

The Attendance Policy

Croyland Primary School

August 2023

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APPROVED:	
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Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed for use by school staff and governors to ensure best possible attendance outcomes for all pupils at the school. It is also intended to provide clear structures for attendance practice and to provide guidance for parents/carers and pupils.

The purpose of writing this attendance policy is to ensure that all Croyland staff and the Governing Body are fully aware of the actions that are necessary, in order to promote good attendance.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to below 90% by the end of the school year, has missed at least 20 school days. If this continues every school year from Foundation Stage to Year 6, it equates to half a school year. This will undoubtedly leave your child with academic and social gaps or, academically behind their peers as they leave us.

OUR ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

The purpose of writing this policy is to make explicit to all those within our school community their roles, responsibilities and actions within our attendance strategy.

Our strategy is underpinned by four foci;

- The promotion of good attendance;
- The reduction of absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- Acting early to address patterns of absence;
- The building of strong, trusting relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

The school staff and governors of Croyland Primary School, alongside the LEA, believe that it is essential for all pupils to attend school regularly and avoid any absence. Any loss of time at school can adversely affect a child's attainment as all pupils benefit from regular school attendance.

To this end we will do all we can to encourage parent/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Designated person responsible for pupil attendance: Lucy Deakin, Headteacher

As a school community, our focus is to:

- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are valued by all staff.
- Ensure a pupil's achievement is not hindered by low levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Raise awareness to parents, carers and our pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of education and that potential is hindered by unnecessary absence.
- Actively challenge the attitudes of those parents and pupils who give low priority to attendance and punctuality
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and are intrinsically motivated to come to school.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

EXPECTATIONS

We expect that pupils on roll:

- Attend school on each day the school is open to pupils as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so;
- Arrive at registration sessions and lessons punctually;
- The gates opens at 8.40 – the school operates a staggered start to the school day. All pupils can enter school anytime from 8.40am;
- The entry doors close at 8.55am – after this time, pupils enter the school via the office and will be marked by administrative staff in the register as late (before registration closes – L);
- After 9:30am, if there has been no request for late attendance or an alternative reason for lateness is not provided then the child will be registered as late (after registration closes – U);
- Attend all the required lessons and engage with the education being provided;
- Arrive at school appropriately prepared for the day;

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Discuss promptly with the Headteacher any problems that might deter their child from attending school;
- Provide up to date contact details;
- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school each day punctually and properly prepared for the school day;
- Contact the school before 8:30am whenever their child/children is/are unable to attend school, on the first day and every subsequent day of his/her/their absence, and send a note/email detailing the reasons for absence;
- The school reserves the right to ask a parent to provide medical evidence where children are ill on the first and/or last days of term/half term;
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school;
- Make written requests to the Headteacher in advance of foreseen absences
- Collect their child promptly at the correct time;
- Provide at least three contact details for each child, at least one of which should be for a person or persons outside of the immediate family;

We expect administrative staff to:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- Monitor every pupil's attendance;
- Contact parents as soon as possible (by 10:00am) on the first day of absence where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes giving a reason for the absence and the likely date of return;
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LEA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
- Ensure irregular or concerning patterns of attendance are identified early and steps are taken to improve attendance wherever possible;
- Refer a parent who is repeatedly late to collect their child from school to Northamptonshire Children's Services.

We expect all staff to:

- Emphasise the importance of good attendance and take positive steps to encourage it;
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children;
- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any parent/carer/pupil's concerns.

The Headteacher is expected to:

- Implementation of this policy at the school leading attendance across the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

We expect the Governing Body to:

- Promote the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
- Regularly review and challenge attendance data;
- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school;
- Make sure staff receive adequate training on attendance;
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Parents should be aware that the school day contains two sessions, morning and afternoon. For example, if a pupil is reported to have missed two sessions – it may mean they have missed a whole day's schooling, or the equivalent of two mornings; two afternoons; or a combination of a morning or an afternoon session.

Every half day absence from school is classified as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of an absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as illness or another unavoidable

cause. As a school, we follow up any absences to ascertain the reason for it before we make a decision regarding entry to the school register.

Authorised Absence:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for a child's non-attendance at school. Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parent's employment
- family bereavement;
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis);

The National Associations for Headteachers have defined what constitutes exceptional circumstances for granting absence during term time.

“Headteachers already have discretion over the granting of absence during term time. They rightly prioritise learning over holidays. Headteachers are able to - and do - authorise absence in exceptional circumstances”.

“The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short”.

Unauthorised Absence:

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unsatisfactory.

Absence will **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- a parent medical need or sickness;
- a sibling medical need or sickness;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, lack of transport to school etc);
- family holidays;
- Children who arrive at school after the close of the register at 9.30 am without an authorised reason.

PERSISTANT ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. Croyland Primary School expects parents/carers to ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.55 am and again at 1.10/1.25 pm. The morning register closes at 9.30 so pupils arriving between 8.55 and 9.30 will be marked with an L,

indicating they are late for school. However, pupils arriving after the register has closed will be registered with a U showing they are present in school but were late enough to affect their learning.

In considering attendance levels, the class register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should parents/ carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The data which is extracted from attendance registers is used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half) termly and yearly basis;
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees;
- facilitate and encourage early intervention;
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc); match attendance trends with attainment trends;
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy;
- report attendance matters to parents/carers

As a vigilant and caring school, we apply first-call response to pupil absence. This means we make a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a telephone call. We would prefer that parents were active in informing us of their child's absence before the school day begins to minimise the time this follow up takes.

In order to ensure that our registers are accurate and our pupils are identified as safe, as early as possible within the school day, we request that parents **contact school before 8.30am on the first day of absence**. There is an automated voicemail service available so messages can be left. There is also the absence reporting facility on the school communication system.

If we don't receive a call or voicemail message, school will contact the named parent/carer in the morning to ascertain the reason for their child's absence. **A phone call will be made each day the child is absent, unless it is known in advance how long the child will be absent from school**. As a record of the absence, we request that it is followed up with a written note or completion of a school 'absence form' available from the School Office.

A note/letter from a parent does not make the absence authorised. Reasons for a pupil's absence such as shopping, birthday treats and siblings' birthdays are not unavoidable causes, warranting authorised absence. Parents should avoid, where possible, making medical and dental appointments for their child during school time. Special Leave may however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for hospital medical appointments which must be in school time.

Where parents have not contacted the school to explain their child's absence and a reason is not returned within seven days, the absence is registered as unauthorised.

If a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan and, does not arrive at school or a reason is

received, the child's Social Worker will be contacted as a matter of urgency.

If we are in anyway concerned about a child's non-attendance at school during the period prior to being missing from education, we will ask the Police to undertake a Welfare Check.

HOLIDAYS

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations which were revised in 2013, time off school for a family holiday is no longer permitted and will not be authorised or deemed Exceptional Leave regardless of the reasons given.

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE

If a parent requires Exceptional Leave, they must complete the request form two weeks before the start date of their request for leave. We will consider the request based upon the information that has been received. A written response noting whether the Exceptional Leave has been granted or refused will be sent to the parent. If granted, the exceptional leave will be recorded as an authorised absence.

If parents choose to take their children out of school during term time, the school will not be responsible for setting the work missed or preparing additional work whilst the child is absent. A child's learning needs are based on on-going daily assessments which require the child to be in school. Teachers will however provide a child with an exercise book if they wish to keep a diary of their experience. In doing this, **THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE ARE SUPPORTING THE ABSENCE IN ANY WAY.**

Every request for exception leave is reviewed on an individual basis.

If we have reason to believe that a family/child is on holiday, despite reasons given through messages left on the school answering machine stated as otherwise, the attendance will be recorded as unauthorised. To support our judgement, we may make a home visit or return the original phone call for further clarification.

WORKING WITH AND COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS IN REGARD TO ATTENDANCE

Termly reminders are communicated with parents to log on to the school communication system and check their child's attendance figure with an explanation of school expectations. Attendance figures are included on the Parent Teacher Consultation forms twice annually.

Every term a member of the SLT, and the Attendance Lead and School Secretary meet together to review whole school key stage attendance and individual children. An attendance report is prepared prior to this meeting with comparison data. It includes authorised and unauthorised attendance and persistent absences for the term and year to date.

Where a child's attendance is between 90% and 96%, a letter will be sent to parents making clear that their child's attendance must improve.

Where a child is listed on the school's persistent absence report, which is below 90% to date, a parent may be invited into school to discuss how their child's attendance can be improved. We would not meet with a parent where an unauthorised holiday has been taken and historic or current attendance is good or if there has been a medical need for the child.

We may decide to undertake, for those parents who do not attend on the date and time that has been arranged and who do not inform us of their lack of availability, to conduct a home visit to address our concerns.

If after an agreed period of time, there has not been a significant improvement of attendance, a Parent Contract Meeting will be arranged. All contracts set 100% attendance target over 5 weeks period. If this target is not met a referral to the Educational Inclusion and Partnerships Team will be made by the school.

When a parent contract is initiated, or it is requested in writing, any absence must be accompanied by medical evidence for it to be authorised.

PENALTY NOTICES

Taken directly from North Northamptonshire County Council website:

What is a penalty notice?

A penalty notice (PN) is an alternative to prosecution and requires the parent(s) to pay a fixed amount as a fine for their child's irregular attendance at school. It is issued per parent, per child.

Who issues them?

In Northamptonshire the Local Authority issues them through the Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team following notification from the school.

When are they used?

- When a pupil has a minimum of 10 school sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 6 school week period; (a school day is two sessions -morning and afternoon) or;
- When a pupil has a series of unauthorised absences leading to irregular attendance.

This includes:

- Any absence marked in the register as unauthorized;
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken and is recorded as an unauthorised absence;
- An absence in term time which has not been authorised by the Headteacher. The Government has directed that Headteachers may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances;
- PNs can also be used during the first 5 days of exclusion. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a child is excluded from school.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by the local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Please note If the school refers a period of absence that is longer than 15 consecutive school days, the Educational and Inclusion Partnership team may consider that a penalty notice is not appropriate. In these instances the matter may proceed to a prosecution. If a parent knows that

their child is failing to attend school regularly and there is reasonable justification for not ensuring that their child attends then it is for the parent or carers to prove that reasonable justification.

LATENESS

Children are expected to be punctual and lateness is unacceptable. Children should be on the school premises by 8.50am. The school day officially starts at 8.55am (when the register is called). Children who arrive after this time will be issued with a Late Card. A record will be maintained of all children who are late and the reason for their lateness. Those children late after the close of the register (at 9.30am) will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Persistent lateness is addressed through the Pastoral Team and Headteacher if it is required and further advice may be taken from the Educational Inclusion and partnerships Team.

CHILDREN RELUCTANT TO ATTEND SCHOOL

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved by contacting the school and discussing the specific issues initially with the child's class teacher. If a child is reluctant to attend school, do not attempt to cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse in the longer term.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Religious observance is for festivals such as Eid ul-Fitr or Diwali where school will only authorise **the actual days of the festivals**. The Jehovah Witness Summer Convention day will also be authorised. If a family has to travel abroad for a festival, then a day will be authorised for the event, plus up to two days travel. Absence due to religious observance will be authorised, but the day must be:

- exclusively set apart for religious observance; and
- set apart by the parents' religious body (not the parents)

CHILDREN NOT COLLECTED AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

There are rare occasions when perhaps due to an emergency, parents are not able to collect their children promptly from school, or make arrangements for their collection at the end of the school day. Parents should always attempt to contact the school as soon as possible if they are likely to be late collecting their child.

In accordance with Northamptonshire County Council Policy, if a child is not collected, the school will make enquiries to find the parents using the emergency contact numbers provided by the parents. If after one hour it has not been possible to contact parents/carers then the local Police will be informed of the situation. The school will also contact the Initial Contact Team (Social Services) to inform them of a possible problem.

SCHOOL TARGETS

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality regularly. The Governing Body sets attendance targets annually and are kept informed on attendance figures

The school has adopted the following attendance targets:

Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The Pastoral Team oversee the attendance and punctuality matters in the first instance. A member of the team records punctuality on a daily basis and reports individual cases at a termly pastoral review. Attendance is addressed in the same way, with delegated actions to address school concerns.

All Parental Contracts are filed in the pupil's personal file on successful completion of the contract. Working contracts are held by the Lead Practitioner for Pastoral Intervention.

The Headteacher and Home School Support Worker are currently those designated to making referrals to the Educational Inclusion and partnership Team.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Governing Body will review this policy periodically and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.