

# Castle Primary School ATTENDANCE POLICY

REVIEW DATE: September 2024

## **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.
- Ensure that 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/ Guardians and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, the reason should never be covered up nor should Parents/Carers 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/Carer.**

- 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/Carer or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.
- Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, showing whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or absent.
- If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent each half-day of absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only schools can authorise the absence not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required preferably in writing and on the day of absence.

Any **AUTHORISED** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as 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/Carers 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 (after 9.05 a.m.) to get a mark.**
- **Instances where attendance is continuing to fall.**

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 Education Authority.

## **PROCEDURES**

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

- Information on attendance and how to report an absence is given to Parents/Carers at the beginning of each school year and to all in year starters.
- Parents are required to telephone and inform school on the morning of the first day of Absence (by 9.05 a.m.) and on each day thereafter.
- If Castle Primary has received no contact by 9.05 a.m. we will telephone Parents/Carers 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/Carers are responsible for ensuring that the school office has a minimum of two emergency contact numbers with which any unexpected/unexplained absence can be checked.
- A procedure exists in school for recording reasons for absence.
- The School Office will inform staff of all notifications of absence.
- A file is kept to record details of children who have to go home during the course of the day.
- Parents and Carers should inform the school office concerning any medical or dental appointments or absence for religious observances that need to be held during school time.
- Pupils arriving after the close of registration (9.05.a.m.) will receive a **Late Mark**. This counts as an **unauthorised** absence.

- Regular late arrival at school, which has not been resolved satisfactorily, will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. It is important that the school office or Head Teacher are made aware of any mitigating circumstances, as soon as possible.
- Parents/carers of children whose attendance falls below 90% will receive a letter stating that school has a concern over the child's attendance. Parents/carers will be required to provide medical evidence if their child is absent from school due to illness on every occasion until the child's attendance rises. If no evidence is received the absence will be marked as unauthorised even if an absence message has been received.
- If any child has 10 unauthorised absences then the EWO will be informed.
- In appropriate circumstances, entering into Parenting Contracts and issuing Penalty Notices will be considered.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED**

### **Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time**

From 1 January 2018 **any** period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. Your Head Teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your Head Teacher to the local authority.

### **Penalty Notice for persistent absence or lateness**

A Penalty Notice Warning can be issued where a pupil has 10 unauthorised or late marks. They do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

### **Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness**

If your child has had **10** unauthorised absences or is late **10 times** over a **twelve week period**, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or lateness
- 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.

## **HOLIDAYS**

Castle Primary School will not authorise any absences for holidays, family outings etc except those which meet the **Exceptional Circumstances**.

Where parents fail to comply with procedure contained within this policy a Penalty Notice may be considered.

**The Head Teacher is responsible for the operational management of the policy. Class Teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and are supported by the Office Clerk.**

- If there is concern about a child's absence Class Teachers or Teaching Assistants 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 Head Teacher by the Class Teacher or Office Clerk who will contact the Parents or Carers.
- The Head Teacher, with the Office Clerk, will analyse the 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 pupil's attendance level falls below 90% 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/Carer 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 are in school time.

### **Information about individual school targets**

Our Office Manager will contact Parents/Carers 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 (these are recorded electronically through the schools' Management Information System).

The school sets attendance targets each year. The Head Teacher 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.

**Our school target for attendance for 2022/23 is 97%.**

## **REWARDS FOR GOOD ATTENDANCE**

All children who have 100 per cent attendance for the WHOLE academic year will be recognised and awarded at our whole school presentation evening.

Each half term pupils with 100% attendance will be presented with a certificate and a small reward. At the end of each term the pupils with 100% for that WHOLE term will receive a badge in recognition of their achievement and another small reward. This will continue for each of the three terms in the school year.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Office Clerk  
Head Teacher

Mrs J Walker  
Miss J Mason

## **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 regularly and on time. All school staff are committed to working with parents to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **RECORDS OF CHILDREN'S ABSENCES**

- **LETTERS FROM PARENTS**

Letters giving reasons for absences should be dated and kept inside each Year group's folder of the Class Notes file in the main office.

- **TELEPHONE MESSAGES**

Messages given by someone calling into school etc, should be recorded by teachers on a sheet of paper and kept inside each Year group's folder of the Class Notes file in the main office.

- **CHILDREN GOING HOME DURING THE DAY**

A file is kept to record details of children who have to go home during the course of the day.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEWING**

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance. They will request an annual report from the Head Teacher and also receive an update each term through the Head Teacher'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 meeting the appropriate figures.