

Follifoot & Spofforth CE (VC) Primary Schools

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2015

Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance is vital if pupils are to thrive both academically and socially at school. Absence from school disrupts pupils' learning and progress and in some cases can have a detrimental effect on their relationships. As such, children should only be absent from school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances. This policy outlines the responsibilities of the Headteacher, school staff, parents and governors in ensuring that all pupils attend regularly and are punctual.

Aims and Principles

Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school for every session the school is open. Whilst it is right to recognise that individual pupils and families may from time to time have problems, our aim should always be to expect regular attendance.

The majority of pupils want to attend to learn and achieve, but some may not be able to do so for reasons beyond their control. It is our responsibility to identify these pupils and investigate.

Good communications with home is a fundamental ingredient in promoting good attendance and punctuality. Parents should be encouraged to see themselves as partners with our school, and instil respect for education and those who teach their children.

Aims

- To provide a structured and consistent approach to dealing with attendance issues.
- To provide clear guidelines of how attendance issues will be dealt with to all relevant parties.
- To improve our overall attendance and punctuality rates as part of a multi-faceted approach to raising standards.

In order to further these aims and principles it is our responsibility to:-

1. Identify a senior member of staff with oversight and responsibility for attendance.
2. Integrate attendance within the pastoral policy of the school.
3. Ensure the Headteacher frequently comments on and communicates about attendance and punctuality to pupils, parents and staff.
4. Ensure teachers are punctual, expect good attendance and frequently comment on and praise this behaviour in their group.
5. Ensure pupils who are late or have been absent are told they have been missed and what it means for them and others.

Legal Requirements

All children aged 5-18 must receive full time education.

Registration

An accurate and consistent registration system throughout the school is essential in order that absenteeism can be tackled. It is important that pupils are aware that registration is taking place. Registers are legal documents and can be used in judicial proceedings.

Registration Procedure

- Registration in each class must be completed no later than 15 minutes after the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Registers must be returned to the school office after this.
- Children need to be marked as present (using /) or marked in pencil with N if they are not present. An absence slip must be sent to the office in order that the absent child's parents can be contacted.
- Lateness should be clearly indicated if a child arrives 10 minutes after the start of registration, and the time of arrival recorded (L and U codes).
- The class register should accurately reflect the enrolment register and be completed fully and correctly in ink.

Pupil Illness

Role of the Parent - To call school before the start of the first school day that your child is absent from school to inform them that your child will not be attending due to illness. When your child returns to school, send a note to the class teacher indicating why s/he was off school. Following sickness / diarrhoea, children should not return to school less than 48 hours after they were last ill. For advice on when to return your child after other illnesses, please contact your healthcare professional.

Role of the School - To record illnesses in the register and advise the parent where relevant as to an appropriate date to return to school.

Role of the Headteacher - To arrange work for the child where the absence may be extended and where the child is capable of completing tasks at home.

Pupil Punctuality

Pupils should arrive at school on time each day (8.55 am at both schools). Arriving late is detrimental not only to that child, but to other children in the class where the teacher needs to accommodate a pupil part way through a lesson. Pupils should be on the playground in advance of 8.55 am when the bell rings to indicate the start of the school day. If a pupil is not present when his/her name is called at the beginning of the day, s/he is recorded in the register as having arrived late. Registers close at 9.30 am. After this time, absence without prior notification or acceptable explanation is recorded as unauthorised*.

*Note – Within the SIMS system any lateness that has an accepted explanation will just be recorded as 'L' regardless of how many minutes late. Lateness that has no explanation or an explanation that is not considered exceptional or acceptable would be recorded as 'late after register has closed' and would be unauthorised.

Role of the Parent - To ensure that your child is on the playground ready to begin school at 8.55 am. Should you be late due to unavoidable circumstances, it is important that you call school to inform us of this.

Role of the School - To record all late arrivals (e.g. after the register has been taken) accordingly in the register. If a pupil has not arrived after the register has closed (9.30 am) without prior notification, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

It is the school's duty to ensure that, where a child is absent without notification, the administrator contacts parents/carers to find out why. If the administrator is unable to contact the family of a pupil absent without notification, the Headteacher will be informed.

Role of the Headteacher - To ensure that pupil learning is not adversely affected by factors within the school's control. The Headteacher will implement a range of procedures to build a culture that promotes high levels of attendance while appropriately supporting and challenging absence.

Building a Culture of High Attendance

- All staff actively promote the importance of high attendance. Examples – parent guide on the importance of good attendance, weekly updates on newsletter, clear guidance of leave in term time that is fully implemented.
- Attendance section on school websites to share information with parents.
- Levels of weekly attendance are promoted to pupils via 'Golden register' class challenge. This is shared and celebrated weekly in assembly and recorded for all pupils to see.
- Provide support for individuals when they return from absence establishing a culture and expectation that support will be given to 'catch up' with learning missed.
- Half and full term summary to review and track key attendance measures will inform appropriate next steps.
- Work with colleagues from behaviour and attendance at the LA and EMS to keep up to date with changes to local national picture and practice.
- Contact families every day of absence.
- A school action plan focused on improving attendance.

Procedures to reduce the impact of absence

- The HT in conjunction with administrative support will review attendance data at the end of each academic half term. Where any pupil has attendance below the NY expected target of 97% the HT will review the daily attendance of that pupil for the term or terms of that academic year to investigate reasons/causes or patterns.
- Persistent Absenteeism (PA 90% or below) will be closely monitored every half term. Parents will be informed via a personalised letter. Letters will be personalised depending on the nature of the absence and the explanation(s) offered.
- Where absence is clearly explained and down to explained illness or exceptional circumstances, parents will be reassured but will be reminded of the expected % attendance figure and offered support in helping their child achieve this.
- Where absence is unexplained parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss strategies to improve attendance and / or punctuality.
- Where absence is unexplained or persists, pupils' attendance would be monitored on a half termly basis or in serious cases of persistent absenteeism on a weekly basis.
- If parents fail to engage with this process support would be sought via the prevention team this may involve visits to families in the home from appropriate professionals. At this stage the HT may seek advice on the benefits of requesting the Local Authority to pursue a penalty notice.

Role of Governors - To monitor and evaluate the strategy for attendance via examining half termly summary reports and school visits to look at approaches and strategies. Support and challenge the school in ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to improve overall attendance.

Leave During Term Time

The law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Headteachers are only able to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment.
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organization / company.
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

This is not an exhaustive list and the circumstances of each case will be considered. Leave is only acceptable against exceptional circumstances and should not be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school.

Please note that the ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Where a child is taken out of school for the purpose of leave of absence in term time without the permission of the school, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and as such may result in a Penalty Notice. Penalties are applied by the Local Authority and as such are not at the discretion of the Headteacher. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, the matter may be taken to prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Amendments to 2007 Penalty Notice regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1st September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices in line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecution if the fine is not paid.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt a child's educational progress.

Requests for leave of absence in term time must be made 6 weeks prior to the leave of absence and in writing on the holiday request form which is available from the school. Parents may be required to attend an interview to discuss their request for a term time leave of absence.

Parents / carers will be notified in writing of the decision for a leave of absence in term time within 10 school days of the date of the application.

Should the child fail to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date and there is no communication from parents / carers, the school may remove the child from the school roll.

Appendix 1 - Model Letter

Dear

(insert full name of parent/carer- letter should be sent to each individual parent/carer)

Refusal for exceptional leave in term-time.

I have considered carefully your request for leave in term-time and on this occasion I will not be authorising your child(ren)'s absence.

This is because *(insert reason)*

OR

Leave is only acceptable against exceptional circumstances and should not be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school.

If your child(ren) do not attend school during the dates you requested *(insert dates)* the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

A copy of this letter will be placed on your child(ren)'s school file.

Headteacher

Appendix 2 - Model Letter

Dear

(insert full name of parent/carer- letter should be sent to each individual parent/carer)

Refusal for exceptional leave in term-time.

I have considered carefully your request for leave in term-time and on this occasion I will not be authorising your child(ren)'s absence.

This is because *(insert reason)*

If your child(ren) do not attend school during the dates you requested *(insert dates)* the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a request to issue you with a penalty notice will be made.

A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will take legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer.

A copy of this letter will be placed on your child(ren)'s school file.

Headteacher