



ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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Castle Hills Primary School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction

'Being the best that we can be'

Castle Hills Primary will work together to provide the learning community with a safe and stimulating environment where all members enjoy, value and take pride in what they learn and where success at all levels is celebrated.

Castle Hills Primary recognises that there is a clear link between good attendance and pupil attainment; the more time a pupil spends in school the more likely they are to improve their opportunity to fulfil their potential. This policy supports our school ethos enabling us to live and learn together in an environment where everyone feels happy, safe and secure.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Learning: -Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parent/guardian's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: -A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly: Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:-

Attendance

Behaviour Management

Health and Safety

Access to the Curriculum

Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this school will:

- Give details on whole school attendance in our Newsletters
- Report at least twice yearly on how a child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is

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- Celebrate good attendance by displaying whole school and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through weekly class attendance cup, certificates and termly attendance reward fun days

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

to age, ability and aptitude and

to any special educational needs he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

The Law relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence

Schools are required by law to keep an attendance register and must mark whether a child is present or absent at each morning and afternoon session. If a child is absent, the register must also state whether the absence is AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED, this is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Within the context of the law, absences can only be approved by the school and not by the parents. Headteachers can refuse to authorise an absence if they do not believe the circumstances justify the absence. Parents should, therefore, cooperate with the school to enable them to mark school registers.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments, (supported by an appointment letter/card/slip), which **unavoidably** fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Doncaster Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These include:

- parents/guardians keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 should be contacted to resolve the issue.

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Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and school requires full parent/guardian support and co-operation to tackle this.

All absence is monitored and all PA cases are also automatically reported to the Doncaster Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service.

Absence Procedure

If a child is absent the parent/guardian should:

Contact school before 9.15am **on the first day of absence**

Bring a child back to school as soon as possible after an illness

If a child is absent school will:

Text and/or telephone on the first day of absence if school have not had contact

Monitor attendance and send letters of concern out to parents/guardians of pupils whose attendance percentage drops below 95%

1st letter of concern

2nd letter of concern (no or little improvement)

Invitation to attend a meeting in school with the Headteacher and attendance team to discuss the situation

Referral to Education Welfare Officer, Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service

Telephone Numbers

There are times when school are required to contact parents/guardians, including absence, therefore it is the parents/guardians responsibility to ensure all contact numbers are kept up to date and any changes are reported to the school office immediately.

School Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Parents/guardians are expected to contact school at an early stage in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties arise, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from Doncaster Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement; however, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the parent/guardian may be given a **penalty notice** of £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the fine could result in prosecution and a further fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court may also issue a Parenting Order.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information:

Telephone: 01302 737235

Email: welfare.service@doncaster.gov.uk

Website: www.doncaster.gov.uk and search for 'school attendance'.

Punctuality

A school has to take a register of all pupils first thing in a morning and sometime during the afternoon. The Government advice states that schools can keep the register open for up to 30 minutes; however this can be a shorter period.

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If a pupil arrives late to school but whilst the register is still open they are marked as Late (L). If a pupil arrives at school after the register is closed, without a satisfactory reason, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) and may lead to prosecution for not ensuring your child has regular/punctual school attendance.

The school day starts at **8.45am (KS2)** and **8.50am (KS1/F2)** and we expect children to be **sitting at their desks ready to work at these times**.

After these times doors are locked and all pupils are required to enter via the school office to receive their late mark (L). At 9.16am and 9.21am respectively registers are closed, and in accordance with the Regulations they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but late after registration (U). This mark is recorded as an unauthorised absence resulting in a possible penalty notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record the parent/guardian will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and attendance team to resolve the issue, however the parent/guardian can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting a child to school on time.

Please refer to '**School Session Times**' leaflet, copies are available at the school office.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect the pattern of a child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by **not taking a holiday in school time**.

No parent/guardian as a right to demand a pupil's leave of absence for a holiday.

No holidays will be authorised during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances; and each request will be considered on an individual basis by the Headteacher. All applications for leave must be made at least 4 weeks in advance by completing a holiday application form. If it comes to our attention that a child has taken a holiday without submission of a holiday form a Fixed Term Penalty Notice may still be issued.

Full details of this procedure are given to parents annually in July, for the following academic year, and copies are available on request from the school office, (see also 'Holidays in Term Time' leaflet).

School Attendance Targets

The Government sets targets for attendance, these are 95% for primary school and the attendance target set by the local authority for **Castle Hills for 2014-15 is 95.5%**.

Primary schools are also RAG (red, amber, green) rated based on their persistent absence percentage figures collected by the local authority:

Green 95.5% or above

Amber 93.6% to 95.4%

Red 93.5% or below

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/guardians and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.