

# **Sutton St James Community Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy - September 2013**

### **1. Introduction**

- Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential at our school.
- We value all pupils and we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.
- Sutton St James School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them enabling them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent individuals who are able to make a positive contribution to their community.
- We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

### **2. Legal Framework**

- Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **3. Categorising absence**

- Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.
- Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.
- Where a parent does not phone in, the administrator will phone to check why the child is absent.

## Absence will be categorised as follows:

- Illness In most cases a telephone call from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.
- Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day.
- Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.
- Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- Family Holidays and Extended Leave Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Parents will be made aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child on holiday during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before holiday arrangements are made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence will be **unauthorised**.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence of more than 10 school days be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the holiday needs to be taken during term time.

- **Religious Observance** Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

- **Traveller Absence** The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

Our school will follow County guidance to protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance.

- **Late Arrival** Registration begins at 8:55 a.m., pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9:15 a.m. pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

The lateness will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, the parent/carer can evidence attendance at a medical appointment. On arrival at school, parents/carers should record time of arrival and reason for lateness in the late book.

- **Unauthorised absence** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

#### 4. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil

- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil

Our school will follow Lincolnshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

Our school believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Head teacher will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with

- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school daily before 9:15am if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time, where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday

## 6. Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every term the administrator will provide the Head Teacher with attendance data for each pupil within their class. The list will be colour coded as indicated below:

GREEN	<b>pupils with attendance between 100% and 95%</b>
AMBER	<b>pupils with attendance between 94% and 85%</b>
RED	<b>pupils with attendance below 85%</b>

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## 7. Support Systems

School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Referrals to support agencies
- Reward systems
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

In extreme cases where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, our school will consider the use of legal sanctions via the Education Welfare Services on behalf of Lincolnshire county Council.

### Policy to be reviewed by September 2014

Head teacher signature .....  
Date .....

Chair of Governors signature .....  
Date .....

## **Appendix 1**

### **Escalation of Attendance Interventions**

#### **GREEN pupils with attendance between 100% to 95%**

At the end of each term, parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance.

At the end of each big term, children with 100% attendance will receive a certificate of achievement.

At the end of each year, children with 100% attendance will receive a certificate of achievement

#### **AMBER pupils with attendance between 94% and 85%**

The headteacher will speak to the parent to:

- Confirm with the parent the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages

Where attendance has not improved following the initial contact with the pupil, letter 1 (Appendix 2) will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, letter 2 (Appendix 3) will be sent to parents inviting them to attend a meeting with the Headteacher.

#### **RED pupils with attendance below 85%**

Pupils who have attendance below 85% are considered to be persistently absent from school.

Letter 3 (Appendix 4) will be sent to parents inviting them to attend a School Attendance Panel (SAP), this may involve the Education Welfare Officer. The attendance will be closely monitored and targets set.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, possible outcomes of the School Attendance Panel meetings will be:

- Complete a CAF leading to multi agency support
- Refer to the Education Welfare Officer

<Date >

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

Re: Name of pupil dob

Dear <Name of Parent>

In accordance with our procedure to improve attendance and achievement, I am writing to you because your child's attendance has fallen to ...%. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

An attendance of less than 80% means an average of at least one day off every week and this will harm your child's future if it is not improved. I realise that there may be good reason for your child's recent absence and you may have already told us about it. However, it is vital that all pupils at our school attend at least 95% of the time and therefore we will be monitoring your child's attendance.

With your support, I would expect your child's attendance to improve. If it does not, you will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss your child's attendance and any support the school can give.

I would like to remind you that parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure their children receive an adequate education under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

If you have any concerns or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

I look forward to seeing an improvement in ..... 's attendance.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland

Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

Appendix 3 - Letter 2

<Date >

<Address>  
<Address>  
<Address>  
<Address>

Re: Name of pupil dob

Dear <Name of Parent>

On <date> I wrote to you advising that .....’s attendance had fallen to ...%. Unfortunately, there has been no significant improvement in his/her attendance and this is continuing to cause concern. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

I must remind you that regular attendance is a legal requirement and it is important that any issues that may be the cause of this poor attendance are addressed as soon as possible. You are invited to attend a meeting at school with the Headteacher on <date> at <time> to discuss your child’s attendance and offer our support in improving this.

If you are unable to attend on this date please contact the school to arrange a mutually convenient time.

Please complete the reply slip below to confirm you will be attending this meeting.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland  
Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

**Attendance Meeting <date>**

Child’s Name:.....

I will/will not be able to attend the attendance meeting on <date>

Signature:.....

**Appendix 4 – Letter 3**

<Date >

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

Re: Name of pupil      dob

Dear <Name of Parent>

Following our meeting on <date>, I note that there has been no significant improvement in <pupil's name>'s attendance. <Pupil's name>'s attendance for this academic year has fallen to...%. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

You are invited to attend a School Attendance Panel meeting on <date> to discuss the concerns around his/her attendance.

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please contact the school to rearrange. Please complete the reply slip below to confirm you will be attending.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland

Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

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**School Attendance Panel Meeting <date>**

Child's Name:.....

I will/will not be able to attend the attendance meeting on <date>

Signature:.....

<Date >

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

Re: Name of pupil dob

Dear <Name of Parent>

Following our School Attendance Panel meeting on <date>, I note that there has been no significant improvement in <pupil's name>'s attendance. <Pupil's name>'s attendance for this academic year has fallen to...%. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

It has now become necessary to refer <Pupil's name> and the concerns around his/her attendance to the school's Education Welfare Officer. They will contact you in due course.

Should you have anything you wish to discuss concerning this matter, I will continue to be available. Please contact the school should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland

Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

<Date >

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

Dear <Name of Parent>

Our attendance records show that <name of child> has been late on <number of lates> occasions since the start of this term.

We are sure you will understand lateness can be very disruptive to the school day. Missing the start of lessons means instructions and other essential information will have to be repeated, which will delay the start of lessons and young people's learning.

The school day starts at 8:55a.m. and register closes at 9:15a.m. Late arrival after this time will be marked as unauthorised absence.

If you are having problems getting your child to school, please do not hesitate to contact us to see how we can work together to resolve the situation.

I look forward to seeing an improvement in <name of child>'s punctuality.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland  
Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

**Appendix 6 – Absence**

<Date >

<Address>  
<Address>  
<Address>  
<Address>

Dear <Name of Parent>

Our records show <name of pupil> was not at school on the date/s listed below. Currently, we do not have any explanation for this absence. If you have already sent a note, please make sure <name of pupil> has given it to their class teacher. If no note is received, this absence will be coded as unauthorised and this will remain on your child's attendance record.

We ask that parents/carers contact the school on the first day of a child's absence. The telephone number for the school is: 01945 440209

Beside the dates below please enter the reason <name of pupil> was absent. If you were unaware of the absence enter a question mark:

<Date>:  
<Date>:  
<Date>:  
<Date>:

Signed Parent/Carer\_\_\_\_\_

Please return this letter to the school office.

If you have any queries or would like to talk to anyone about attendance please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland  
Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

## Appendix 7 – Doctor’s Note

<Date >

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

<Address>

Dear <Name of Parent>

Since the start of the school year <name of pupil> has been absent from school for <number of days> days due to illness. This is concerning as it means <name of pupil>’s attendance overall is <percentage absence>, which is significantly below what the school expects. We understand that some absence due to illness is unavoidable. However it is important the school are aware of any on-going health problems so we can put the correct support in place.

We are sure that you are aware that every school day counts and missing any time from school results in lost learning. We want to support <name of pupil> and make certain that <he/she> does not get behind with work or miss out on any opportunities school offers.

Due to the large amount of illness absence <name of pupil> has had, we will require a doctor’s note or appointment card for any future periods of absence relating to illness.

We will continue to monitor <name of pupils> attendance. If you wish to discuss <name of pupil> attendance with us please contact the school on 01945 440209. I will be happy to talk with you or arrange a meeting if required.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cleland  
Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

## Sutton St James C.P. School

### APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

#### FOR ANNUAL HOLIDAY OR EXTENDED VISIT OVERSEAS

As a parent or carer you are strongly urged to avoid booking holidays or visits overseas during term-time. Should this be absolutely unavoidable then you should fill in this form and return it to the headteacher.

The conditions under which leave of absence for term-time holidays or visits overseas may be granted are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. Parents are reminded that they do not have any entitlement to term-time leave for their children. At school, we will not usually agree to authorise leave for holidays or extended visits overseas during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances which warrant this. (The reduced cost of a holiday taken during term-time will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance.) Permission will not be given if it is applied for after the holiday or visit has taken place. Usually, a child will not be granted more than 10 school days leave in any school year. 10 school days equates to 5% of missed education in each academic year.

Should leave be taken after permission has been withheld then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child's report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and possible legal proceedings.

I request that \_\_\_\_\_(Name of Child)

be granted leave of absence from Sutton St James C.P. School

from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of days \_\_\_\_\_

in order to take part in an annual holiday/extended visit overseas.

It is necessary to take my child out of school because:

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Signature of Parent/Carer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Carer (*please print*) \_\_\_\_\_

Request granted \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher Date \_\_\_\_\_

Request refused \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher Date \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for refusal \_\_\_\_\_

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