

Upton St James CE Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'Every child has the right to an education'. This policy seeks to ensure that the school follows best practice. All staff, parents and children have a responsibility to ensure this right is respected through promoting good attendance.

Purposes

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for register keeping which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff as well as monitoring of attendance levels.
2. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging good attendance.
5. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All staff will recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are significant in encouraging good attendance.
2. All staff will understand the registration process in the school.
3. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and returned to the school office promptly.
4. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents/carers through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters, school prospectus and parents meetings.
5. The school will inform parents/carers monthly of attendance figures via the school newsletter.
6. All pupils' with attendance below 92% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

7. The school will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
8. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
9. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures and set an attendance target which exceeds attendance figures for the previous year.
10. The school will inform parents/carers of attendance issues by letter. (Parents will be informed by text when there is a letter to collect from the office).

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

Parents/Carers

1. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered (and are punctual). Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence and keeping the school informed about the absence.
3. Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time without the school's prior written permission and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or a Court summons.
- 4.
5. Parents/Carers can expect the school to keep them fully informed if there are any attendance issues.

Term time absence

Legislation

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force. These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

All absence requests forms (LETTER 1) will be considered on a case by case basis and only authorised where there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a pupil can be away from school if the leave is granted. One of the headteacher's considerations will be the child's current attendance rate.

All absences must be explained by a parent/carer. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence. Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision (LETTER 2)

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are: (this list is not exhaustive)

- Illness (*See note 1 on page 3*)
- Exceptional circumstances
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (*See note 2 on page 3*)

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 5 days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 92% and/or is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being unauthorised.

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a pupil need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence.

Penalty Notices

Parents/carers will be informed in writing if the decision has been made not to authorise a request for leave of absence.

The school may refer the matter to the Local Authority to consider either issuing a Penalty Notice or a Court summons to the parents/carers.

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued. (LETTER 3)

If the parent(s)/carer(s) can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

Please be aware:

Parents who take their child out of school without prior written authorisation from the school could be subject to a £60 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority (£60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days), or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Parents should note that in normal circumstances, current practice is that only one penalty notice will be issued to a parent relating to the absence of a particular child within a two year period. Should a further period of unauthorised absence be recorded, then the parent(s) will normally be summonsed to appear at a Magistrates Court.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

Unforeseen absences

On the first day of absence the parent/carer should ring school before 09:30am to inform the office that their child will be away and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is requested and a date and time agreed for the parent/carer to update school if the child has not returned.

If contact has not been made by the parent/carer by 9.30am then first day contact will be made by the admin staff. If there is no response from the telephone call a text message will be sent requesting the parent to phone into school. If there is no contact by 10.30 am, the other named contacts will be telephoned. If there is no satisfactory explanation for the child's absence, or there are other concerns, in order to ensure the child is safe, someone employed by the school will visit the home on the same day. On occasions where there is nobody at home this will be risk assessed on a case by case basis and referred to Children's Services as appropriate.

Admin staff keep a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.

If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they should liaise with the admin staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they should inform the Head Teacher.

Parents are reminded of the first day contact procedure each term via the school newsletter and school prospectus.

A letter (LETTER 4) will be sent home if no reason is given for a child being absent. If a response is not received by the end of the next school day then as stated in the letter the absence will be unauthorised.

Where a child is absent due to moving schools they will stay on the school roll until notification of arrival from the new school.

If a child has unexplained absences and is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns, the school will immediately notify the Safeguarding Hub and the Attendance Improvement Service.

The school will inform the Attendance Improvement Service if:

***A child does not attend for 5 days after an authorised absence; or has been absent for 10 consecutive days, during which time reasonable enquiries have been undertaken to find the child's whereabouts. Despite these efforts the child's whereabouts remain unknown.
A child has moved away and details of new school have not been given.***

Lateness

There are many negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late including:

- The loss of education suffered by the pupil which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.

- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- Damage to pupils emotional well-being.

Children who arrive after 8:55 am are considered late. An appropriate mark is recorded in the registers.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- Doors will be locked at 8.55 am. Any children arriving after this time are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception where their name will be recorded in the late book. All children who arrive late will have their own signing in sheet which the parent will need to complete and sign explaining why their child is late.
- Late gates will be implemented at least once a month by the family key worker.

All children's attendance records will be checked regularly for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U) (which is recorded as unauthorised absence). Where late arrivals reach five or more in a half term the school will write to the parents (LETTER 5). If there is no improvement the Headteacher will arrange to meet with the family in order to work together towards improving punctuality (LETTER 5a).

Occasions of being late after registers close ('U' code) contribute towards the overall number of unauthorised absences.

Attendance letters

All attendance will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees. Absences will be unauthorised by the school where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer or where the school feels the reason is unacceptable.

Where a pupil's attendance is below 92% and the majority of absences are due to medical reasons then, at the Headteacher's discretion, **Attendance letter 1 (Medical)** will be sent to the parents/carers. (LETTER 6)

Where a pupil's attendance is below 92% and there are unauthorised absences the following actions may be taken:

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 92% (at the school's discretion). (LETTER 7)

Attendance letter 2 will be sent after 2 weeks, if no improvement has been made, with an appointment to see the Head Teacher. This letter will also be sent out at the headteacher's discretion if the child's attendance drops again within the same academic year. (LETTER 8) If the majority of absences are still due to medical reasons, **Attendance letter 2 (Medical)** will be sent (LETTER 8a).

Attendance letter 3 will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the headteacher, where strategies to improve attendance will be discussed and agreed. These could include a parenting contract, an attendance 'passport', a period of work with the Family Key Worker, a legal consultation with the Local Authority or a referral to Children's Services. (LETTER 9)

If, at any time, a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a 6 months period, the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority for them to consider the legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Further details can be found on the Local Authority website. <http://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/attendance/>

Rewards for promoting attendance

- Each week the year group with the highest attendance percentage will be celebrated by receiving Attendance Bear during Friday's assembly.
- A termly certificate is given to every child who has 100% attendance for that particular term (and been on time every day)
- A £5 book token is given at the end of the school year to every child who is on 100% attendance for the whole school year.
- A weekly draw will take place at the Celebration Assembly on Friday. Children's names will be put into a box if they have been in school every day that week and not been late. A small prize will be given to the child whose name is pulled out of the box.

Collection of attendance data

Each term the Head Teacher and Senior Administrator will analyse the results of the latest census data and produce an appropriate action plan for the term ahead.

Torbay Attendance Good Practice Guide referred to in the writing of this policy.

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