



## Caddington Village School

### Attendance and Punctuality Guidance

#### EXPECTATIONS OF EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE

A child in this country has a right to an education.

**Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states:**

**'If you have a child of compulsory school age, who is registered at school, you must make sure that your child attends that school regularly'.**

We, the staff and Governors of Caddington Village School, believe that pupils must be given the opportunity to achieve their best by attending school regularly and punctually. We have clear aims regarding attendance-

#### Aims

We aim to:

- Help children to have a positive attitude towards school
- Encourage all children to attend school on time, every day
- Provide a safe, warm and welcoming educational provision that will ensure the needs of all children are met in order that they are happy to attend school regularly
- Ensure that all children, regardless of their age, ability, gender, ethnicity, culture, special educational or physical needs, are given an equal opportunity to attend school regularly, raise awareness, so that all children and parents/carers understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Prepare children for adulthood by helping them to understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Support children and their parents/carers effectively so that they are able to ensure regular and punctual attendance
- Work with a range of agencies to ensure effective and appropriate action is taken to support families so that all children attend school regularly and on time

#### RAISING AWARENESS- THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR AND PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE

The school will take the steps needed to raise awareness, both with children and parents/carers, of the importance of regular and punctual school attendance.

This occurs via a number of mechanisms:

Parents/Carers:

- Letters regarding Attendance
- Newsletters and other written communication
- School displays



- **Celebration assemblies**
- **Direct communication, written (attendance letters) and verbal (e.g. phone calls from class teacher/ admin team, attendance at meetings, attendance at panels etc.)**

#### **Children:**

- **Attendance Bears are given out at weekly Key Stage assemblies to the class with the highest attendance percentage**
- **Celebration Assemblies**
- **Certificates and badges are awarded each term**
- **Mufti days are awarded for the classes with the best attendance**
- **Curriculum activities**
- **Displays**
- **Direct communication with identified children e.g. those that arrive at school late or are late for lessons**

Children at Caddington Village School are rewarded in multiple ways for good attendance and punctuality. Every classroom has a visible attendance chart that is completed weekly by the children. Class teachers monitor the register and have conversations with children/parents regarding any negative patterns in attendance or punctuality. Improved attendance can be rewarded through the use of points and stickers (in line with the school reward system). Classes are encouraged to work together to win the Attendance Bear for having the highest attendance percentage in their Key Stage. The class with the highest attendance for every half term are rewarded with a special non-uniform day. Individual children are rewarded for excellent attendance at end of term Celebration Assemblies, where they receive Attendance Certificates and bronze, silver or gold badges. These are awarded for 100% attendance for one, two or three terms.

#### **PUPIL ABSENCE**

##### **If a child is absent.**

We undertake the Government's good practice policy of tracking our pupils each day through a First Response to absence, if we do not receive notification of absence. Regulations outline that it is a parent/guardian's responsibility to offer a reason for absence and the duty falls to a school to 'authorise' the absence or challenge ongoing unsatisfactory missed learning by undertaking investigations.

Parents/carers must contact the school on a daily basis in the event that their child is going to be absent from school; the absence will then be recorded appropriately in the register with the correct code.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register; as a result the admin team will endeavour to contact a parent/carer to confirm a reason for the absence (First Response).



If there is any concern over a child's absence, immediate action by the school will be taken. The office staff will then make contact straight away with the parent/carer, in order to check on the safety of the child. If contact cannot be made then the office staff will inform the Safeguarding Lead who will take appropriate action (including informing the Head of School/Executive Headteacher).

If the school is unable to make contact with a parent/carer on all the emergency numbers provided, the absence will be unauthorised until contact has been made and a reason provided by the parent/carer. It is therefore vital that any changes to contact information is provided for the school.

If a leave of absence is required for a child, a request for absence must be sent to the school along with any supporting evidence prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a hospital appointment.

### **AVOIDING PLANNED ABSENCES**

Amendments to the 2006 (Pupil Registration) Regulations, enacted in September 2013, have removed all references to family holidays and extended leave, as well as to the threshold of 10 school days. The amendments make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Neither the regulations, nor the accompanying guidance, specify what might constitute exceptional circumstances.

Requests for absence are either authorised or declined in accordance with Local Authority guidance, adopted by the Governing Body. All requests for term-time leave should be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides. Leave for term-time holidays cannot be authorised. If leave is taken without authorisation for 10 sessions or more within a 12 weeks period, the Local Authority will be alerted to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (2 sessions is equal to one school day). Further periods of unauthorised absence will result in the issue of fines and the possibility of criminal proceedings. In line with Local Authority guidance, no school work will be given during an unauthorised absence.

### **OTHER UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Unauthorised absence will also be recorded on the official school register when the school has no information for absence or an unsatisfactory reason was offered. It could also be as a result of an irregular attendance pattern when the school feel unable to continue to authorise the absence, especially when there is no supportive medical evidence.

### **GENUINE MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

Some of our pupils have specific medical conditions and bearing in mind their difficulties, they attend very well. Parents will be asked to provide 'up to date' medical evidence, to



support any unavoidable absence. We can also help support education in these circumstances. School work will not be provided for any form of unauthorised absence.

We appreciate the difficulty with regular appointments for dentist and doctors but would request (where possible) that routine appointments are made after school or during school holidays.

## **REGISTERS**

As denoted in legal documentation, the Governing Body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Our school official register is taken in each class twice a day. Registration starts at 8.50am. Pupils who are not in school before the register officially closes at 9:05am, will be marked as unauthorised late; 10 sessions of any unauthorised absence, including lateness, in a 12 week period will also result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Pupils arriving after the school gates have closed but before the official closure of the registers will be coded as authorised late. In the afternoon the register closes at 12:45pm for Reception - Y3, 12:55pm for Y4 and 1:15pm for Y5 - 6. The registers are regularly monitored internally and inspected by an officer from Central Bedfordshire's Access and Inclusion Team.

Parents will be informed as soon as an attendance or punctuality issue is identified. You may be informed by telephone or an escalating series of letters which will, if necessary, lead to a Panel Meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to invite families to meet with school and Local Authority staff and make a positive plan to improve School Attendance. Our aim is to listen and work with parents in support of their children to make a difference and avoid further action.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason if it meets the criteria for an exceptional circumstance and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping or celebrate a birthday during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

### **Unauthorised Absence**



An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

## **AVOIDING LATE ARRIVAL**

Arriving late to school can be disruptive to learning for both the child arriving late and the children already in class. Therefore parents and carers are requested to help their children to enjoy their school day in a calm receptive way by arriving each day on time. Pupils arriving after the school gates have closed will be marked late.

If there is a personal reason why a pupil will be late and this cannot be avoided – parents and carers are requested to contact the school so that the difficulty can be registered.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TEAM**

The school warmly welcomes the support of the Attendance Officer from Central Bedfordshire Council. The school is advised by him/her when issues relating to attendance arise; the school takes action based on the advice given.

Additionally, we are working hard to improve our attendance and punctuality and carry out the following to support improvement:

- Organising late patrols
- Carrying out register checks (which are followed up with agreed actions)
- Organising attendance panels
- Supporting parents/carers to help them improve their child's attendance
- Agreeing fixed penalty notices where appropriate
- Taking court action as required

## **REPEATED ABSENCES**

There is a procedure that will be followed if a child is recognised as having unacceptable levels of attendance (below 93%) in order that children do not become PERSISTANT ABSENTEES (below 90%); details are written below:

Initially, a letter will be sent to the child's parent/carer to inform them that there is a concern over their child's absence. This may also be accompanied by a phone call by the child's class teacher or form tutor. The depth of concern will be indicated by the contents of the letter or conversation. This will give parents/carers time to improve their child's attendance.

Letters that are sent will often be linked to other actions such as a meeting with the Assistant Headteacher/Head of School or support from the Attendance Officer; these may lead to the school organising other support strategies in order that attendance can be improved.



If attendance does not improve or deteriorates a referral will be made to the school's Attendance Officer. As a result, s/he will contact the parent/carer and request their presence at an Attendance Panel. The Attendance Officer and the Designated Attendance Lead will attend the Attendance Panels. These meetings will be an opportunity to discuss concerns over a child's attendance with the parent/carer, offer support and set targets in order that the child's attendance improves.

In the event that a child's attendance continues to be poor, the school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (a fine for unauthorised absence). Alternatively, the Attendance Officer may begin court proceedings as the Governors, supported by the Central Bedfordshire Council, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Parents/carers should also be aware that if their child's absence drops below 90% then any further absences will be recorded as 'unauthorised' unless they provide evidence to support the absence. Supporting evidence may include:

- An appointment card/letter
- A note from a GP/Practice Nurse (giving reasons for absence)
- A copy of a prescription made out for the child

When the evidence is presented a decision will then be made as to whether the absence will be authorised or not.

## **MONITORING AND REPORTING**

Class teachers, the admin team and the Head of School are responsible for monitoring attendance on a daily basis; all parties will take appropriate action in terms of:

- Recording attendance and absence
- Reporting concerns about a child's attendance

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor the school's overall attendance, and they request a termly report from the Headteacher with regards to this matter. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for the attendance policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore closely examine the information provided and seek to ensure that the attendance figures meet the targets set.

Caddington Village School Governors set the target of 96% for 2016-17. We did not meet our target. Our attendance was 92.11% which is below the national average (of 96%) and puts us near the bottom of all Primary schools in the country.

Our target this year is 96%. Together we will strive to meet this target by following our school procedures for attendance and punctuality and working closely with Central Bedfordshire Access and Inclusion team.