

# Stonebridge Primary School Attendance Policy 2014

## PHILOSOPHY

We expect the pupils at our school to have exemplary attendance and punctuality and we will put in place appropriate procedures to encourage this. 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 which meets their needs. We will monitor attendance and punctuality tightly, engage effectively with outside agencies and offer a range of support strategies in order to ensure our children's attendance is at least 96%.

## PRINCIPLES

### **We will ensure that:**

- ❖ Once a child is enrolled at school, parents are aware that they have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends every day, unless prevented from doing so by illness or other exceptional circumstances for which absence is authorised by the school.
- ❖ Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and **Amendment Regulations 2013** the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of the morning session and during the afternoon session. This register will also indicate whether an absence was 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

### **Definition of 'authorised absence':**

an absence is classified as authorised when the school has ascertained that 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, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Exceptional cases of religious observances or particular family circumstances may also result in an authorised absence being granted by the school.

only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, or allows a child to stay away from school to celebrate a family birthday or go on a family outing or does not provide appropriate medical certification as requested.

### **Definition of '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.

### **We will ensure that:**

- ❖ We maximise attendance so that all pupils can gain full access to our curriculum and be enabled to reach their full academic potential and achieve a high level of personal and social well-being;
- ❖ We monitor attendance very carefully to ensure that pupils are safe and that their whereabouts are known;
- ❖ Although low attendance and punctuality rates can be effected by genuine health issues and circumstances, they can also raise safeguarding concerns and as such should be viewed alongside the Safeguarding Policy of the school
- ❖ Attendance issues are given a high priority with parents and pupils in order that unauthorised absence is eliminated and overall attendance rates is increased.

# Stonebridge Primary School Attendance Policy 2014

- ❖ Attendance and Punctuality rates are monitored on a weekly basis, that regular meetings are held to discuss this data and a way forward (PSW & HT) and a meeting is held each half term with the school Education Welfare Officer.
- ❖ That correct absence codes are utilised and appropriate action taken.
- ❖ Parents and carers understand clearly when it is appropriate to keep their children off school, the procedures they are expected to follow and when this constitutes unauthorised absence and also understand that punctuality issues can affect their child's attendance rate
- ❖ Parents are encouraged to book appointments (medical and other) as much as possible before and after the school day as well as during the holiday period.
- ❖ School staff and parents and carers are familiar with and adhere to our procedures for registering pupils' attendance, and reporting, recording and following up a pupil's absence or lateness;
- ❖ Pupils and their parents and carers understand the importance of regular and consistent attendance and punctuality;
- ❖ Parents and carers are clear of the consequences of failing to ensure that their children attend school and will alert them when their child's attendance reaches unacceptable levels.
- ❖ Absence from school during term time will only be allowed due to "exceptional circumstances" **(Amendment Regulation 2013)**
- ❖ Children enjoy coming to school and are highly motivated to attend regularly and consistently.
- ❖ We work collaboratively with the Education Welfare Service and the school Education welfare officer to encourage good attendance and offer support to families in need.
- ❖ All referrals made to the Education Welfare Officer are monitored closely and appropriate action taken
- ❖ Children who are absent for more than 20 days are removed from the school roll after taking advice from the EWO, unless there are particular extenuating circumstances.

## PROCEDURES

### **Procedure if a child is absent or late**

- ❖ The school expects parents to telephone the school to inform them of their child's absence through illness, on the first morning of absence, this is the legal responsibility of the parent. This prevents school office staff having to make numerous phone calls and provides reassurance of a child's safety in the event that parents cannot be contacted by telephone for any reason. Parents can also use e-mail or fill in an absence form the next day or bring a note to school.
- ❖ When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- ❖ A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has an unavoidable medical appointment.
- ❖ If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.
- ❖ If a family cannot be contacted for over 3 days a referral will be raised to the Education Welfare Service. If the family is known to social care and the child /children subject to CIN support or CP plan then the allocated social worker will be contacted on the second day of absence where the family has not contacted the school or is not able to be contacted by the school.
- ❖ If a child arrives late for school they will be recorded as late in the register. If they arrive after 9.15am the school office will note the reason, the time and add to the register. The attendance of a child who arrives at school after 9.30am, unless the parent has contacted the school in advance, will be recorded as unauthorised. Persistent lateness after 9.15 am may be recorded as unauthorised absence at the head teacher's discretion.

# Stonebridge Primary School Attendance Policy 2014

## Requests for leave of absence for a child

- ❖ We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible and do not miss out on crucial learning which may put them at an educational disadvantage. However, we do understand that there are exceptional circumstances in which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, for example, a special religious or family event (such exceptional circumstances would not include normal events such as birthdays and would be a maximum of 2 days). We expect parents and carers to contact the school to obtain authorisation at least a week in advance. Normally such exceptional requests will be granted if proof can be provided and does not mean a child will be absent for an extended time. Absences which do not follow this procedure will be recorded as unauthorised.
- ❖ Parents and carers have no statutory right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday. Children are required to attend school for 190 days in a school year, leaving 175 days of weekends and school holidays. Parents and carers should always endeavour to arrange family holidays when their children are not required to be in school.
- ❖ Our school considers pupils' continuous attendance at school to be so essential for their academic achievement that it is not our policy to authorise an allocation of term time holiday days to families as outlined in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and Amendment Regulations 2013**). Only in exceptional circumstances will an absence request be considered. Request for such absences should be made at least six weeks in advance. Each case will be considered individually by the headteacher. If the extended leave is unauthorised and the family still take the pupil away from the school then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. This could result in a warning letter or an Education Penalty Notice (EPN) being issued which is a penalty fine of £60.00. Failure to pay this fine could end up with court action being taken in relation to the child's non-attendance at school, this is a most serious matter. If a child fails to return to school within the specified time his/her name will be removed from our Admission Register (Regulation 9 of the Education Pupil Registration – Regulation 1995) and a new application will have to be made to the Local Authority-.

## Long-term absence

- ❖ When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that, where possible, the child can keep in touch with the learning going on in their class. Parents will be required to provide medical proof regarding the absence.
- ❖ If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority (LA) support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school, where possible.

## Repeated unauthorised absences

- ❖ The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be contacted, informed of their child's overall attendance record and asked to discuss the reasons. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the school Education Welfare Officer who may visit the home and/or invite parents to a meeting in order to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation. Attendance meetings with parents involve the EWO, Head Teacher and Parent Support Worker, an improvement plan will be put in place and the consequences and processes applied if attendance does not improve, will be explained to the parent. This meeting will allow the parent to give explanation as to why their child's attendance is poor and the meeting may be able to agree a support package for the family.

# Stonebridge Primary School Attendance Policy 2014

- ❖ The governors, supported by the EWO, reserve the right to consider taking legal action, possibly resulting in a fixed penalty fine, against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

## Rewards for good attendance and good punctuality

- ❖ Class awards are given each week to the best attending KS1 and KS2 class in the school. Classes are also given a weekly award if they have had 100% punctuality.
- ❖ Attendance incentive rewards or certificates are given to children with 100 per cent attendance each term and over a whole school year, the school celebrates this achievement.
- ❖ The weekly attendance rate of the school and the best attending and most punctual classes will be displayed on our display boards and in our newsletters.

## Attendance targets

- ❖ The school sets attendance targets each year. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years and national expectations. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.
- ❖ A report is given in relation to the annual attendance figure which explains any substantial impact on the figures, for example religious festivals Eid and Diwali or closure due to bad weather.

## Monitoring and review

- ❖ It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor overall attendance. With this in mind the attendance figure of the school is reported as part of every Head Teachers report ie 3 times a year
- ❖ 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 can be.
- ❖ The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- ❖ The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus and on the school website.
- ❖ Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Head Teacher, who will contact the parents or carers or/ and bring to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer through the regular meetings or as a direct referral if urgent.
- ❖ A summary booklet of this policy will be distributed to parents and reviewed alongside the policy.
- ❖ This policy will be reviewed every three years by the governing body or sooner if necessary.

**Agreed by Governors: October 2014**

**To be reviewed: October 2017**

**Date: 9.10.14**