

# Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances

## THE HUB SCHOOL



EAST RIDING  
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

**Policy Owner:** East Riding of Yorkshire Council

**Approved by:** Governors/Headteacher

**Date:** Autumn 2013

**First Adopted:** 2013

**Next review due by:** Responsibility of the Local Authority

## **Absences from School for Exceptional Circumstances Policy**

### **Background**

Schools are required to provide education for 190 days a year and it is expected that children who are registered at a school will attend for this time. Parents do not have an automatic right for their children to have time off school and any requests for absence are entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Research shows that children do not achieve as well in their education and in public examinations the more school absence they have, for example a child absent from school for a period of two weeks each year, for exceptional circumstances and with the average absence for illness may miss the equivalent of one whole year's education over their school life.

### **General Principles**

The following general principles underpin this policy:

- (i) The principles of honesty, openness, transparency and the spirit of co-operation underpin the policy.
- (ii) All schools within the East Riding that have adopted this policy agree to follow it through to penalty notice if appropriate. This will ensure that the policy is applied in a consistent manner and provides equity for all parents and schools.
- (iii) Support of this policy from the local authority will be as a partner in both the primary and secondary behaviour and attendance partnerships. The achievement and inclusion services of the Council will ensure other local authority departments are aware of and include the philosophy of this policy in their practice.
- (iv) Where a request for absence form is not submitted, absences cannot be authorised retrospectively; this is prescribed in law and in these circumstances the penalty notice code of conduct must be followed.
- (v) Data from each individual school in relation to requests for absence will be monitored by the local authority and shared with schools and the partnerships. This will allow the partnerships to assess the impact of this policy.
- (vi) The behaviour and attendance partnerships will review this policy annually or in line with any legislative changes.

### **Policy**

In order for consideration to be given, requests for absence must be for exceptional circumstances only. The primary and secondary behaviour and attendance partnerships and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council agree to follow the law, in such that the provision for Headteachers to authorise absence purely for the purpose of a family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance. Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.

4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. To attend and participate in an approved sporting event or performance.
6. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 5 above, the parent/carer must write to the Principal Education Welfare Officer. This officer will decide whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and advise the school accordingly.

Evidence would be required in each case.

**If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:**

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- 2) Year six transition day (for pupils in year six).
- 3) Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six).
- 4) Year nine options time (for pupils in year nine).
- 5) At any time during years 10 & 11 (for all pupils in these year groups).
- 6) At any time specified by the school (this will be communicated to parents by each school).

Consistency across our large geographical area is vital for parental confidence. If a Headteacher has any doubts their thoughts can be discussed with the principal education welfare officer for advice and guidance prior to informing parents of their final decision. Headteachers would be well advised to keep a log of their decision making rationale.

### **Looked After Children**

This policy applies to all children, including those who are Looked After Children. The Headteacher will only approve an absence for a Looked After Child in accordance with Children, Family & Adult Services guidance. The only person who can request an absence for an East Riding Looked After Child is the area manager. Requests from foster carers and social workers should not be considered.

Headteachers should, in the cases of a child placed in an East Riding school who is a Looked After Child from another local authority, consult with the child's social worker. The social worker will enquire from that local authority what agreements or exemptions their policy on exceptional circumstances contains.

## **Absences from School for Exceptional Circumstances Procedures**

The school will retain a supply of 'Absence from School Request Forms' and give to parents, together with the Information for Parents, as required. The policy, information on absence from school and request forms will also be available on the Council's website.

Parents must return the absence request form, together with any supporting documents, in reasonable time prior to the planned absence, to the school. If an absence is required at short notice the parent must make every effort to contact the Headteacher, or most senior member of school staff available, to discuss the planned absence.

Where children are absent from school without a prior request being made to the Headteacher the absence when it occurs cannot be authorised. The law now clearly states that no absence shall be retrospectively authorised.

If siblings or other children living in the same household (of compulsory school age) are known and identified on the 'Absence from School Request Form' and attend an East Riding of Yorkshire school, the Headteachers from both schools must reach a joint decision regarding the parent's request, preferably within five school days of receiving the absence request form. This will ensure a consistent approach across the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The Headteacher will decide if the request should be authorised or unauthorised using the 'Absence from School Decision Making Flowchart' and the principles within the absence from school for exceptional circumstances policy.

### **Absence from School Request Forms**

The parent wishing to remove the child from school should be the parent who completes the 'Absence from School Request Form'. Any disagreement between estranged parents should be resolved prior to submitting the request.

### **Authorised Absence Requests**

The Headteacher will write to the parent who has made the request, informing them of the decision, the date of the child's last school day before the absence and the date the school expect the child to return to school. Within the letter it will be clear how the absence will be marked on the child's attendance certificate. A copy of the letter should be sent to any parent who does not have day to day care and responsibility of the child but does have parental responsibility. A copy of both letters will be placed on the child's school file.

### **Unauthorised Absence Requests**

The Headteacher will write to the parent who has made the request, informing them of the reason why this decision was made. The letter will clearly highlight that if the parent decides to go ahead with the absence it will be unauthorised and a penalty notice, per child, may be issued to each parent with day to day care and responsibility. The letter should also mention both the number of days and sessions the absence is for. A copy of the letter should be sent to any parent who does not have day to day care and responsibility of the child but does have parental responsibility. A copy of both letters will be placed on the child's school file.

### **Actions Following Return from the Requested Absence**

The school may take reasonable steps to ensure that the child catches up with missed work where appropriate.

## **Delayed Return Following Authorised Absence**

If the child does not return to school on the agreed date following their absence, the school will investigate this considering the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Children Missing Education Policy. It is important to follow this policy to safeguard children, for example from a forced marriage.

If a child returns to school later than the agreed date and the parent claims their return was unavoidably delayed, this absence must be investigated and the most appropriate code used. Advice on this can be sought from the Education Welfare Service.

## **Penalty Notice Referral Due To Unauthorised Absence from School**

Once the unauthorised absence has been taken and the child has returned, the school may complete a penalty notice referral form and email it to [education.welfare@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:education.welfare@eastriding.gov.uk), together with a copy of the 'Absence from School Request Form', the letter sent by the Headteacher to the parent and a copy of the child's up to date attendance record. During an academic year two penalty notices can be issued to any one parent with respect to each child.

If procedures have been followed correctly and the case meets the penalty notice criteria the education welfare service will issue a penalty notice.

## **Parent Pays Penalty Notice**

The case is closed and the period of time that the parent received the penalty notice for cannot be used in any further proceedings.

## **Parent Does Not Pay Penalty Notice**

If after 28 days the penalty notice remains unpaid, the education welfare service will liaise with the local authority Legal Services for consideration of it being dealt with in the Magistrates' Court. The school will be required to provide a Headteacher's certificate. The education welfare service will keep the school informed of the proceedings upon request.

## **Publicity and Awareness Raising**

The local authority will publicise the cross phase agreement to parents through the media and the publication of leaflets.

The school may produce leaflets and include information in newsletters etc, as agreed by the partnership.

## Useful Documents and Contacts

### Useful sites - National

Keeping Pupil registers 'Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations (2008)'

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/b0010008/pupilregistration-regulations-and-guidance>

Absence and Attendance Codes 'Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities' (January 2009)

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/doc/a/aaac/absence%20and%20attendance%20codes.doc>  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance?page=1>

**Useful sites – East Riding** – the following links can also be found on the Intranet

Children Missing Education Policy Schools intranet:

<http://unixinet/schools/> follow the LL admin tab, the document can be found in the Education Welfare Service Folder Council intranet:

[http://unixinet.eastriding.gov.uk/pls/intranet/docs/FOLDER/ROOTFOLDER/DIRECTORATES2005/CFAS/INCLUSION\\_SERVICES/ELLRESOURCES/ELL\\_EDUCATION\\_WELFARE\\_SERVICE/CME+PROCEDURES+%26+GUIDANCE+2008.DOC](http://unixinet.eastriding.gov.uk/pls/intranet/docs/FOLDER/ROOTFOLDER/DIRECTORATES2005/CFAS/INCLUSION_SERVICES/ELLRESOURCES/ELL_EDUCATION_WELFARE_SERVICE/CME+PROCEDURES+%26+GUIDANCE+2008.DOC)

Term Time Holiday Request Form & Information for Parents (Appendix 1) <http://www.eriding.gov.uk>

Term Time Holiday Decision Making Flowchart (Appendix 2) <http://www.eriding.gov.uk>

EWS Penalty Notice Referral Form (Appendix 3)

<http://www.eriding.gov.uk>

Looked After Children & Term Time Holidays – Advice to Headteachers (Appendix 4)

<http://www.eriding.gov.uk>

### Contacts

Education Welfare Service

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Beverley

East Riding of Yorkshire

HU17 9BA

education.welfare@eastriding.gov.uk

(01482) 392146

DCSF school attendance team [school.attendance@dscf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.attendance@dscf.gsi.gov.uk)