



## St Osyth C of E Primary School.

### Attendance Policy 2015

#### **Rationale**

School education lays the foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted upon promptly. It is a parental responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school promptly and return home safely.

#### **School Attendance and the Law.**

Under the 1988 Education Act parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 only the school ( and not the parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education ( Pupil Registration) (England ) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to 10 days leave of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned regulations (2013). Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case by case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absences are recorded as a result).

The Department for Education have not provided any guidelines as to what they would consider to be exceptional circumstances. This is solely at the discretion of the Headteacher. *Where possible, 'families' of schools should look to have a consistent approach to all leave of absence requests - try to ensure that requests for siblings who attend different schools are met with the same response by each Headteacher who receives the request.*

If leave of absence is taken without the request being agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent per child/£60 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions (5 days) or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6), the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate a prompt return to suitable education.

## **Aims**

Our Attendance Policy aims to :-

- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

## **Targets**

- for attendance rates to exceed 95.5%;
- for all absences to be legitimate and authorised;
- to increase the numbers of pupils who achieve 100% attendance in the school year;
- to reduce the numbers of families taking holidays during term time;
- for all children to arrive on time to school, unless there is a legitimate reason for not doing so.

## Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school every day;
- attend school punctually;
- attend appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure regular attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that their child arrives on time and prepared for the school day;
- ensure that they contact the school daily of any absence or in advance if known, whenever their child is unable to attend school;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school;
- if your child is absent for more than 3 days we expect medical advice to be sought by day 4 and verification may be requested. Evidence of any prescribed medicines may also be requested to complete our records;
- if hospital appointments fall within the school day, a copy of the appointment letter should be provided for our records and children should attend school before/after such appointments if at all possible;
- doctor/dentist appointments should be made out of school hours unless in cases of emergency;
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child;
- notify immediately any changes to contact details;
- collect their children promptly at the end of the school day (please also see section entitled 'Late Collection')

We expect that school will;

- provide a welcoming atmosphere;
- provide a safe learning environment;
- provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns;
- keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality;
- contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- follow up all uninformed absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In case of long term frequent absence due to medical conditions, verification from a GP or other relevant body may be requested;

- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition;
- regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils;
- make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly;
- meet regularly with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the EWS. Failure by a family to comply with the planned support set by the EWS may result in further actions e.g. Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absences**

### **Examples**

#### Authorised absences

- genuine illness of the pupil
- hospital/doctor's appointment for the pupil
- major religious observances
- visits to a prospective new school
- external educational exams or educational assessments.

#### Unauthorised absences:

- shopping /day trip/visit to a theme park
- birthday treat
- oversleeping due to a late night
- looking after other children/other family members
- appointments for other family members

## **Registers, Punctuality and Lateness**

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school opens at 8:30 am.

- By law, schools must take morning and afternoon registers and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 8:45 am and pupils who arrive after this time will be recorded as late for school.
- Registers close at 9:20 am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the Local Authority.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1:10 for KS1 and 1:20 for KS2.

- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with through the attendance officer/EWO.
- Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

## Procedures

- All absences should be noted initially in the school register
- A first day absence message or telephone call (before 9 a.m.) is expected from the parent/carer giving full details as to the reason for this absence. For a continued absence contact from the parent/carer is expected by 9 a.m. each morning.
- A 'first day absence' call is made by administrative staff if a parent/carer has not informed school of the reason for their child's absence.
- Learning Mentor will make contact with parents of children who regularly arrive late in school and those whose attendance is being monitored.
- Upon return to school an explanation should be provided to confirm the reason for absence by email, letter or verbal communication to the class teacher. In the event, the communication should be noted in the class register. Letters should be handed to the class teacher and emails will be printed and given to the class teacher.
- In the event of the child contracting an illness or suffering an injury which would make an absence of 5 days or more likely, parents should inform the school immediately, and subsequently keep the school informed on progress.
- In the event of non-communication of a reason for absence a standard letter will be sent home via the child in the first instance. If this is unsuccessful, then the school office will follow up with further letters etc.
- Parents are advised of their child's authorised and unauthorised attendance rates on all school reports.
- We work closely with families and the Education Welfare Service where absence is due to difficult or chaotic home circumstances.
- School registers will be inspected regularly by the Headteacher and the attendance officer. We work closely with the EWS who review our registers regularly.
- Parents will be contacted in the event of:
  - a. unauthorised absence
  - b. frequent short absences, particularly where a pattern emerges e.g. every Friday
  - c. persistent lateness.

## **Late Collection**

School expects that, with the exception of unavoidable circumstances, all children will be collected on time at the end of the school day. Should there be an unavoidable emergency please telephone the school office.

Children who have not been collected will be registered at the school office. Parents/carers will be required to sign for the late collection of their children. This is a safeguarding issue and school needs to know pupils are collected safely.

In the event that late collections are repeated we will write requesting that you meet a school senior leader to discuss the situation. As this is a safeguarding issue we also reserve the right to contact Social Services.

## **Reward**

There is a weekly attendance award cup for the class with the highest attendance percentage.

A certificate is awarded for 100% attendance each term. If a child achieves 100% attendance in the next consecutive term they will receive a prize e.g. a book token and their certificate and for 100% attendance for the year a certificate and a prize of a higher value.

Rewards will be given in assembly for the whole school to see.

## **Monitoring this policy.**

The attendance officer and the Headteacher monitor the attendance of all children and targets those whose attendance falls below 95% and works with families to improve this.

**Attendance is an agenda item on the curriculum agenda each term where the Headteacher presents a report on the activities to promote good attendance and the support given to families by school and the EWS. The Headteacher reports to the full Governing Body each term with regard to attendance through the Headteacher's report.**

The Headteacher and Governors use RAISEONLINE data and LA data to compare attendance at St Osyth C of E Primary school with national attendance rates and set targets.

This policy will be reviewed in January 2017