

Cottenham Primary School



Attendance Policy

Date:	Spring 2023
Reviewed by:	Premises
Next Review date	Spring 2 2024
Equality Review Checklist	<p>In reviewing this policy due consideration must be given to the impact that changes may have on issues of equality for the protected groups:</p> <p>Age Disability Religion or belief Race Pregnancy and Maternity Sex</p> <p>Sexual orientation Gender reassignment Marriage/civil partnerships</p> <p>If the equality of a protected group is likely to be compromised by changes to the policy then please complete an equality risk assessment and tick here: <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Introduction

Cottenham Primary School aims to work in partnership with parents and carers to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so and there are no exceptional circumstances. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. The most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make each and every school day a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Statutory Framework

Under *The Education Act 1996*, parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006* the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

‘Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

‘Unauthorised absence’ is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Persistent absenteeism is classed as any pupil with attendance below 90%.

Absence codes and the reasons for using them, including when an absence will be deemed as ‘Authorised’ or ‘Unauthorised’, can be found on the Department of Education website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> and a summary in Annex 1.

Authorised and Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer; for example if a child has been unwell and the parent contacts the school to explain the absence. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance, October 2014, states “*Headteachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The application **must be made in advance** and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher’s discretion*”.

There are national registration codes (Annex 1), used by schools when absence can be authorised. Leave of absence can be authorised for the following reasons:

- A child’s illness
- A child’s medical or dental appointment (which could not be made out of school hours)
- Days of religious observance
- Participation in a supervised sporting activity
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational purposes

Other exceptional circumstances, warranting authorised leave of absence, have been agreed by the Headteacher and governors of Cottenham Primary School to include:

- The death of a close relative
- Attendance at a funeral
- Respite care of a looked after child
- A housing crisis which prevents attendance
- Participation in a supervised activity/performance important to a child’s specific high ability
- Visits to another school where she/he may/will eventually attend
- To visit a dying relative

Proof of the above may be asked to be seen. For example, doctor’s letter, medical or dental appointment card.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is/or has been absent without good reason, as defined and agreed by the school, taking into account the list above. These absences will affect the child’s overall attendance record which is monitored by the school’s Attendance Officer and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and remains on the child’s file.

Requests for exceptional leave of absence

The ‘*Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence*’ form is available from the School Office. This should be completed by the parent or carer and returned to the School Office **at least one week before the first day of requested absence**. Alternatively, parents can request an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss the exceptional absence at least one week before the first day of requested absence.

Requests for exceptional leave will always be looked at on an individual basis and a decision will be made based on whether it is considered to be exceptional. The Headteacher’s decision regarding authorisation will be returned to the parent or carer as soon as possible either in writing or person.

Registration and Lateness

Class teachers electronically mark children as either present or absent and Office staff then enter the appropriate code relating to their reason for absence.

Pupils who arrive after 8.50am **must enter school via the Main Office and are recorded as Late (L)** on the register. **Pupils who arrive in school after 9.20am are recorded as Late (U)** on the electronic register, which the system logs as an unauthorised absence unless exceptional circumstances are explained to and accepted by the Headteacher (as set out above). Should punctuality become a significant issue, a letter may be sent to notify parents that a pattern of persistent lateness has been noted and, should there be no improvement, parents will be requested to meet with one of the Deputy Headteachers to discuss solutions. If this does not soon improve, the Local Authority Attendance Officer may be involved. The same applies to afternoon sessions where the start time is 1.00pm for KS1 and 1.15pm for KS2.

What happens when a child is absent?

As soon as registers have closed Office staff check for absences and begin contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent for unknown reasons. If no contact is made with the parent/carer or other listed persons on the child's file, and there are concerns about the child's wellbeing, a home visit may be made and/or outside agencies informed.

Repeated absences/poor attendance

Senior Leadership monitor attendance every week. The Local Authority Attendance Officer visits termly to discuss any pupil whose attendance is a cause for concern, and will discuss appropriate intervention. The school employs the Local Authority's guidance for notifying parents of poor attendance.

The school may suggest completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) form, with parents of pupils who require support with attendance or wider family issues.

Penalty Notices for non-school attendance

Repeated or prolonged unauthorised absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice in line with *Penalty Notices Non-School Attendance Cambridgeshire County Council Local Authority Code of Conduct* (see below for extracted key information and the school website for the full document).

Extract from 'Penalty Notices Non-School Attendance Cambridgeshire County Council Local Authority Code of Conduct'

Penalty Notice may be considered as an alternative to prosecution for failure to ensure regular school attendance in any given period of unauthorised school attendance as below:

- A. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:** As the Government changed the PA (Persistent Absence) threshold to 90% (in effect from Sept 2015), the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice in relation to a child whose attendance at school is less than 90% over a given period. There must be at least 8 unauthorised sessions over an 8 week period with all absences recorded as unauthorised or 90% and below mostly unauthorised over a longer period. To allow time and opportunity for early intervention work with the family, attendance will be monitored by school and Local Authority before enforcement actions are considered. Such a Fine is intended to offer a rapid intervention, which may be used to address non-school attendance before it becomes entrenched, following guidance in section 13 of 'PN Code of Conduct'.
- B. UNAUTHORISED TERM TIME LEAVE (includes Holiday):** Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. **Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with 'G' code in the attendance register.** A child with overall good attendance in the current academic year or previous years will not affect this decision. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. *(The Supreme Court Judgement in the case between Isle of Wight Council v Platt (6th April 2017) clarified the meaning of regular school attendance in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996. To attend school "regularly" means in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".)*

Children Missing in Education

The school follow the county guidelines for children missing in education (CME).

Any pupil who had been absent from school for 10 consecutive days (and reasonable attempts have been made to ascertain the reasons for absence) will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Officer using the CME 'Request for Intervention Referral form'. The school and Local Authority Attendance Officer will then work together to continue to carry out reasonable enquiries to identify the pupil's whereabouts. After four weeks should such efforts prove unsuccessful then the school, in consultation and agreement with the Local Authority Attendance Officer, can remove the pupil's name from its roll.

The school requires parents/carers to complete a Department for Education form when moving school or choosing to home tutor. This form is in addition to any admissions forms which are required by schools and local authorities. This form requires parents to identify the home address at which they will reside after leaving the school, information regarding their new school or home tutoring and requires the parent to sign to endorse the information given. This information will then be passed onto the appropriate authorities so that children are tracked through to their next education setting.

Taking children 'off-roll'

The school must inform the Local Authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

Annex 1 Extract from Department for Education - School Attendance, Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities **Absence and Attendance Codes**

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes are:

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Consortia Schools

Pupils attending consortia schools as part of their course only need to be placed on the registers of their 'main' school rather than on all of the schools they attend. They should be treated as guest pupils at the other consortia schools. The consortia schools however, must ensure they have suitable systems in place for monitoring and reporting the attendance and absence of the pupils involved, which must be shared with the 'main' school.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Different Term Dates for Different Pupils

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for 'staggered starts' or 'induction days'. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.