



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Approved by
Education Committee

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November 2021

**RELEASING THE
IMAGINATION:
CELEBRATING
THE ART OF
THE POSSIBLE**



Attendance Policy

AIMS - our policy aims to:

- emphasise the importance to all children that maximum attendance at school is an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement;
- make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and children) UCPS's expectations on attendance levels;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to children missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. ***Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our children.***

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

Attendance is a national priority. All schools must submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance.

The vast majority of our children achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all of our children as a **minimum**. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); children should **not** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Authorised Absences

The School cannot legally authorise **any** leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for **authorised** or **justified** absences:

- (i) a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- (iii) absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.**

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

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

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- minding the house; □ caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DFE guidelines look at the area of **Special Occasions** and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would **not**.

Holidays

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

In common with the other schools, we ask parents who feel it is **absolutely unavoidable** that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the School, in writing, **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances. It would be very rare to authorise a holiday during term time.

The DFE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that **Head Teachers** should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised.** The School will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively. Any requests for term time holidays will necessitate an interview with the appropriate member of the pastoral staff.

Sabbaticals

We strongly discourage parents to take their children out of school if parents are taking professional or academic sabbaticals. We believe that when this happens it disrupts the learning of the child, disrupts the social relationships and dynamic of the class and thereby affects other children. Should an application to be absent from school for a parents' sabbatical be made, the school will inform parents of the process, which will include being taken off role after 20 days of absence. Children on the waiting list will be offered a place following this. If a decision is made to be absent for this reason, the school will discuss with parents how to manage the transition to support the child.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school sessions; morning registration begins at 8:45am and afternoon registration is at 1:00pm. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken; **parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late;**
- if their child is ill, notify the school **on the first day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence;

- send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school. This should be taken to the Admin office. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message.
- get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

In return the School will:

- contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- contact home over any unexplained absences;
- follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- involve the inclusion leader to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- regularly and consistently remind children of the importance of good attendance and punctuality; □ reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Our expectations are outlined in our **New Parents Booklet** within the attendance section.

Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the School offers the following rewards:

The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- the Headteacher and class teachers will communicate regularly with Parents/Carers on attendance matters;
- ***appropriate personal encouragement or congratulations will be offered to individual children and classes;***
- clear attendance information will be entered in the school brochure;
- Local Authority Parents/Carers leaflets will be sent to all new Parents/Carers.

The letters of congratulation are sent home directly, become part of the student's records and make a meaningful contribution to their reference for further education or the world of work. Attendances and absences are included in termly Assessments, which are also sent home.

Roles and responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie, explained in **Appendix 1**. The administrative support provided by the Attendance Officer is absolutely key. It is important that **all** members of staff are aware of the responsibilities of form tutors so that when they take on the role temporarily they know what is expected of them: **a robust system is dependent upon everyone playing his/her part.**

The Education Welfare Service

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the School several times a term. The School works very closely with the EWO regarding children who are giving cause for concern; the EWO visits homes, sees and supports children in school and is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance. The EWO is available to assist parents where difficulties arise and can be contacted via office.

In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service also initiates legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up, setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis. **A Final Word**

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning. Our community

is aspirational: we are ambitious for all our children and give the same level of attention to attendance as to other matters concerning their well being and achievement in school. We look forward to your cooperation.

Appendix 1

Absence Codes – Recorded on registers

∧	Present at registration
B	Educated Off Site (Not dual registered)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
F	Agreed extended holiday
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)
H	Agreed holiday
I	Illness
J	Interview
K	Exam
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
Q	Absent from class, working elsewhere
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not based working)
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to pupils
AEA	Authorised Educational Activity - counted as present.

The Absence Codes have been updated by Capita and are now identical for all schools nationally

Appendix 2

Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures: Updated March 2017

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are

important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Marking the register

The office will call home on the first day of absence. If no reason is given, Class Teachers are responsible for following up absences and communicating reasons to the Office staff. Class teachers are responsible for ensuring their registers are correct. They are legal documents.

Reading the registers

It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for **EVERY** pupil (everyone **must** fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late!). Staff must enter either 'present', 'absent' or 'late' (+ how many minutes late). **Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible.**

We operate a policy of 1st day response regarding absence across the school.

Communication with/from parents

The DFE guidance strongly recommends a policy of same-day contact as this has been shown to be the single most effective strategy in improving rates of attendance; it is also important from a Child Protection perspective.

We do, however, require **ALL** absences to be covered by a letter, e-mail, phone call or note in logbook from parents/guardians in addition to the initial telephone contact (texts not accepted). Communication is required for every day of a period of absence. Every Friday the office will provide to class teachers a list of children whose absence has yet to be authorised with a communication from home. It is the class teachers' responsibility to chase these up and make adjustments on the register.

A Few Words on Lates

- Statutory Registration starts at 8:45am and 1:00pm and closes after 30 minutes. Thereafter children's absence will be recorded as unauthorised (U) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment.
- A student should only be marked as **late** when the teacher has completed the whole register and a pupil arrives after the register has been "sent" (electronically).
- It is important that we are consistent in our procedures across the school: parents with siblings in the school do sometimes cross-check to see that the same standards are being applied and we are consistent in our approach to latecomers. So please record Lates and the number of minutes late then re-send registers.
- Children who are late for an assembly should visit the Attendance Officer to record their attendance and then report to the appropriate Key Stage office to discuss the reasons for their lateness. If the reason given is not satisfactory then children will return for a break detention.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected; however, parents have been successfully prosecuted for failing to get their child to school consistently on time. Therefore we will take a robust response to those who are regularly arriving late.

N.B. If for any reason you are unable to take an electronic register, a paper register must be taken and given to the Attendance Officer. Remember to record details of the group, time, etc.

Attendance Data provided to class teachers

Class teachers have access to any child's attendance data via SIMS. In addition, summary data is provided on each set of assessments which go home termly.

Appendix 3

Attendance: roles and responsibilities

Class teacher

- Mark registers accurately;
- Practise good housekeeping - chase up absence letters for coding, pass on letters for filing;
- report attendance data to children and parents/carers during mentoring, Parents' Evenings (Learning Conversations) prepare lessons to promote attendance as part of PSHE
- input missing marks

Office Admin Support

- liaise with Class teacher regarding children who are late;
- ensure all registers are complete and follow-up where necessary;
- ensure codes are recorded accurately (**see Appendix 2**);
- first day contact pupils checked and telephoned where necessary;
- contact all children on first day of absence;
- liaise with EWO¹ and monitor those children giving cause for concern.

Pupil Support Staff - Overview of whole Key Stage

- Liaise with:
- **Daily** - Attendance Officer, to investigate any immediate causes for concern; **Weekly, with EWO:**
- to discuss cause for concern cases and general attendance issues, high PA² and FSM³ focus;
- to analyse weekly and termly attendance data;
- and Head of School/Year to ensure appropriate level of response to attendance concerns;
- and Head of School/Year in order to ensure all meetings take place in an efficient manner.

¹ EWO – Education Welfare Officer

² PA – Persistent Absence

³ FSM – Free School Meals

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

- Prepare, analyse and bring relevant data school meetings;
- follow escalation process with children and families giving cause for concern (see procedures and practice policy); □ set targets for those children whose attendance is 90% and below;
- liaise with school staff and discuss with Headteacher when absences persist and surgery and letter 1 has not had the desired impact (attendance is below 85% over previous 6 weeks);
- prepare half-termly report summarising individual cases, level(s) of intervention and impact for Headteacher;
- prepare case studies on 3 individual cases (including PA and Free School Meals) on a termly basis.

Assistant Headteacher

- Meet EWO regularly (minimum twice per half term) to discuss individual cases and overview of attendance data;
- collate summary cumulative %/sessions missed (high PA) and individual attendance data;
- analyse data to identify trends, areas of improvement and areas needing improvement;
- investigate strategies to improve attendance of children at the School;
- liaise with EWO and teams regarding individual cases and trends in sub-groups (15% & 20% PA, FSM, gender, year group);
- report impact of strategies to SLT and Governing body.

Appendix 4

EWO and Attendance: procedure and practice

1. Early Intervention:

EWO will identify children whose attendance is 90% or below. Intervention will be agreed with the school and class teachers before any action is taken in order to take into account any mitigating circumstances.

The meeting will be followed-up with a letter from EWO plus attendance leaflet.

2. If attendance does not improve? Letter 1.

Attendance must be under 85% over the previous 6 week period, not an average of the school academic year.

Monitoring and identification of student is conducted by EWO, action agreed in conjunction with pastoral team.

Parents contacted to discuss reasons for continued poor attendance (by phone or meeting if appropriate).

Letter 1 sent by EWO which indicates that the next stage will involve Senior EWO

Any further absences are unauthorised unless a medical note is provided.

3. If no further improvement.

EWO to contact school link for following action:

- Letter informing parents/carer inviting them to a formal 'Parenting Contract Meeting' where a clear 90% target is given over a 6 week period.
- School to host meeting with EWO in attendance.

4. Still no further improvement

School to continue with PACE interview where a formal caution is given, followed by court proceedings if necessary.