



Name of Policy	Attendance Policy (includes term time leave of absence)
Date last reviewed	December 2019
Date to be reviewed	December 2021
Governor Committee	Standards
Key Member of staff	Headteacher
Statutory	No

1 Introduction

1.1 We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

1.3 Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Authority prosecuting the parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent could be fined up to £2500, and/or sentenced to three months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a fixed penalty fine of £50.

1.4 The School Attendance Regulations 2006 have been amended with effect from 1st September 2013 changing the rules about term-time holidays. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be “exceptional circumstances”. (see 4.0 for further points)

2 Definitions

2.1 Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian, for example if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

2.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. These absences will affect the child's overall attendance record which is monitored by the Education Welfare Service and remains on their school file.

2.3 Lateness

School starts at 8.55am. This is the time your child must be in the classroom, so you need to ensure your child is coming through the gate by 8.50am.

It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are either used for starter tasks, to give out instructions or organise school work for the rest of the day. If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.

Parents who arrive at school after the gates are closed must bring their child in through the office entrance giving a reason for the lateness. The child will be marked as 'L' (late) in the register.

3 When a child is absent.

3.1 When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, using the appropriate code, or, if the reason has not yet been established, recording 'N'. At 9.30 am each morning, office staff will check the class registers and begin contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent but whose absence has not been reported by a parent/carer. Calls to parents/carers will be made by 11 am.

3.2 On the first day of a child's absence, parents are asked to contact the office before 9.30 a.m. to give the reason for the absence and to contact the office as early as possible on each subsequent day of absence.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments should be made out of school hours. In emergencies where this is not possible, the child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. If a child has a medical or other necessary appointment, which cannot be taken out of school hours, parents should contact the office prior to the day of absence. If a child is absent due to illness for longer than 3 school days, medical evidence may be requested.

3.4 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The office staff will then be in contact as soon as possible with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child. If no contact is made with the parent/carer and there are concerns about the child's well being, a home visit may be made or contact made with outside agencies.

4 Requests for exceptional leave of absence

4.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we understand that there are circumstances where a parent may request leave of absence for a special reason. The exceptional leave request form is available on the website or from the school office. The exceptional leave request form should be completed by the parent and returned to the school office at least one week before the first day of requested absence.

4.2 Absences during term time as a result of term time holidays, interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in school. The school discourages parents from arranging holidays during term time and in line with the legal amendments made in September 2013, the Headteacher will only authorise absences for such holidays in exceptional circumstances.

4.3 Requests for exceptional leave will always be looked at on an individual basis and a decision by the Headteacher will be made based on whether it is considered to be exceptional. Taking additional leave than that which has been agreed will be marked as unauthorised. Parents do not have any right or entitlement to expect term time leave to be granted and all leave is granted at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Exceptional circumstances might include the following:

- A parent or grandparent is seriously/terminally ill and the leave proposed is likely to be the last such holiday.
- There has recently been a death or other significant trauma in the close family and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation.

- The leave requested is a unique one off, never to be repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

4.4 If the school does not agree to the exceptional leave request and you still take your child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. This absence will then be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and it may result in a Penalty Notice being issued. The 2007 penalty notices regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. These penalty notices will be enforced by the Local Authority and are as follows:

- Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 21 days
- Parents must pay £120 if they take between 22 and 28 days to pay

Further details are available on the link below.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/term-time-holidays/>

4.5 The school will not grant leave if:

A child's attendance record over the previous 20 week period is less than 95% - even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable causes such as illness;

The period of leave coincides with the start of term, or is near to or coincides with tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

5 Attendance monitoring

5.1 Duxford (C of E) Community Primary school monitors attendance carefully and considers the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting their own priorities for the coming year.

5.2 Through newsletters and by personal contact, parents are reminded about their responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly.

5.3 Parents will be encouraged to understand the full implications for both their children's academic progress and their social groupings when they miss school.

5.4 County Letter System

The school will monitor attendance regularly and produce attendance reports twice per year. If at any point parents wish to discuss their child's attendance or find out more, they can contact the school office or come and speak to the headteacher. If absence drops below the threshold of 96% at the point of analysis, a letter will be sent from the school explaining that there is a concern about the child's attendance. Evidence will be required for time off for illness if this is a factor in the low percentage and marks on the register will be updated accordingly.

Should absence drop to 94%, a second letter will be sent.

Support will be offered and the school will try to help parents find a way to tackle any reason for absence such as difficulty in getting their child to school or medical conditions. If there is no improvement or absence continues to persist a meeting will take place between school to resolve the problems as quickly as possible.

If, after a meeting, there continues to be deterioration and attendance drops to 89% over more than an 8 week period with unauthorised sessions; or (without a meeting/series of letters) there is continuous unauthorised absence amounting to at least 6 continuous sessions missed (3 days) over an eight week period or 8 sessions missed (4 days) over a longer period, the matter is likely to be referred to an Attendance Officer who may make the decision to fine or prosecute.

This is classified as persistent absence. This is a very serious consequence that County are insisting upon for persistent absence. The penalty will be £60 (per parent, per pupil) if paid within the 21 days or £120 (per parent, per pupil) if paid within 28 days; should the Penalty Notice remain unpaid or have been paid only in part at the end of the 28 day period, Cambridgeshire County Council will prosecute the parents for the offence to which the notice relates (there is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice). The school makes no financial gains from making a referral.

5.5 More Information

We truly believe that children who are at school the most have the most capacity to learn and we also find that children who are off school, even short term, cause disruption to learning which we are keen to avoid. Parents are encouraged to follow the link below for more information:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/>

6 Monitoring and review

6.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. 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 as high as they should be. The responsibility to authorise or requests for absence has been delegated to the headteacher. Letters are sent to all parents who request absence and the seriousness of unauthorised absence is clearly explained.