

# Littledean C of E Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

At Littledean C of E Primary School we believe that children need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education and achieve their potential. We expect all children on roll to attend every day when school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning. Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- attainment in school;
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships;
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside other.

### The Law

The law says that:

- Parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that their children receive suitable full time education;
- That Local Authorities (LA's) must ensure that parents fulfil their legal obligations regarding their children's education;
- Maintained schools must allow the LA to inspect their registers;
- Schools must report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly. Gloucestershire's Penalty Notice protocol allows schools to notify the LA of any pupil having more than 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a ten week period particularly when the absence is on account of:
  - lateness after registration;
  - term time holidays without permission.

In these instances the LA will consider issuing a fixed penalty notice of £60. Unauthorised absence may lead to the LA taking full court action if attendance issues cannot be resolved.

Formal meetings (Attendance Improvement Meetings) will be held with parents whose children's poor attendance may lead to legal proceedings and attendance plans will be drawn up and monitored.

### Responsibilities

Parents/carers should:

- Make sure that their child attends school regularly and on time, appropriately dressed and equipped and in a fit state to learn.
- Let the school know if they are having difficulties with attendance so that any available help or support can be offered.
- Let the school know, by telephoning before 9.15 am, on the day of the first absence from school, why their child is absent and when they are expected to return.
- Where possible seek permission from school prior to any absence.
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term time.

- Notify the school if they intend to remove their child permanently from the school for any reason.

School will:

- Make suitable arrangements for the safe, daily registration of children.
- Be consistent in their attendance practices.
- Keep and mark registers accurately.
- Follow up any unexplained absences.
- Notify parents/carers, at least annually, of their child's attendance level.
- Notify the LA of children who have poor attendance, leave the school to be educated at home, go missing or are excluded.
- Notify the LA and/or Department for Education of absence figures for the school and, where necessary, individual children.

The Head Teacher will;

- Ensure that everybody at school treats attendance as a priority.
- Write to families of whose children come under the category 'persistently absent'.
- Promote the importance of good attendance to children and their parents/carers.
- Be available to discuss attendance concerns with children, parents, staff and governors.
- Remind parents at least annually of attendance procedures.
- Carry out Attendance Improvement Meetings (AIM) when necessary.
- Oversee attendance procedures and attendance data.

Governors will:

- With the Head Teacher, monitor, evaluate and review the attendance procedures regularly.
- Report on attendance statistics when required.

### **School Times**

We open the doors at 8.40am each morning and we require each child to be in school by 8.45am. School finishes at 3.00pm.

Children should be collected promptly unless they are attending an after-school club. Please inform the school office if you will be late collecting your child for any reason.

### **Registration**

School must keep attendance registers for all children on the school roll. The class teacher will call the register twice a day and every child will be marked as present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity off site. It must be shown by the use of approved codes, whether the absence is authorised or not.

Registration for KS1 and KS2 will take place between 8.45am and 9.00am. Children arriving after registration will be marked as late. If a child arrives after the classroom doors have closed and the register has been completed, they will need to be let in through the door by the school office and the register will be marked with an unauthorised absence mark.

Registers will be marked again during afternoon session.

Absence, legally, has to be recorded as either authorised or unauthorised and reported on to the DfE/LA. Only the schools can decide whether an absence is authorised or not and does not have to accept the reasons given by the parent or carer.

### **School Procedures**

Registers will be returned to the office and checked after the close of morning registration. Where the register shows an unexplained absence and there has been no message received at school by 9.15 am a phone call will be made to the parent/carer to find out the reason for the absence and the expected date of return.

If school has been unable to make contact by telephone a written communication will be sent on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence, requesting a reason for the absence. If there is still no response the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school Family Support Worker will also be notified at this time to see if she can make contact with the family.

Where the register shows 5 separate late during or after registration marks over a school half term, school will contact parents.

Where the register shows 10 separate late after registration marks over the last 10 weeks the LA may issue a fixed penalty notice.

Concerns about attendance or punctuality will be referred to the Head Teacher who will, if necessary, contact parents/carers to try to resolve any issues. The Family Support Worker will also be involved to offer any support that might be necessary. If these issues cannot be resolved and there is unauthorised absence the matter may be referred ultimately to the Education Entitlement and Exclusion Team at Shire Hall.

### **Absences**

**Illness** – It is realised that a child may be absent from school because of genuine illness. In such cases the absence will be authorised. However, patterns of frequent or sporadic absence will be followed up by the school initially, with the LA becoming involved as appropriate when necessary.

**Medical Appointments** – Please try to make appointments outside of school hours if at all possible. However, if this is not possible we ask for copies of appointment cards/letters.

**Longer Absences** – Suitable work will be set by the school for children who are absent for longer than a week when requested by the parent/carer.

**Unauthorised Absence** – All absences will be deemed unauthorised until the school decides otherwise, based on the information provided by the parent/carer.

**School Closure** – In the event that the school is closed at the Head Teacher's discretion, absences will be recorded as authorised i.e. adverse weather, no running water/heating.

## **Holidays in Term Time**

The law (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) states that parents/carers do not have a right to take their child(ren) out of school for a holiday in term time. The Education (Penalty Notice) Regulations 2007 further strengthens the duty on LA's and schools to address the issue of non-attendance robustly.

For every application made by the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives, the Head Teacher has a discretionary power to grant up to 5 days of absence in a school year for a family holiday if they believe that the circumstances are truly exceptional and warrant it. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for a holiday as a right.

Head Teachers are permitted to agree 'holiday leave' only in infrequent and exceptional circumstances, such as:

- Attendance at a wedding/funeral/special religious or cultural festival.
- If a parent, due to the nature of their work, cannot possibly take time off during the regular school holidays. This would need to be evidenced by a letter from the employer.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

If the parent/carer keeps the child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time will be recorded as unauthorised.

Each individual case will be dealt with sensitively and on its own merits to ensure that the best interests of the child are met. It is a condition of such authorised absence that suitable work will be done by the child whilst they are missing school. This will be set by the Head Teacher.

Holidays requested for the following reasons will not normally be authorised:

- The availability of cheap flights or holidays.
- The availability of desired accommodation.
- Poor weather experienced during school holiday periods.
- An overlap with the beginning/end of term.
- In addition, holidays will not be authorised during examination periods.

If the parent/carer wishes to apply for permission from the Head Teacher, a letter must be written requesting permission, in advance. Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively. If the school does not agree and absence and the child does not attend during the dates requested, the absence will be unauthorised.

If a holiday request is refused but the holiday is still taken, action will be taken immediately, as outlined above. All unauthorised absences will be examined and the appropriate action will be taken following Government/LA guidelines which may result in a penalty notice being issued to each parent for each child.

## **Appointments**

If appointments have to be made during school hours, school should be pre-notified. Parents collecting children from school mid-session should, for safety reasons, notify the office on departure so that the child can be signed out and again on re-arrival so

that they can be signed back in. If present at registration no amendment to the register is necessary. If absent at registration the register should be marked with an authorised absence mark.

### **Frequent Absences for Medical Reasons**

When a child frequently misses school for medical reasons, medical services may be consulted and appointment cards will need to be provided. Where necessary a referral will be made so that an evaluation of the child's health and care needs can be made.

### **Longer Absences**

Children who have been absent for a long period of time will be positively welcomed back and will be assisted in catching up with any missed work. Friendship groups will be monitored for a period of time to ensure that the child is happily settled back into school life.

### **Children Missing Education (CME)**

Children Missing Education refers to 'any child of compulsory school age who is not registered at any formally approved education activity e.g. school, alternative provision, elective home education, and has been out of provision for at least 4 weeks'. CME also includes those children who are missing (family whereabouts unknown), and are usually children who are registered on a school roll/alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address and either:

- a) Has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- b) Has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without an explanation, or
- c) Left school suddenly and the destination is unknown.

If this is the case then the school will follow the guidelines and procedures laid out by the LA.

### **How we Support Good Attendance**

We do this by:

- Treating attendance as a priority.
- Promoting good attendance at every opportunity.
- Always using first day telephone contact.
- Celebrating good and improved attendance.
- Setting attendance targets.
- Keeping parents/carers inform of their child's attendance.
- Making good use of attendance data by specific analysis.
- Notifying governors at each full governing board meeting of attendance levels.
- Providing access to our Family Support Worker who can support families where attendance is an issue.
- Providing a safe, happy, stimulating environment for the children, where they feel valued and welcomed and that their presence matters.

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