

Stirling Primary School

Attendance Policy

Introduction and background

The Hall Cross Family of Schools has adopted the following policy statement:

Good attendance is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills, which will equip them for life. It is important to ensure that our most vulnerable pupils are given the same opportunities, which may mean extra support in certain cases.

The school aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parents/carers, local community and the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service can work in partnership. The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

All staff will encourage good attendance and will liaise with home and partner agencies if this is appropriate. Good attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such by the school. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

Aims:

- To improve the quality of school life
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- To create a culture in which good attendance is 'normality'
- To demonstrate to pupils, parents/carers and staff that the school values good attendance and to recognise that good regular attendance is an achievement in itself
- To be consistent in implementation, both in terms of rewards and sanctions
- To value the individual and be socially and educationally inclusive
- To improve overall attendance and reduce persistent absence
- To promote and support good attendance throughout formal education.

Objectives:

- To involve the children or young people more in their school attendance
- To improve communication with parent(s)/carer(s) about regular school attendance
- All school staff to continue to take responsibility for children's attendance
- To recognise the important role of class teachers and learning mentors in promoting and monitoring good attendance
- To ensure time and organisation within the school to enable the AIMS and OBJECTIVES to be met

- Effective working relationship with Behaviour and Attendance Service, and the reporting of half-termly figures to the service

Actions:

- To have an effective means of collecting and monitoring attendance information
- To discuss the settings of targets for the school with the Education Welfare Officer.
- To ensure that such data is available and used effectively by school managers and staff in conjunction with the EWO
- To agree specific targets for individuals, groups, years and the whole school in a context of all known relevant factors and record these in the School Development Plan
- To target resources and implement where most appropriate and to undertake this within a reasonable time frame
- To keep parent(s)/carer(s), pupils and governors informed of policy and practice
- To ensure that the school is aware of government targets which may have been set for some vulnerable groups, such as Looked After Children or young people.

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create patterns of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to parents/carers termly on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parent/carers should their attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance through whole-school displays, awards and events/ trips.

Understanding types of absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not the parent) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good caused like illness or hospital appointments which fall unavoidably in school time. Parents/carers are requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments.

Unauthorised absences are those which school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave of absence' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- Routine Medical/ Dental appointments that could be arranged after school or in school holidays
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been explained properly.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given. Parents/ carers will be informed of their child's attendance each term. Families will be contact before reaching the Persistent Absence threshold as it is important that we work together to ensure children are attending school appropriately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents will be asked to attend a meeting and may include additional support through the School Nurse or Education Welfare Officer. We may use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Persistent Absenteeism can also lead to legal proceedings and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (fines).

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone the parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them. This will be followed up by a text message and/or letter if we are unable to speak to parents/carers.
- Discuss/refer the matter to the Education Welfare officer if attendance drops below 92%.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help and information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority. If a child's attendance give cause for concern and sickness is continually reported, support will be offered.

Lateness

Lateness is not acceptable. If the child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupts lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school starts at 8:45am when the doors open. We expect children to be ready to come in when the doors open. Classroom doors close at 8.50am and the registers are marked at this time. A child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Entrances to the school close at 8.50am.

Children arriving after this time must then be signed in at the office.

If a child arrives after 9:15am, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence for the session. This could mean that a parent/carer will receive a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but school can be approached at any time if there are any problems with getting a child to school on time.

Leave of Absence

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make clear that from September 2013 Head Teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. These are defined as follows:

Exceptional Circumstances

1. *Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specific time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday*

in school holidays. This must be evidenced by the production of the policy document of the organisation.

2. Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.

Leave of absence forms must be completed four weeks before the proposed holiday and before it is booked.

The school will write to parents/ carers to inform them if permission has been granted and if not, what the consequences of taking your child/children out of school will be.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Local Authority. A separate penalty notice will be issued to each parent for each child who has unauthorised absence.

Extended Leave to Return to Home Country

If a family intends to have an extended visit to their home country a form must be completed before leaving. All details should be completed in full. The school will write to acknowledge receipt of the form and will inform you on what will happen if you do not return by your intended date and if an extended leave is likely to mean your child will be taken off the school roll. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Attendance Officer.

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