

Attendance policy

Approved by The Full Governing Board

On

7th November 2022

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Authorisation

Authorised by: Full Governing Board

Change History

| Editor | Comment | Date | Version |
|------------|---|----------|---------|
| T Farrelly | Update of November 2012 policy – minor amendments | 15/11/13 | 1.3 |
| A Roseweir | Review | | 1 |
| T Farrelly | Update and minor amendments | Jan 2016 | 2.0 |
| J Stawman | Policy re-written | Nov 2017 | 2.1 |
| FGB | Agreed by the Full Governing Board | 14.1.17 | 3.0 |
| LGB | Agreed by the LGB | 19.11.19 | 4.0 |
| N Grant | Policy reviewed | 2.11.22 | 5.0 |
| LGB | Agreed by the LGB | 7.11.22 | 5.1 |

Document References

| # | Title | Date | Version |
|---|--------------------|------------|---------|
| | Education Act 1996 | | |
| | Children Act 1989 | | |
| | Equality Act 2010 | April 2010 | |

Distribution List

| Name | Date | Method |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Whole school community | November | MLE |
| Governors – via SharePoint | November 2019 | SharePoint |

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

To ensure that all pupils, regardless of race, ethnicity, linguistics, creed, gender, ability or special needs or any other protected characteristic (Equality Act 2010) receive a suitable education through regular and punctual attendance.

Background

Regular attendance at school is a legal requirement and Section 444 (1) and 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 already exist to enforce attendance through the courts in appropriate circumstances. The legal responsibility for compliance with these acts rests with the parents and courts have the powers to fine, imprison or impose various orders.

Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| OMR | Optical Mark Register |
| EWO | Education Welfare Officer |
| EWS | Education Welfare Service |
| SEND | Special Education Need |
| FPN | Fixed Penalty Notice |
| KS | Key Stage |

POLICY – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

The school actively encourages regular attendance. Good attendance and being on time are essential if pupils are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills, which will equip them for life. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and may lead to educational disadvantage. Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend school. It is the school's responsibility to support attendance and to take seriously problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Pupils attend for 190 days each year – a total of 38 weeks.

Excellent attendance is a key factor in high achievement and we believe here at Courtwood, that parents, carers, teachers and our Governors, have a duty to encourage maximum attendance at school. Parents and carers of children at Courtwood are responsible for ensuring that their children come to school every day and arrive on time. We work in partnership with our parents & carers in order to achieve this.

Regular school attendance is a parent's legal obligation and we recognise that "parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly" (DFE 1996).

AIMS AND TARGETS

- To promote good attendance and punctuality through a positive school ethos and culture.
- To maintain and improve the overall attendance of children at school.
- To improve children's attainment through good attendance.
- To encourage parents to ensure that children arrive at school on time.
- To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school including parents, pupils, teachers and governors.
- To positively reward good pupil attendance and punctuality and acknowledge good staff attendance.
- To provide information about the range of support services that parents can access.

Parents can support regular school attendance by:

- Making sure your child leaves for school with plenty of time to arrive on time.
- Supporting and encouraging your child by attending parents' evenings and other events.
- Contacting the school to discuss any concerns regarding your child's attendance.
- Working in partnership with the school to resolve any issues that are affecting their child's attendance.

ATTENDANCE

ABSENCES

There are two types of absence – authorised and unauthorised.

What is an Authorised Absence?

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. Every half a day of absence from school must be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Many absences are for justifiable reasons and will therefore be authorised by the school.

These include absence for:

- Illness (frequent absence due to illness will be monitored and persistent absence may lead to a request for medical evidence.)
- Religious Observance or
- Compassionate leave such as bereavement of a close family member.

All other absences, including persistent lateness, must be treated as unauthorised.

What is an Unauthorised Absence?

These are absences where the reasons are not considered acceptable by the school and officers working on behalf of the Local Authority. These include but are not limited to:

- If it is your child's birthday
- Parents/Carers woke up late/unwell and therefore do not think they should send their child to school.
- Your child has non-infectious conditions.

- Your child is on antibiotics (the school office can administer antibiotics on prescription that are required to be taken 4 times daily). Please see the Medical Needs Policy for further details.
- Siblings are unwell.
- A Doctor's or Dentist Appointment that lasts all day.
- Weddings.
- Unauthorised lates (where pupils arrive late for school [after the register has closed] this will be marked as unauthorised absence for that session, even though they may arrive later.)
- Holidays during term time.

Absence due to Illness

Communication: Working in partnership with parents

All parents are asked to contact the school by 9:00am on the first day of absence and maintain contact with the school throughout the absence. If no notification is received about a child's absence, then a member of the school's Administration Team will phone you to establish the reason for the absence. If we are unable to reach you or there is no response, absences will be unauthorised and our EWO may be notified.

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases a parents' note explaining that their child was ill can be accepted without question or concern. In exceptional circumstances further evidence of a child's illness may be requested. However, schools can challenge parents' statements or seek additional evidence if they have any concerns regarding a child's attendance.

Sickness that continues over 5 days may require a letter from the GP depending on the circumstances. Persistent absence/illness may also lead to a request for medical evidence. If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness, the absence will be treated as authorised.

The types of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- Attendance is less than 90%.
- There are frequent odd days' absences due to reported illness.
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated.
- Where there is a particular medical problems and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Parents/carers should make dental/doctor appointments for after school hours or during the school holidays. If it is within school hours that cannot be avoided, we will require proof of appointment. Leave for medical or dental appointments will be authorised where confirmation has been received from the parents [either in person, telephone call or writing]. The child should attend school before/after the appointment depending on the time of the appointment. For example, if the child has an appointment at 10am, we expect them to be returned to school after this.

Absence due to Holidays

Requests for leave of absence (exceptional circumstances)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 have amended Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

At the welcome meetings for children about to join the school, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. At this initial meeting parents are asked to arrange their family holidays within school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted. The school's policy relating to authorisation of holidays is also communicated to parents.

Procedure for requesting Leave of Absence

Holidays taken during term time are strongly discouraged and schools can only agree to absence if they believe there are exceptional circumstances that warrant it. All leave of absence requests will therefore be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional.

A parent/carer should complete an absence request form (available from the school office) and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the date required. The Principal will only authorise a request in **exceptional circumstances**, and for a maximum **5 days** during the child's whole school career. Whilst the Principal will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

- No holidays will be authorised during the month of May in Years 1-6 and June for Year 1 and Year 4.
- The Principal will consider requests for absence due to public performance participation. The pupil must then acquire a license from the Local Authority.
- Pupils with medical needs are considered individually; the school will liaise with parents and medical staff to support the child's education.
- Holidays taken owing to close familial bereavement abroad will be considered sympathetically.

Please note: The Board of Governors of Courtwood Primary School have made the decision not to authorise families taking holidays during term time, other than exceptional circumstances.

If the Head teacher deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a reply confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.

If the Principal deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised, a reply informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence been taken will be sent to each parent. 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). If this penalty is not paid, the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

Children Missing from Education

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 their prompt return to suitable education. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff should follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

Schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days education.

PUNCTUALITY

Lateness

It is important that children arrive for school punctually to ensure a calm and purposeful start to the day. Being on time is very important. When children are late for school, they not only miss valuable learning time but also disrupt their classmates who are already settled. For some children who are persistently late this can be an embarrassing experience, which may lead to uncooperative and disruptive behaviour at school and home.

The school gates open at 8:30am. Children can come into school, supervised by staff, from this time.

The school bell is rung promptly at 8:45am and the main gate and external school doors are closed shortly afterwards. Registration period is from 8:45 – 8:50am for all pupils. Pupils arriving after this times will be marked late. The register closes at 9:15am. After 9:15am, your child will receive a U code for Unauthorised. A U code is the equivalent of an absence mark and will negatively affect the child's overall attendance.

If your child is regularly late a letter will be sent to parent/carers informing them. Depending on the occurrence, this may include our Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). Persistent lateness after 9:15am will be monitored and may lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice and fine by the Local Authority.

Late Collections

For different but equally important reasons your child should be collected on time. Waiting and not knowing why parents are late can cause anxiety for children, especially when they observe that every member of their class has been collected and they have all gone home.

Occasionally a parent/carer may be late to pick up their child/children due to an emergency or unforeseen circumstance. If this occurs:

- Parents/carers are required to contact the school if they are going to be late collecting.
- If a child is collected more than ten minutes late three or more times during a half term they will receive a letter from the Principal.
- If a child is collected more than ten minutes late on a regular basis then a charge may be applied at the discretion of the Principal.
- The charge for late collection will be £5.00 for every ten minutes late after the first ten minutes.
- If a known adult has not collected a child by 4.00 pm and the school has not been made aware of the circumstances, a call to Social Services may be made, in line with advice regarding safeguarding procedures.

Educational Welfare Consultant/ Monitoring

The school works very closely with the Education Welfare Service to help support families whose attendance or punctuality is not currently meeting the school's targets. Initially parents will be contacted and invited in to the school to meet with the Education Welfare Officer, to try and understand and address any barriers that may be affecting attendance (such as concerns about bullying, learning needs and family circumstances including a change of address and parental separation.) Every attempt will be made by the school to work in partnership with you to ensure that your child attends school regularly and on time. Should attendance and/or punctuality not improve, your case may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. Parents and carers may then be asked to attend a meeting with the school Education Welfare Officer.

The Local Authority may in case of unacceptable unauthorised absence, issue a Fixed Penalty Fine (FPN) or enforce attendance. Please be aware that legal measures may be taken against you should no resolution be found, including a FPN. This is a route we wish to avoid.

An FPN is a fine. Parents who are issued a FPN will be expected to pay a fine of £60 per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 14 days, it will increase to £120 per parent, per child.

In worst case scenarios, when there has been no improvement in attendance, the Local Authority may prosecute the parent under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The School has a named senior member of staff with responsibility for attendance and punctuality (Deputy Head – Natasha Grant), who works closely with the Designated Safeguarding Leads (Principal - Natasha Grant, SENCO – Lauren Cleaves) where there are attendance concerns. The administrator responsible for attendance is Katie Pratt. Our school Educational Welfare Officer is Sarah Philpott from WPA.

Monitoring and Communication

- At Parent's Evenings, teachers give parents an attendance report. If relevant, they explain the link between poor attendance and reduced attainment. Newsletters regularly have an item promoting good attendance and making links with attainment.
- In the end of year school report, pupils receive a rating for attendance and punctuality.
- Attendance is promoted through assemblies and visual displays.
- Regular policy reviews and staff training sessions support the school's work on attendance.
- Weekly half day visits by the EWO to work with Natasha Grant, attendance lead ensure children are tracked and monitored rigorously and parents invited in for meetings as necessary.

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

We aim to encourage good attendance and punctuality to instil good habits in children by providing the following incentives:

At Half Terms (October/February and June)

- Pupils receive recognition for 100% attendance each half term by earning a 100% sticker presented in assembly.
- Pupils reaching the school target of at least 95%, receive recognition for 95% - 99% attendance each half term by earning a 'Great attendance' sticker presented in assembly.

At End of Terms (December, April and July)

- Children who have 100% attendance for the whole term will be presented with a small reward (attendance bug/pencil/wristband etc)
- Children who achieve 95 – 99% attendance for the whole term will receive a pop out attendance award/certificate.
- The class with the best percentage attendance will receive a treat (e.g a non-uniform day/ funky feet day/ DVD afternoon)

End of Year: July

- Bronze certificate presented to those achieving 95+ % attendance for the academic year.
- Silver certificate presented to those achieving 97+ % attendance for the academic year.
- Gold certificate presented to those achieving 99+ % attendance for the academic year.

For STAFF/OFFICE ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

- Attendance registers at Courtwood are online through our SIMs package.
- Registers must be taken twice a day: at the start of the morning session and the afternoon session.
- If the school was closed due to adverse weather conditions, fire or other structural damage or for in service training, no attendance registers are needed.
- Registration period is from 8.45 – 8.50am for all pupils. Pupils arriving after these times will be marked late. **The register closes at 9.15 am.** Children who arrive after 9.15 am will be marked as an unauthorised absence.
- Agreed national codes are used to show the various reasons for absence.

LATENESS

- A pupil, who arrives after the register has been taken by the class teacher, should be signed in by the office staff and the arrival time noted.
- Pupils who arrive between 8.50am and 9.15am will be marked late, but present.
- Persistent lateness after 9.15 am will be monitored and may ultimately lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice and fine by the local authority.

APPOINTMENTS

- Children leaving the premises for doctor / hospital appointments must leave via the main door, where they will be signed out by a member of staff and the time recorded.
- On their return they will be signed back in, with the time recorded.

MONITORING

- Registers are kept for 3 years.
- The school Education Welfare Officer meets with the school attendance lead weekly and reports on individual children/classes/whole school attendance figures.
- Termly report completed by Education Welfare Officer for school and shared with Principal and governors.
- This information is reported to governors termly The Deputy Principal meets with the attendance officer regularly to monitor attendance patterns. Each case is looked at individually. Decisions are taken to:
 1. Take no action as attendance is reasonable.
 2. Phone and request further details.
 3. Send a standard letter to the parents to arrange a meeting. Copies to be filed in the attendance folder and a copy given to the class teacher for information. Targets may be set at this stage; in this case there will be further monitoring / meetings.
 4. Refer the case to the Education Welfare Officer - When cases are referred to the Education Welfare Officer, this will involve further meetings with parents. If pupils' attendance does not improve, then a FPN and Court action may result.

SAFETY

- In the case of an evacuation of the premises due to an emergency e.g. fire, the attendance registers and 'in / out' book will be collected by the secretary and taken to the playground.
- In the case of a lunchtime evacuation, a senior member of staff will be responsible for collecting the registers and the 'in / out' book as well as accounting for the pupils.
- The class teachers/supervisors will then call their registers to account for all their pupils.
- The secretary will collect the registers before returning to the building or relocating.



Courtwood Primary School

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

For further information please see Attendance Policy on School website

www.courtwood.org.uk

Please complete and return it to the school office at least 2 weeks before planned absence in order for the request to be processed.

NAME OF CHILD _____ CLASS _____

First day of absence _____ Last day of absence _____

Number of days _____

Please explain reason for request or attach a separate letter:

Signed _____ Print Name _____

Date _____

OFFICE USE ONLY:

The absence is authorised

☐

This absence is unauthorised as it does not comply with our Attendance Policy

☐

Signed _____ Principal

Date _____