

DONINGTON COWLEY ENDOWED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy has the full agreement of the Governing Body and was agreed at their meeting on 26th March 2014.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent of every child of compulsory school age has a duty to ensure that the child receives efficient full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and any special educational needs he or she may have.

Donington Cowley Endowed Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils. The school believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end the School will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted upon as quickly as possible.

2. AIMS

It is recognised that

- ◆ All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- ◆ No pupils should be deprived of their opportunities by either their own non-attendance or that of other pupils from receiving an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- ◆ In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- ◆ Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- ◆ Situations may exist beyond the control of pupils and/or parents, which schools need to address in partnership with external agencies.
- ◆ The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer groups and prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

3. EXPECTATIONS

We expect the following from our pupils

- ◆ That they will attend school regularly.
- ◆ That they will arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.

We expect the following from parents:

- ◆ To ensure their children attend school.
- ◆ To contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- ◆ To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done any homework set.
- ◆ To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep them away from school.
- ◆ To avoid holidays in term time other than in **exceptional circumstances**.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- ◆ Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- ◆ Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to anybody without the consent of the student or their parent/carer).
- ◆ We will take steps through rewards to encourage good attendance.
- ◆ A quality education that allows every child to fulfil their maximum potential.

4. ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH REWARDS:

Attendance will be encouraged through:

- ◆ A certificate, provided by Lincolnshire County Council, for 100% attendance achieved throughout the year. (For reward of this certificate attendance is 100% if there has been no unauthorised or authorised absence).
- ◆ A certificate provided by Lincolnshire County Council, for 100% attendance achieved throughout their time in primary education. (For reward of this certificate attendance is 100% if there has been no unauthorised or authorised absence).
- ◆ The G2 computer package provides the school with easily accessible attendance records, which promote speedy evaluation of attendance levels and timely responses by the school.

5. REGISTRATION:

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, it is the legal responsibility of parents to see that their child/children receive(s) regular education suitable to their age, aptitude and abilities.

The Importance of Registration:

- ◆ An attendance register, electronic or manual, must be kept on which, at the **BEGINNING** of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent.
- ◆ Manuscript registers must be kept in ink and corrections must be made in such a way that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable.

- ◆ 'Present' marks should be recorded in black ink; authorised absences should be entered in red initially with the symbol for categorising the absence in black.
- ◆ Where electronic registers are used, hard copy, current for each session, must be kept to observe the spirit of the law and for Health and Safety reasons.

Categorising Absence:

- ◆ **Only the Headteacher**, in the context of the law **can approve absence**, not parents.
- ◆ Emerging patterns of authorised absence notified by class teachers should be reported to the Headteacher.
- ◆ Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.
- ◆ Class Teachers who experience difficulty in receiving a parental note should inform the Headteacher.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences

- ◆ Illness.
- ◆ Family bereavements.
- ◆ In **exceptional circumstances only**, a family holiday of up to ten school days
- ◆ Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- ◆ Days of religious observance.
- ◆ Fixed term exclusion
- ◆ Permanent exclusion until removed from roll.
- ◆ Off-site education.

Absences should **not** be authorised under the following circumstances.

- ◆ Holiday absence taken in term time unless the Headteacher has agreed that the circumstances are **exceptional**.
- ◆ Shopping trips.
- ◆ Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- ◆ Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- ◆ Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- ◆ No reason given.

Holiday Absence

Parents wishing to request absence from school need to write to the Headteacher. Leave of absence should be granted only due to exceptional circumstances relating to the application. The parent/carer must write to the school explaining the exceptional circumstances. The guidance issued by the Department for Education states that leave of absence is unlikely to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Commencement of section 155 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

From 3 September 2012, the criminal offence for parents who fail to secure their children's regular attendance at school will be extended to include failure to attend at alternative provision. Parents will be legally responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age attend the alternative provision arranged for them.

This could be in circumstances where the child has been excluded for a fixed period from school or where the child has been asked to attend for educational purposes. Parents must be notified of the arrangements by the appropriate authority and informed of the consequence of non-attendance.

This legislation puts attendance at any alternative provision on the same footing as attendance at a school or pupil referral unit (PRU), and supports the Government's focus on improving attendance for all pupils.

RE: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE and HOLIDAYS DURING TERM-TIME

At Donington Cowley Endowed Primary School the highest possible attendance rate for every child is a school priority and we are constantly monitoring attendance and punctuality to ensure that each individual can achieve their best.

The school is *extremely unlikely to authorise any absence due to holidays during term-time and leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances*. Should parents or carers choose to take their child on holiday during term-time they must accept that unless there are 'exceptional' circumstances then a code 'G' is entered in the register which indicates a holiday that is not authorised by the school.

The information below demonstrates a summary of how school attendance may affect a child's future progress and we would ask that you bear this in mind before considering to allow your child to remain absent from school for *any avoidable* reason including holidays during term-time

Above *Fewer than 6 days' absence in an academic year*

97% Very good attendance. Pupils with this level of attendance have the best chance of achieving the grades of which they are capable and this leads to the best prospects for work, college or university.

95% *Fewer than 10 days' absence in a year*

Pupils are likely to achieve their target grades, and have good opportunities for work, college and university, but will need to invest time in catching up any work missed.

90% *19 days absent from school*

Pupils with this level of attendance are missing a month of school per year and this is likely to have a detrimental effect on their achievement; it will be difficult for them to achieve of their best.

85% *29 days absent from school – DFE classify this level as persistently absent*

These pupils are missing six weeks of their education and will find it extremely difficult to keep up and achieve of their best.

80% *Pupils with this level of attendance are missing a year of school over the five years that they attend School.*

It will be almost impossible to keep up with their work and these pupils are at risk of serious underachievement. Parents of students with this level of attendance could be issued with a penalty notice.

School and home working together can promote good habits for life for every pupil and we look forward to your support for your child's education by ensuring very good attendance.

School attendance and the Law

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives powers to the Local Authority to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Increasing school attendance is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's achievement chances, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent of every child of compulsory school age has a duty to ensure that the child receives efficient full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and any special educational needs he or she may have.

Where a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child at a school at which they are a registered pupil then the parent may be guilty of an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Where a child has not attended regularly at school the Local Authority has the options of issuing a fixed penalty notice in respect of the parents of the child, bringing proceedings before the family courts for an Education Supervision Order or prosecuting the parents under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Non school attendance includes any day when a child should be in attendance at school and they are absent without the authorisation of the school and includes unauthorised holidays during term time and persistent late arrival at school beyond the registration period.

Lincolnshire considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- ◆ Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps).
- ◆ Inappropriate parentally condoned absence.
- ◆ Where a child is absent from school due to unauthorised absence of 15% or above over a six week period.
- ◆ Failure to return to school on the agreed date (may also result in your child losing their school place).
- ◆ Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)

The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/ carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions. Attendance is of such importance to all of us however that the authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing a child's schooling.

Penalty Notices will only be issued within the terms of the Code of Conduct published by Lincolnshire County Council in January 2014.

Parents will always be forewarned by the school of the possible issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice through a Fixed Penalty Notice Formal Warning Letter.

There is no right of appeal against a Penalty Notice. Full details of the procedures for issuing Penalty Notices are to be found in the Code of Conduct, Lincolnshire County Council, January 2014.

All administrative functions in respect of the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices and the collection of payments for the same will be undertaken by the Local Authority.

Please visit: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/schools/welfare

NB: PUPILS WHO ARE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL BUT TAKING PART IN AN APPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY SHOULD BE MARKED WITH A 'V' (EDUCATIONAL VISIT) BUT ARE COUNTED AS PRESENT FOR CALCULATING PERFORMANCE TABLE DATA. THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES FALL WITHIN THIS CATEGORY.

- ◆ Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.
- ◆ Pupils receiving approved education off site, e.g. those receiving specialist support or those in receipt of home tuition but remaining on the role of the school should be marked with a 'B' (educated off site).

Lateness

- ◆ For the purpose of good discipline a pupil will be deemed late if they arrive after the close of registers in the morning or in the afternoon.

Registration Procedure:

Registration will be undertaken by the class teacher twice daily. This will be done for morning sessions at 8.55am and for afternoon sessions at 1.10 pm. Where a child arrives at school more than fifteen minutes after the end of the registration periods, they will be counted as being late.

Full details of symbols used and supplementary reference letters may be found in the registers.

The registers will be taken to the school office at the end of each registration period.

Transfer of manually recorded data to the electronic registration package will be done where possible on a Friday afternoon (weekly). In the event of this not being done transfer will take place as soon as possible.

In the event of a school trip taking place, class lists must be taken on the visit which clearly indicate the presence or absence of a child.

Office staff will contact the parents/carers of the children (from details held in the emergency contact file) listed and seek to establish the child's safety and reason for absence.

6. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Information regarding procedures for notification of absence are issued to parents at least once a year.

Contact by Telephone/Visit

Where a parent telephones the school or comes in to explain their son/daughters absence, a 'Reason for Absence' slip (copy attached) should be completed by the Administrator or member of staff taking the message and this slip must be forwarded to the class teacher at the earliest convenience.

Information by Letter

A letter must be supplied by the parent/carer explaining non-attendance of their son/daughter. These letters will be kept with the registers for the full academic year and then sent to the Administrator. The Headteacher is to be informed of any absence which:-

- ◆ Appears irregular (below 90%).
- ◆ Shows regular patterns e.g. repeated absence on the same day/s of each week.
- ◆ Is unexplained i.e. unauthorised.

A standard letter will be sent to parents who fail to give a reason for their child's absence.

7. EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE:

Good relations and working practices are essential. Agencies have difficult roles in that they endeavour to support both the school in meeting its legal obligations as well as the home and pupil in ensuring that the latter's educational opportunities are maximised. Some parents need the support of these agencies so that they can fulfil their legal obligations to their children.

(a) The Education Welfare Service has been described as the "attendance enforcement arm" of most local authorities (DES 1991) which complements the role of the school.

(b) The Lincolnshire Education Welfare Service will always endeavour to provide schools in Lincolnshire with a service that recognises the uniqueness of the school and the community it serves.

(c) The Education Welfare Officers will continue to work closely with teachers, pupils and their families, whilst the priority will relate to attendance matters, other activities may include behaviour problems, exclusions, special educational needs, child protection, child employment and children in entertainment and any other problems that prevent a young person benefiting fully from the educational opportunities available to them.

(d) The Education Welfare Service would wish to support the school in the following ways:
Providing an annual audit/health check of policies and procedures to ensure legal compliance. Absence screening to check for unauthorised absences. Preparation of evidence prior to submission of cases to the Educational Welfare Legal Panel. Liaison with County Solicitor, parents/carers to ensure correct procedures are implemented. Attendance in court on behalf of the LA.

The Headteacher will contact the Welfare Officer as necessary to raise any issues causing concern. Staff should bring any issues causing concern to the attention of the Headteacher as soon as possible. Following referral of any matter to the EWS the school will take part fully in monitoring the situation and work fully with the relevant parties and agencies in the interest of the individual child. Such monitoring and co-operation may well concern matters other than those directly relating to attendance issues.

8. ADMINISTRATION

Staff are reminded of the importance of keeping fully accurate records of attendance. The completion of Department of Education and County returns e.g. Pupil Level Annual Census return (Plasc) is greatly simplified by full and accurate completion of register summaries etc. The Headteacher must be informed immediately if staff receive information that a child has left or may be leaving the school.

9. REVIEW

The policy will be updated to reflect changes to national and local guidance and/or regulations as necessary.
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