of low absence)
- The child is staying at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- The child is shopping during school hours
- The child is absent for reasons that are not exceptional e.g. birthdays
- The child is translating for their parents at appointments
- The child is on a holiday that has not been authorised
- The child is late returning to school after an authorised holiday

Holiday during term time – what the Law says

The Law makes it clear that parents do not have any right to take their child out of school for a holiday in term-time.

In 'exceptional circumstances', Headteachers may allow up to 10 school day's holiday. In most cases, Headteachers will **not give permission** for holiday absence in term time.

What is an 'exceptional circumstance'?

It is a unique, one-off situation such as; when a parent, grandparent or close relative is seriously ill and the proposed holiday, is going to be the last one; or there may have been a significant trauma recently and a holiday may help the child better deal with what has happened; or the holiday may be a unique, never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

The Headteacher will look very carefully at the child's attendance record, and should he/she have worries, for example, if the child's attendance is below 95%, it is very unlikely that they will authorise the holiday or any other absence.

If a child is in Year 6, it is very unlikely that a holiday request will be authorised during this year. This is because of the strong link between absence and how well a child does in national examinations. Year 6 children take their SATs in May and therefore no absence for holiday will be authorised before this point in the year.

School will **not authorise** absence for any of the following reasons:

- To take care of family members
- Birthdays
- To translate for family members
- No uniform or school shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Weddings abroad – even if it is for a close family member
- Family anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problems
- Child refusing to come go school

There are many other reasons; these are just some examples.

What does the school do to promote good attendance?

- The school makes children feel welcome and valued. The school's Values approach encourages children to feel part of a big school family and that they are missed when they are late or absent.
- Good attendance is praised.
- Learning is matched to children's needs so that they feel good about coming to school.
- Senior Leaders share each class's total attendance each week in assembly. The class with the best attendance gets a sticker on a chart at the front of the hall. The class with the highest number of stickers in a term (Autumn/Spring/Summer) gets to choose a class treat, such as play in the park, an ice cream, bring a toy afternoon or a game of rounders.
- Children who have 100% attendance receive a gold certificate. Children who have 99% get silver, and children who have 98% attendance receive a bronze certificate. This happens at the end of the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms.
- School provides a poster for all parents about the importance of good attendance and this plain speak version of the Attendance Policy supports everyone to access it.
- Attendance is part of the fortnightly newsletters to parents

- The Attendance Leader regularly analyses attendance data and acts swiftly to work with families to improve low attendance (under 95%)
- Children who have 90% or lower attendance will be referred to IAWS.

Reporting Absence and School Routines for Following up Absence

- Parents should leave a message on the school absence line before 9:30am or they can email the school with a reason for their child's absence
- The school will ring any parents who have not been in touch by 9:30am to find out why their child is not in school.
- If the school cannot reach the parent they will leave a message and try texting, emailing and messaging on Class Dojo with a request for the parent to ring the school office
- All reasons will be recorded on the school system (SIMS) as a legal record
- The safety of the child is the school's most important job, so if the school has reason to be concerned about the safety of a child, they will work with IAWS, Children's Social Care and/or the police to find out if the child is safe. This may involve making a home visit.
- If parents do not get in touch within five days after phone calls, emails and home visits, an immediate referral to IAWS will be made and an investigation begun.

Persistent Absence

When a child is constantly late or absent and the school's efforts to improve the child's attendance have not worked, a referral will be made to IAWS for an investigation and possible legal action (fines, full prosecution or Education Supervision Orders).

Before this, the school will have had attendance meetings with the parents and written to them formally.

Parents will be told that they will have to provide suitable evidence (doctors' notes/medical letters) for every time their child is absent until their child's attendance improves to above an agreed level.

This is a summary document. Full information can be found in the main Attendance Policy, which is on the school website.