



Sutton in Craven C of E (VC) Primary School

Attendance & Holidays in Term Time Policy

Date Adopted: October 2017
Next Review: September 2018
Reviewed yearly by the Improvement Committee.

Rationale

This document sets out the rights, roles and responsibilities for Parents and Carers, Pupils, School Staff and Governors; and the systems and procedures in place to identify how the school will deliver its aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance. It will be reviewed annually.

The aim of this policy is also to minimise the amount of time lost to term-time holidays in order to maximise the educational potential of every child. This can be achieved with the support of parents/carers by ensuring holidays in term time are not taken in school time unless there is exceptional circumstances. Absence for any reason during term time interrupts a child's education and disrupts educational progress.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Sutton in Craven C of E Primary believes that it is important that Parents and Carers, Pupils, School Staff and Governors all work in partnership to encourage good attendance for all pupils. The following is a summary of the rights, roles and responsibilities for individual groups of stakeholders.

Parents and Carers

- Ensure the child(ren) in their care attend school regularly and punctually.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent to inform the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent for more than 1 day, to inform the school office of the continued absence and update as to the reason for the absence regularly.
- To avoid leave of absence in term time wherever possible. Where this is not thought possible, to write to the school as soon as possible prior to the first requested day of absence to request authorisation.
- To advise the school, by contacting the school office, immediately if they become aware of problems with attendance.

Pupils

- Attend school regularly and punctually.

School Staff

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate.

The Headteacher is also responsible for liaison with individual families and the Local Authority Behaviour and Attendance Service to ensure appropriate support is given where attendance concerns are identified and for liaison with the Local Authority and DFE to ensure that the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.

However, Sutton in Craven C of E Primary believes that all staff have responsibilities and a role to play in promoting good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere for children.
- Providing a safe learning environment.
- Ensuring an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns.
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance.
- Being aware of the role all staff can play in ensuring attendance is seen as important for all pupils.
- Adherence to the systems and procedures in place within school to promote good attendance and highlighting any concerns to the Headteacher.

- Participation in training regarding school systems and procedures.
- Willingness to communicate with children and parents about attendance.

Some staff will have specific individual responsibilities to support the attendance policy and these are outlined in the Procedures section of this framework.

Governors

- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it annually.
- Agree statutory targets for attendance at Sutton in Craven C of E Primary School.
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance.
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance.
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively.

Procedures for registration

- Morning Registration is between 08.50am and 9.00am
- Afternoon Registration is between 1.00pm and 1.05pm
- Each class teacher is responsible for marking children present in the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed by 9.00am and 1.05pm to avoid discrepancies between classes.
- The class teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence, is returned to the school office by 9.10am/1.15pm.
- The school office is responsible for in putting absence codes following contact from a parent.

Late Registration

- School doors are locked at 09.00am and 1.00pm. Pupils requiring admittance to the school after these times must inform the school administrator in the school office.
- If the school office does not hear from parents, reporting a child's absence by 9:30am then the school will contact them to establish the reason for the absence.
- The school office is responsible for maintaining a signing in/out book. This must contain details of name, class, time admitted/time released, reason for lateness/absence and supervising adult (for signing out). After 9.00am/1.15pm an entry must be placed in the signing in book before a late pupil is admitted.
- The attendance registers are closed at 9.25am. This means that any pupil who arrives after the registration period (8.50 to 9.00am) but before the registers are closed will be given a late mark (L) in the register. This code is classed as a present mark, but displays that the pupil arrived late for school.
- Any pupil who arrives after the registers have closed but before the end of the morning session will be given a "late after registers closed" mark (U) in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session. The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling; putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including consideration of the use of legal sanctions, in just the same way.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

In every instance it is the Headteacher who determines whether an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. This decision is made based on information provided by parents/carers. However, because the register is a legal document, the Headteacher has responsibility to ensure that it is completed accurately and in accordance with current guidance. For this reason it is not sufficient for an absence to be recorded as authorised based entirely on information provided by parents/carers.

- For extended medical absence school may request confirmation from a healthcare professional to confirm the child's medical condition and reasons for absence.
- For Religious Festival Parents / Carers must request the absence required in advance in writing. Failure to do so will result in a religious festival absence not being authorised.

The school office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

- Parents/Carers are requested to contact the school office before 9.00am on the first day of absence advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date; if known.
- Where the absence is for several days, the Parent/Carer is responsible for informing the school office of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis.

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence. If contact cannot be made the Headteacher should be informed and, in the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Headteacher will determine whether the Local Authority Attendance Team should be advised.

The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register after 9:10am. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not they should seek advice from the Headteacher.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to the class teacher or Headteacher in order to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

An application for pupil leave of absence should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and preferably at least 6 weeks before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right. The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school taking into account any factors present by the family.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

Please note: Head teachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional.

This is not an exhaustive list and Head teachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Where a Head teacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Head teacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term time without the permission of the school risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing the application parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

- Parents may be required to attend an interview to discuss their request for a term time holiday.
- Parent/carers will be notified in writing of the decision for a holiday in term time within 10 school days of receipt of the application.
- If the school does not agree to grant the leave for the holiday and the parents/carers take their child on holiday then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence 'G' (family holiday not agreed)

- Should the child fail to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date and there is no communication from parents/carers the school may remove the child from the school roll.
- Where a child is taken out of school for the purpose of leave of absence in term time without the permission of the school, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and as such may result in a Penalty Notice. Penalties are applied by the Local Authority and as such are not at the discretion of the Headteacher. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, the matter may be taken to prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Amendments to 2007 Penalty Notice regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1st September 2013, pay £60 per parent within 21 days or £120 per parent within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices in line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecution if the fine is not paid.

The Education Social Welfare Officer

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to The Education Social Welfare Officer. They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the Pupil Attendance threshold, will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed.

Use of Penalty Notices

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil and the Education Social Welfare Officer as appropriate. Furthermore, Sutton in Craven C of E Primary may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes leave of absence (holidays) which are taken without a prior request being made; and those taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the holiday been taken regardless of this advice. Sutton in Craven C of E Primary may also request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason.

The amount payable for a fixed penalty notice is £120 per parent per child reducing to £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days. If the penalty notice is not paid in full by 28 days then the authority will commence legal proceedings for the original offence of 'failing to ensure your child attends school regularly' under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Signing Out Medical Appointments

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted authorised absence for an appointment in school time.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member (normally to be authorised in writing by the legal guardian of the child). When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the school office is responsible for ensuring that they complete and sign the school signing out book.

Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning

The Governors have determined that the Headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring, analysis and action planning of school attendance. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the Local Authority and DFE within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers who take the register and highlight causes for concern and the school office who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The Headteacher is required to review this Attendance Policy annually and to report on attendance matters to the Governors at Full Governing Body and/or Improvement committee meetings. The Governors will also review the Attendance Policy at least annually to ensure that it continues to meet the school circumstances.

Sutton in Craven C of E Primary also uses whole school incentive and reward schemes in order to raise the profile of attendance and promote good levels of attendance. These schemes will be reviewed and changed regularly in order to ensure that children remain interested and motivated.

Referral to the Education Social Welfare Officer

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring consistent referral of regular or unjustified absence. The criteria for referral are outlined in the systems below.

In addition to the above, the Headteacher is required to discuss general attendance matters with the Education Social Welfare Officer at least twice a year. The purpose of these discussions is to:

- Monitor progress towards targets, highlighting any concerns and identifying any action required.
- To receive guidance on latest best practice.
- To receive information about local and national trends and benchmarking.
- To discuss whether current attendance policy and procedures are effective.

School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence

- The school office is responsible for advising the Headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise.
- The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Headteacher as issues arise.
- In addition to this the Headteacher will use electronic systems to monitor the attendance of individual pupils at least once every half term.

Once concerns have been raised:

- The Headteacher will discuss the matter informally with the family (including the pupil).
- The Headteacher will send letters regarding attendance issues to parents of all pupils whose attendance raised a concern. This will be done on a termly basis.
- If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to provoke the required level of improvement, the Headteacher will contact the Education Social Welfare Officer who will arrange meetings with the family and Headteacher as appropriate and determine whether any interventions are required. These interventions will include consideration of the use of legal sanctions.

School System for reintegrating pupils who have had long term absence

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the Headteacher, class teacher, SENCO (if appropriate) and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

Communication of Attendance Policy and Procedure It is important that the School's Policy on Attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The Governors have determined that:

- Reference to the School Attendance Policy re Holidays during term time and absence is to be made clear and the policy can be easily accessible via the school's website.
- Staff responsibilities will be contained in the Staff Handbook
- The Headteacher will ensure that staff receive training regarding their responsibilities re the Attendance Policy and Procedures.
- The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern as an agenda item on each Headteacher's report to the Full Governing Body.