



COUNTESS
GYTHA
PRIMARY
SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date Adopted: March 2018
Frequency of Review: Three Yearly
Next Review Date: March 2021
Signed _____
on behalf of the Governing Body

INTRODUCTION

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school's Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

There is a clear link between pupils' achievement and their level of attendance at school. The governors and staff, alongside the Local Authority, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular attendance. We want all pupils to achieve the very best they can and for this they need to be in school regularly.

To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

The School will provide the attendance record of each child at parent consultation meetings during the year and provide a Certification of Registration for the school academic year with each child's annual report.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

EXPECTATIONS

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential, pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. This is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. *DfE Advice on school attendance (updated November 2016)*.

The Government expects schools and local authorities to:-

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent lateness;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Support parents in performing their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- Encourage all members of the school community to be punctual.
- Meet for at least 380 sessions of 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils.

The School expects pupils to:-

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.

The School expects parents and carers to:-

- Ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Ensure they contact school by 9:00 am on the first day of absence whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- Contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.

The School will ensure:-

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend without providing good reason – parents will be telephoned by the School office by 9.30am.
- Immediate action is taken on any problem notified to us.
- All staff members contribute to improving and maintaining attendance and to take ownership of attendance as a whole school responsibility in a positive manner.
- Regular monitoring of attendance by the Headteacher.
- A referral of specific issues to supporting agencies where appropriate.
- Every appropriate opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

1. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). The registration codes are available on www.gov.uk as approved by the Government.
2. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Lateness

At Countess Gytha, we also take lateness very seriously. Persistent lateness can become a problem, as vital information with regards to school work is usually given out at the beginning of lessons. Students arriving late can miss this which may have a negative effect on attainment. We do have a legal obligation to close the register after the first 30 minutes of morning and afternoon sessions (9.30am and 1.30pm).

- If a child arrives before the register closes (between 9am and 9.30) they will be marked as 'Late' (L) in the register.
- If a child arrives after 9.30am the register will be marked with a 'Late after register closed' (U).
- The school actively encourages punctuality and is alert to patterns of late arrival.
- Parents will be written to where punctuality is a concern and reminded of their parental responsibility and the potential damage caused by lateness. Such letter will require a response from parents to explain the reasons for lateness. Parental responsibility for lateness will be stressed in the majority of cases.
- If a pupil is late due to exceptional circumstances, no action will be taken. If a pupil is frequently late with the same or similar explanation, school will speak to parents to identify any issues that are causing the pupil to arrive late at school. If the pupil still arrives late, the school may decide not to authorise the late arrival and enter an unauthorised late mark 'U'.
- In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep the register open for a longer period.

When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. Notification to the school of these appointments should be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL PROCEDURE

First Day Absence

1. Parents/carers must contact the school on the first day of any absence by 9:00 am either by telephone (using our absence child voicemail service), by email or in person, explaining the reason for absence and the likely day of return.
2. If there has been no contact by the parent/carer by 9.30am, the school will telephone the first named contact on the child's registration form. Failed attempts to speak to a parent/carer will be recorded.

Third Day Absence

1. If a child is absent for a third consecutive day, parents/carers must telephone the school and provide information on the child's anticipated return.
2. If there has been no contact by the parent/carer, the school will telephone the first named contact on the child's registration form. Other named contacts will be telephoned if the first named contact is unavailable. Failed attempts will be recorded.

Continuing Absence

If there has been no contact by the parent/carer by the start of the fifth day, a letter will be sent to the parent/carer requesting an explanation for their child's absence.

Pupil Missing

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation after 10 consecutive school days and the school are unable to contact the family, must be referred to the Children Missing in Education Team or the police to conduct a home visit.

Absence Notes

Absence notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of the School Office to be aware of and bring attention to the Headteacher, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parent/s. The Headteacher or SENCO will liaise with the Education Welfare Officer to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring, parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward.

PENALTY NOTICES AND LEGAL ACTION

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:-

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-

- 1. To his age, ability and aptitude and*
- 2. To any special needs he may have*

either by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise".

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part VI Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/444>

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the County Attendance Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues. All PA cases will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions.

Compliance with Somerset County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, issued on 30.08.2013

There is a Local Authority appointed Welfare Officer for the school whose contact details are available from the school office.

Parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their child and the Authority will take appropriate legal action in response to cases of poor attendance. This may include us as a school requesting:-

- Education Attendance Referral
- Fixed Penalty Notice (£60.00 fine per child per parent or carer)
- Court Action for failure to secure regular school attendance.

Penalties may be requested and served to each parent/carer per child:

- where the pupil's absence, perhaps within a rolling academic year, has not been authorised by the school.
- where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. (The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies)
- where term-time leave of absence has not been authorised (authorised leave of absence to take family holidays can only be granted by the school in exceptional circumstances).

PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards targets will be established and the Headteacher will be responsible for overseeing this work.

Our school's target for this academic year is: **96%**

A Welcome Back

It is important that if arriving late to school or on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

Promoting Attendance

There will be a range of ways in which the school will promote attendance in a sensitive and inclusive manner. For example, the school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

Leave of Absence

As of 1st September 2013, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

REGISTER AND ADMISSION ROLL KEEPING

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1751/introduction/made>

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories: -

1. Unauthorised Absence;
2. Authorised Absence;
3. Medical;
4. Approved Educational Activity.

1. Unauthorised Absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason.

2. Authorised Absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/regulation/6/made>

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include: -

- Field trips and educational visits;
- Sporting activities;
- Link courses or approved education off site;
- Most types of dual registration.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.