



Community First Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Community First Academy Trust
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ADOPTED AT THE MEETING OF THE LOCAL ACADEMY BOARD

CHAIR OF BOARD: Mr M Farrell

Date: September 2019

Planned Review Date: September 2020

Attendance Policy

1. Rationale

- 1.1 The Local Advisory Board and Staff at our school seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her potential.
- 1.2 Our school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, where all our pupils feel wanted and secure.
- 1.3 We will work with pupils and their families/carers to ensure that each pupil attends school regularly and punctually by:
 - Reminding parents/carers regularly of their responsibility in ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.
 - Making parents/carers aware of the impact of poor attendance on academic progress. Attendance of less than 85% (i.e. 8.5 days lost for a 190 school day academic year) is known to compromise pupil attainment.
- 1.4 Local Advisory Board representatives are legally bound to set an attendance rate target each year and the school will work hard to achieve that challenging result so that our pupils have the maximum opportunity to fulfil their potential.

2. The partnership between parents/carers and school

- 2.1 Parents/carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive full time education and so are primarily responsible for ensuring their children attend and stay at school.
- 2.2 It is the responsibility of the school to support good attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.
- 2.3 Our home-school agreement reflects our understanding that regular and punctual attendance is essential for maximum pupil progress to be attained.
- 2.4 Parents/carers have the opportunity to discuss any difficulties related to attendance with the Pastoral Support team, Class Teachers and the Senior leadership team.
- 2.5 Parents/carers are also responsible for ensuring that their child arrives at school by 8.50am, properly attired and ready to learn.
- 2.6 Parents/carers must see themselves as partners with the school in the education of their children. This means encouraging a respect for education and those who deliver it.

3. Informing parents/carers

- 3.1 Our school prospectus contains information regarding the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- 3.2 Our Home-School Agreement reinforces the importance of regular attendance and that this is shared responsibility of school, home and where appropriate the child.
- 3.3 Newsletters, information sheets and "Red, Amber, Green" letters are sent out on a regular basis to remind parents/carers of their responsibilities and the impact of poor attendance.
 - a) Green = 96.5% or above
 - b) Amber = 95% - 96.4%
 - c) Red = 94.9% or less

3.4 Parents/carers are informed of the common procedures followed by the school and the Local Authority relating to requests for absence other than sickness in term time. Research suggests that children taken out of school may never catch up with the learning they have missed and this may affect test results and can be particularly harmful in the run up to end of year examinations. Children who struggle with English and Maths may find it even harder to cope on their return. Younger children may find it more difficult to renew friendships with classmates.

4. The importance of registration

4.1 Attendance is recorded in both hard copy and electronically using the ARBOR system. Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.55am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence. In cases where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment for example, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

4.2 School acknowledges punctuality as the responsibility of the parent/carer. Punctuality is essential to ensure that the start of the teaching day is uninterrupted and that there is optimum teaching and learning time for all pupils. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of others.

4.3 Electronic registration facilitates the easy analysis of attendance data, highlighting patterns of lateness or absence which would be reported to parents/carers if necessary.

4.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS/CARERS CONTACTING SCHOOL WITH THE REASON FOR ABSENCE CANNOT BE EMPHASISED ENOUGH. WE NEED TO ASCERTAIN THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO THE CHILD AT HOME OR ON HIS/HER WAY TO SCHOOL AND THAT THEY ARE SAFE.

4.5 Where a pupil has not arrived in school at the close of register, and parents/carers have not contacted school as to the reason for this absence, then school will follow the protocol below...

1. Text / telephone parent/carer to ascertain the reason for non-attendance as soon as is practicably possible after close of register. A visit to the home may be considered.
2. If no contact has been made by afternoon registration, a follow up text will be sent and attempts to telephone will be made, including calling other people on the pupil's contact list.
3. If the pupil does not attend on the second day, and no message has been received from parents/guardians, following morning registration a follow up telephone call will be made. If we are unable to make contact at this point a visit will be made to the home address to attempt to speak to parents. Should no contact be made, a letter will be left asking parents to contact school as a matter of urgency.
4. If after afternoon registration, we have still not made contact to check on the welfare of the child then calls will be made to the local authority safeguarding team and if we feel it appropriate the police to ask them to carry out a welfare check.

5. Holidays in Term Time

5.1 Holidays in term time, or Leave of Absence, can affect a school's otherwise good attendance record by a number of percentage points in any one year.

5.2 There is a common misconception amongst many parents/carers that pupils are allowed to take ten days leave in any one academic year which equates to an absence of 2.5%. Legislation says that parents are entitled to *request* leave but that it is the school that must approve that request. At the heart of common protocol adopted by Wigan schools and reinforced by Government guidance is the presumption of not authorising requests in term

time except in “special circumstances” and only in “exceptional circumstances” for extended leave (over ten days).

- 5.3 At our school term time holidays and extended leave are not allowed as a rule and parents/carers are discouraged from arranging any holidays or absence during term time as they are not in the best interests of pupils.
- 5.4 Information for parents/carers clarifying their legal responsibilities regarding attendance and highlighting the impact of avoidable absences during term time will be made available via the school prospectus, Home-School Agreement, parents’ evenings and induction meetings.
- 5.5 Parents/carers must apply to the Head of school in good time (Local Authority defines this as 6 weeks in advance) for permission to take their children out of school during term time. Where unforeseen circumstances occur (e.g. bereavement) parents/carers are still required to contact the school to request leave of absence. Our school will operate a formal process of application and agreement. In addition, the number and frequency of absences taken for this purpose will be recorded throughout a pupil’s school career.
- 5.6 As part of the application process parents/carers will be expected to demonstrate a willingness to make arrangements that cause least disruption to their child’s learning. This might involve:
- Wrapping days of absence around existing school holiday periods to minimise time out of school.
 - Considering whether it is wholly appropriate for a child to accompany adults in some circumstances.
 - Weighing the benefits to the family against detriment to educational process.
 - Avoiding entirely periods of public examinations and National Curriculum Assessments.
- 5.7 Circumstances when an application for a term time holiday will not be granted:
- Within transition periods e.g. entry in Reception Class, transition from Primary to Secondary
 - Immediately before and during National Curriculum Assessments
 - When the pupil’s attendance record is already at or below 96.5% or will fall to below that level if the leave is granted.
 - If the pupil already has unauthorised absences in the current academic year.
- 5.8 The Head of school may, on occasion, make a judgement that there are genuine and acceptable circumstances pertaining to a particular application to take a pupil out of school in term time. The following general issues will be considered at such times:
- Age of the pupil.
 - Time of the school year.
 - Motive and purpose of the request and potential benefits to the pupil.
 - Duration and impact on continuity of learning.
 - Circumstances of the family requesting time out of school.
 - Rarity or otherwise of this event in the pupils’ career to date.
 - Overall attendance pattern.
 - Parent/carer must provide proof of unavoidable circumstances e.g. parent/carer leave is during a fixed workplace closedown or an inflexible leave allocation in the parent/carer profession.

6. Extended Leave

- 6.1 In exceptional circumstances where a parent/carer requests extended leave totalling more than 10 days per school year each case must be carefully assessed on its merits. Whilst the presumption is to discourage any leave in term time, there are circumstances in which a Head of school might consider such applications sympathetically.
- Return to a country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons.
 - Parent/carer recuperation or convalescence from serious illness or surgery.
 - Death of a parent/carer or sibling.
 - Life threatening or critical illness of a parent/carer or sibling.
- 6.2 Wherever possible return to country of origin visits should be discouraged in term time, but if unavoidable should be agreed only with firm return dates in place and a clear programme from the parents/carers demonstrating that maximum educational benefits can be derived from the experience.
- 6.3 Family emergencies also need careful consideration. School and peer friendships can provide children with stability and the reassurance of familiar routines during difficult times and upheaval at home.

7. Managing Failure to Return by an Agreed Date

- 7.1 Failure to return to school by the agreed date, without acceptable cause, will jeopardise the pupil's place at the school. A Home-School Agreement stating the agreed date of the pupil's return to school must be agreed and signed by the Head of school and parent/carer.
- 7.2 Where a pupil has been granted 10 days or more days leave and fails to return by the agreed date, a further period of 10 days is allowed for the school and Local Authority to investigate the circumstances before de-registration is considered. This 10-day period of investigation is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- 7.3 If a pupil is unavoidably detained from returning from school by the agreed date the parent/carer must endeavour to contact school and request an additional period of leave. Such cases will be considered on an individual basis.

8. Pupils Taking Holidays/Extended Leave without Permission

- 8.1 Where a parent/carer takes a pupil out of school in term time without asking for or not receiving permission, a period of unauthorised absence is immediately created.
- 8.2 The Head of school will write to the family advising them that the absence is unauthorised and that there is a risk of the child losing his/her place at the school. The school may also notify the Education Welfare Service and may consider a Penalty Notice being issued under the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- 8.3 Failure to return to school within 20 school days places the pupil at risk of losing his/her place.

9 Taking Pupils off the School Roll

- 9.1 Where a pupil fails to return by the agreed date (or where permission was not originally given) from a holiday in term time/extended leave the school will make every effort to contact the family and establish the circumstances, including visits to the registered address.
- a) Where contact cannot be made and no acceptable cause can be established and the school has followed procedures by informing the family in writing of the possible consequences of non-return, then that pupil may be taken off the school roll at the

conclusion of the 10-day investigation period, although in most cases the school will continue to liaise with the LA to establish the location of the family.

- b) The school will inform the Local Authority of the removal from roll, which will be backdated to the last actual attendance of the pupil and the LA will continue enquiries about the pupil's future schooling arrangements.
- c) The school will always work with the Local Authority in advance of a possible case of deregistration as it must be agreed that every effort to locate the pupil has failed.

9.2 Where a pupil is known to have left the area with the school's prior knowledge, but a local school has not yet been identified, we will contact the LA Children Missing Education team and liaise with them to support the identification of an appropriate school place. Once this is successful the pupil will be removed from roll and backdated to the date of actually leaving with the agreement of the LA.

10 The Enforcement Team

10.1 In the promotion of regular attendance, the school works closely with the Local Authority's enforcement Team.

10.2 Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated LA officers, Head teachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absences from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27th February 2004. A Penalty Notice may be issued in the following circumstances:

- Overt Truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Excessive holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed at 9.25am)

11. In school processes.

11.1 Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, a meeting with the class teacher, Pastoral Manager, Deputy Head or Head of School will be arranged to discuss what support can be offered. "Attendance and Punctuality Support Plans" (See appendix a) will be formulated between school and parents which will be monitored and reviewed over time.

Parents who manage to improve attendance following one of these meetings will be thanked.

11.2 If poor attendance or punctuality persists following additional interventions and support, the pastoral and ethos team will use other strategies to ensure a pupil attends school on time, e.g. phoning the parent at 8.00am, etc.

11.3 Individual pupils with good attendance (related to the target set by the LAB) will be invited to attend a reward event to be held in school each term.

11.4 For all pupils who achieve 100% for attendance at the end of the year a prize is issued and an overall winner is selected at random from this group to receive a larger prize.

11.5 Each class displays the previous week's class attendance on its external window to inform parents of the current performance of the group. It is hoped that this helps to motivate parents to adopt good attendance routines.

11.6 The class with the highest attendance each week will participate in a reward to acknowledge their achievement which takes place during the following week.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Local Advisory Board.

Signed:

Date:

