



## Holme St Cuthbert School



### Attendance Policy

*“The poor attendance of a number of pupils can disrupt their own learning and that of other pupils. These children quickly begin to fall behind their peers and often never catch up with gaps in their skills or knowledge. Over time these pupils become bored and disillusioned with education and by years 10 and Year 11 they are lost to the system. These pupils are the most likely to become, ‘not in education, employment or training (NEET)’ when they leave school and easily fall into anti-social behaviour and crime. Not surprisingly there is a clear link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement.”*

**(Department for Education - July 2011).**

#### **What the law says about School Attendance:**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1996 says; “ If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his (her) parent is guilty of an offence”.

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September – July). Any exceptions to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the Headteacher.

This policy is informed by DFE. Circular 11/91 “The Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006” and “Education Act 1996 section 444, the ‘School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence,” DFE 1994 – Paragraph 21, page 4 which reminds us that: “Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call, written letter) in relation to a particular absence does not, by itself, oblige the school to accept it”. There is an expectation that over the course of an academic year a child’s attendance will be 95% or more. Absence that falls below 86% is categorised by the government as persistent absence.

#### **Parents must:**

Ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by making medical appointments out of school time wherever possible, avoid booking any holidays during term time and avoid encouraging their child to stay at home for unjustifiable reasons.

#### **If you feel that your child has an illness which may warrant them remaining at home then you must:**

Consider first of all whether you feel that your child would still be able to take part in the majority if not all of the school’s activities. In this case, you should still send your child to school. Should your child become unwell during the day and/or where the school feels that the child is no longer able to participate in school activities, the school will contact you to collect your child.

If you feel that your child cannot take part in the school’s activities and would be better remaining at home then you must contact the school as soon as possible on the first/each day of absence before 9:30am. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of this policy.

The person ringing will be asked to identify themselves and clearly give the reason for the absence. This information will be recorded.

**If your child has a medical appointment then you must:**

Contact the school prior to the appointment to ask for approved arrangements for your child to be collected/returned to school as close to the appointment time as possible. The school will ask to see a copy of the appointment time/letter. The school will not authorise the absence unless they have seen a copy of the letter/appointment card **before** the appointment.

**If you need to request 'leave' for a specific reason, then you must:**

Follow the school guidelines regarding an application for leave eg holiday. (See, 'Leave of Absence').

**If you know that your child will be late for school you must:**

Contact the school as soon as possible to tell them that your child will arrive late. Make every effort to get your child to school as soon as possible.

**If you are having difficulty getting your child to attend school you must:**

Notify the school immediately (school office, class teacher, Headteacher) about your concerns. The school will make every effort to meet with you and attempt to rectify the problem.

**The School must:**

- Keep regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance registers. These are completed at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session, using a coding system approved by the DfE and Local Authority. For each child, for each session there will be a code relating to present or absent. The absent code will either be authorised or unauthorised. (See, 'Use of Attendance Codes')
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and other INSET days when a pupil is not expected to attend school.
- Notify the parents of any immediate school closure eg due to bad weather
- Respond to requests for attendance data from the Access and Inclusion Team, Local Authority, Department for Education, OFSTED.
- Present attendance data regularly to the Governing Body and parents.
- Notify parents as early as possible where their child's attendance is a cause for concern.
- Notify the Access and Inclusion Team of individual children whose attendance is a cause for concern.

**The Pupil must:**

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day.
- Ensure that their behaviour does not conflict with the smooth day to day running of the school and that they do not behave in a way that may put them at risk of exclusion.

**Use of Attendance Codes**

A series of codes are used for each child and for each school session. The codes are used by all schools so that reasons for absence can be easily and universally

monitored. Each code will mean that the absence has been authorised or unauthorised.

The Headteacher may decide to use a code that authorises a child's absence due to:

- Leave agreed by the Headteacher
- Day of religious observance
- Medical/dental appointment
- Genuine illness or stay in hospital and/or consequent recuperation at home following medical treatment
- Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause eg exceptionally bad weather coupled with the inability to arrive in school safely eg wheelchair users
- Attending a family funeral (this must not however exceed an agreed period of absence)
- Exclusion – a temporary or fixed term exclusion will be recorded with code 'E', a permanent exclusion will be treated as authorised absence until the child is removed from the school register.

The following will be coded as 'present'

- Education off-site e.g. visit
- Education off-site at another setting e.g. exams or dual registered pupils
- Approved sporting activity

Unauthorised codes are used where it is felt that the reason given does not justify the absence. This may include

- A shopping trip
  - A birthday
  - Attending a pop concert/football match
  - Bad weather – too wet, too cold
  - All session absence for a single short medical appointment
  - Lack of usual transport – the parent must demonstrate that every effort has been made to get the child to school safely
  - Taking a holiday or period of leave that has not been approved by the Headteacher.
- Where no reason for the absence is given, the absence will be unauthorised.

### **Leave of Absence**

Any request for 'leave' e.g. holiday absence, must be made in writing. These must be received by the Headteacher no later than **15 working days** before the proposed leave is due to take place.

The Headteacher does have a discretionary power to authorise leave but **this is not an automatic right**. In making an application for leave, the adult(s) with parental responsibility must make the case that their child will need to be treated differently from the norm. There will be no exceptions for families who are split e.g. a request from one parent may be approved but another request from a second parent or family member may be unauthorised. It is the responsibility of both parents with parental responsibility to make their applications for leave, each application will be considered fairly using the criteria below.

Therefore, each request must meet specific 'exceptional circumstances' which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year, or to occur regularly throughout a child's school life. Reasons such as, 'its cheaper', or 'fits in with work patterns' are not classed as exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis and will take the following into consideration:

- The child's current and previous year's attendance
- Regularity of requests

- The reason for the request to determine whether it meets the exceptional circumstances criteria.
- Timing of the request i.e. a request for leave during exam/SAT week would not be approved.

Equally a request for the start of the school year is also unlikely to be approved. Leave taken without a formal request being made to the Headteacher will remain unauthorised even if the parent enters a request on returning from the holiday/leave.

### **Lateness**

The school day begins at 8:45 am and the afternoon session begins at 1:00pm. Ten minutes arrival after this time will constitute a late code.

A child who appears after this time will be marked late for a further 10 minutes using the late code. After this time, e.g. 8:55am for the morning session, a child appearing will be coded as 'unauthorised late'.

A child who is persistently late even within the first 20 mins of the session starting may lose their right to be coded as late and will instead be marked as 'unauthorised late'. The Headteacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing.

### **Absence due to illness**

Children who are genuinely poorly are not expected to attend school and an authorised code will be used. However, where the child's repeated absence due to illness is becoming a concern, the Headteacher may decide to remove the right to the authorised code, and unauthorise further absences due to illness, particularly if the absences total between 5 and 10 days. The Attendance Officer may ask the parent to provide information that supports the parent's view that the child is too unwell to return/attend school e.g. prescriptions, doctor's letter. The Headteacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing.

In order to avoid this, it is essential that parents inform the school of any health concerns that may be affecting the child's ability to attend school regularly.

### **School Closures**

The academic year is 190 days. Schools also have to have an additional 5 days that they can use for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement.

The Headteacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, the school may have to close. The Headteacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Headteacher must close part or all of the school.

Such events may be:

- Not enough staff to safely supervise the pupils and ensure the safe running of the school
- Lack of fresh running water and/or toilet facilities
- Lack of appropriate lighting and/or heating
- Damage to the structure of the building eg fire, water or weather damage.
- Instruction to close due to a local emergency incident
- Emergency at the school (See Emergency Plan)
- Severe weather - In the event that severe weather is forecast, or is developing, the Headteacher, will consider either closing the school in advance of the school day, closing the school early, or opening the school later than usual. The action taken will always result from consideration of pupils, parents and staff facing 'significant risk of serious injury' in school or whilst travelling to or from school.

Once a decision is made, the Headteacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place.

**Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.**

If the Headteacher decides to close the school, then the register is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

### **Praising/rewarding Good Attendance**

All children who have 100% attendance each term will receive a certificate and will be awarded this at the whole school assembly at the end of the term.

### **Removal of a Child from the School Role**

Parents need to be aware that their child can be removed from the school role/register. This may occur following a permanent exclusion or if, following a period of agreed absence, the child fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date. This is undertaken if the school is not satisfied after enquiries by the Access and Inclusion Team that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or other avoidable cause.

### **Access and Inclusion Team (AIT) formally known as the Education Welfare Office (EWO)**

The Access and Inclusion Team (AIT) is responsible for ensuring that parents meet their legal obligations in respect of their child's education and to identify levels of support that a family may need in assisting them to ensure that their child receives a suitable education. The Headteacher and Governing Body of each school have a responsibility to inform the AIT when a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern and to support the AIT in the actions that they may take.

When it is found that parents fail to meet their responsibilities, the AIT has the legal power to take one or more of the following approaches:

- **Warning Letter** – clarifies the legal responsibility of the parent and the school expectations in relation to what the parent must do next
- **Fixed Penalty Notice** – may be issued for example if, your child has unauthorised absences, including taking unauthorised holiday in term time, or if the child is continually late for school.

The fine is £60.00 paid by each adult with parental responsibility for each child. If you have not paid the fine within 28 days then the fine increases to £120.00 which must be paid within 42 days. There is no option to pay in instalments, the fine cannot be reduced if you are in receipt of benefits and there is no right of appeal.

- **Prosecution** – The AIT can prosecute parents if they fail to ensure that their child attends school. You may be fined up to £1000.00. If convicted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, you may be fined up to £2500.00 and/or 51 weeks imprisonment.
- **Parenting Order** – this may be made by the court where a parent has been found guilty of an offence relating to school attendance, this requires each adult with parental responsibility to co-operate with conditions attached to the order to assist them in managing their child's overall behaviour and attendance.
- **Education Supervision Order** – where responsibility is shared between the AIT and the parent.
- **School Attendance Order** – Parents are required to register their child at the school named in the order, failure to do so will result in further action being taken.

All proceedings are taken in relation to each parent and each child not attending school, for example, two parents with two children not attending will have to answer four offences.