

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Codsall Middle School

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Pupil Attendance Policy

November 2016

Principles

- Parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend school.
- Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.
- The school will promote good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials.
- Good attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately by the school.
- All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child.
- We will never cover up absence or to give in to pressure to excuse students from attending.
- Our attendance policy will include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils.

Legal Framework

- Parents have a duty to ensure that children of school age attend school. Permitting absence from school without a good reason (condoned absence) is an offence by the parent.
- Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and record whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent.
- If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent from school every half-day absence from school has to be classified, as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**.
- Only the school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.
- Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more, where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence, to the Local Authority to seek advice from an Education Welfare Worker.

Definition of Authorised Absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause.

Definition of Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Procedures for Parents and Pupils

Absence/lateness

- Absence should be reported by telephone to the school on the first day of absence.
- When absence is expected (known in advance) it should be notified in writing in advance to the school for approval e.g. a family funeral or hospital appointment.
- Pupils arriving late to school (after 8.35am or 1.10pm) should report directly to Reception to register. However, any arrival after 9.35am will be counted as an absence.
- School will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc.,

Family Holidays

On 1st September 2013 a new law came into effect with regard to authorised holidays for pupils' during term time. Prior to the change the law stated that “a pupil may be granted leave of absence from the school to go away on holiday” where the Headteacher considered that there were “special circumstances relating to that application”. This section has been deleted and there is now no rule which allows for authorisation be given specifically for holidays. The replacement section states that “leave of absence shall not be granted” unless the Headteacher considers that there are “exceptional circumstances relating to that application”.

What are “exceptional circumstances”?

- Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement).

The changes make it clear that Headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance. It is the decision of the Headteacher as to what might be considered an exceptional circumstance and parents should not expect their request to be granted as a right.

It is our policy:

- It will be the exception, not the rule; that would lead to a 'Leave of Absence' request being granted.
- Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence in term time need to put the request in writing to the Headteacher in advance and before booking.
- Each application will be judged individually and on its own merit.
- Full disclosure of reasons must be submitted, however further information may be requested should the Headteacher feel this would support an application.
- Any leave not granted will be recorded as unauthorised absence should this leave still be taken.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence is at the Headteacher's discretion and is not an automatic right.

Penalty Notices

Codsall Middle School will work closely with the Education Welfare and the LST18 to ensure regular attendance at school. Education Welfare can take legal action against a parent/carer if the student does not attend school regularly and there is not a medical reason for the absence.

This action might take one or two forms, either issuing a penalty notice or prosecution in the magistrate's court.

Changes to Penalty Notices for Absences

From 23rd February 2015, Staffordshire Local Authority have made the following changes to the county's criteria for issuing penalty notices:

- Removal of the requirement for attendance to be below 87% before a Penalty Notice can be issued.
- Parents can now receive more than one Penalty Notice per academic year.
- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence do not have to be consecutive to trigger a Penalty Notice and can be either during an academic year or over a rolling calendar year.
- The 10 sessions can be made up of a minimum of 4 unauthorised leave of absences plus any 6 unauthorised general absences.
- Monitoring and calculating holiday absences will now be monitored across the previous three terms, regardless of academic year.

Support

Parents whose children are experiencing attendance difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

School Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in dealing with individual absences:

- First day contact is in place; where a parent has failed to notify school of absence for that day, admin staff will send a 'Teachers 2 Parents' text asking parents to contact school with a reason for their child's absence or telephone parents to verify the absence.
- Where a pupil goes missing during the school day i.e. after registration parents will be notified by telephone.

Persistent absenteeism

- Every two weeks an attendance check is made for pupils with less than 90% attendance and the names of these pupils passed to the appropriate Leader of Achievement for action (unless there is a known medical condition which necessitates absence).
- Leaders of Achievement/Senior Leader meet regularly with the EWW and they see pupils whose attendance is giving serious cause for concern. They also carefully consider the absence of any vulnerable pupils.
- A first notification letter of concern, with a copy of the registration certificate, will be sent home to the parents of identified pupils.
- If there is no improvement within two weeks in the attendance of identified pupils, a second letter of notification will be sent home requesting their parents to attend a meeting with the Leader of Achievement/Senior Leader and EWW (the pupil will be brought into the meeting at an appropriate stage).
- Medical evidence for future absences will be requested at this point and absences will be deemed unauthorised if medical evidence is not produced e.g. sight of doctor's appointment card or other document issued on a relevant date.
- If attendance still fails to improve a formal referral will be made to the EWW.
- A 'cold call' will be made to parents to warn them of intended prosecution if the pupil reaches 20 unauthorised sessions.
- When 20 unauthorised sessions (including unauthorised leave of absence) have been reached the EWW may issue a penalty notice which could result in a £60 fine if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not received by the Authority, there may be an automatic prosecution in court for which a £1000.00 fine may be possible.
- Prosecution will be made under the Education Act 1996 s.444. The court could issue an Educational Supervision Order for the child. The maximum penalty for parents convicted is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Attendance Initiatives

- Attendance is recorded by pupils in their planner on a half term basis.
- All parents/carers receive a colour coded letter informing them of their child's attendance termly.
- Pupils with 100% attendance receive a bronze, silver or gold pin badge and certificate each term.
- A termly prize draw for gift vouchers is undertaken for each year group for 100% attendance.
- All pupils with a 100% attendance receive a termly non uniform day.
- On a weekly basis the year group with the highest attendance for the previous week are first in for lunch on a Friday.

School Targets

The school has adopted the following attendance target:

The attendance for 2015/2016 was: 97%

The attendance target for 2016/2017 is: 97%

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

School Staff with Attendance Responsibilities:

Mrs P Baker	Senior Leader responsible for behaviour and attendance
Mrs M Davison	Leader of Achievement KS3
Mrs S Deas	Leader of Achievement KS2
Mrs C Tivey	Responsible for attendance, First Day Contact and Late arrivals and attendance data
Mrs W Griffin	Responsible for Holiday applications on behalf of the Headteacher

Date of Policy updated and approved 4th November 2016

Date of Policy review November 2017

Signed  Chair of Governors