

Cottenham Primary School



Attendance Policy

Date:	Spring 2 2024									
Reviewed by:	Standards									
Next Review date	Spring 2 2025									
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> <table><tr><td>Age</td><td>Disability</td><td>Religion or belief</td></tr><tr><td>Race</td><td>Pregnancy and Maternity</td><td>Sex</td></tr><tr><td>Sexual orientation</td><td>Gender reassignment</td><td>Marriage/civil partnerships</td></tr></table> <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>	Age	Disability	Religion or belief	Race	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sex	Sexual orientation	Gender reassignment	Marriage/civil partnerships
Age	Disability	Religion or belief								
Race	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sex								
Sexual orientation	Gender reassignment	Marriage/civil partnerships								

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.

It is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

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 has an admission register ('the school roll') and an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended (if appropriate). A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006*, as amended, applies.

Schools must keep an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. On each occasion we will record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. 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 absent, 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, in **Chapter 8: Contents of the attendance register** in the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) statutory guidance.

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 (referenced above and in **Chapter 8: Contents of the attendance register** in the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) statutory guidance), 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 Lead 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 on the school website or 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 improve, the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer may be involved if the case meets the relevant criteria and the school refers the case to the Attendance Legal Panel for a Penalty Notice or prosecution. The same applies to afternoon sessions where the start time is 12:45 for EYFS and Y6 and 13:15 for all other year groups.

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/carers 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

Cottenham Primary School monitors and analyses weekly attendance patterns and trends and delivers intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.

In the first instance, we will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. We may suggest completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) with parents of

pupils who require support with attendance or wider family issues. This will be done in conjunction with either our Family Worker or Deputy Headteacher – Inclusion Lead.

The Senior Leadership Team has oversight of core attendance data at least weekly.

The school employs the Local Authority's guidance for notifying parents of poor attendance and has access to the local authority's Non-School Attendance (NSA) Helpline and the school's nominated Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer to facilitate access to multi-disciplinary support for families.

The template letters that we use for attendance management can be found on the school website under 'Attendance'.

Where absence intensifies and where engagement in support is proving challenging, we will hold more formal conversations with parents. This is likely to be led by the school's Attendance Lead and involve one of the Deputy Headteachers. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but should also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

When absence escalates, becomes persistent and severe and voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the Local Authority to either put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order, or issue a fixed penalty notice (where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with) to change parents' behaviour.

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 following link for the full document [CCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#)).

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 90% or less 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.** 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“.)*

Contrary to the above criteria of 3 days of absence to warrant a Penalty Notice fine being issued, in exceptional circumstances where a parent takes a child out of school during term time for an extended period (20 days or more), not authorised by the school, prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice fine being issued.

If 3 or more term time leave Penalty Notices have been issued over a 3 year period then prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice fine being issued.

Should the recipient of a Penalty Notice fail to pay the full amount before the expiry of the period for paying it, the County Council will either begin proceedings against the parent under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or withdraw the notice in accordance with specified conditions (see section 29 of the [CCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#)).

Children Missing in Education

The school follows the Local Authority guidelines for Children Missing in Education (CME).

Any pupil who had been absent from school for 10 consecutive days (and initial enquiries have been made to trace the child and ascertain the reasons for absence) will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer using the CME ‘Request for Intervention Referral form’. **With vulnerable children, the school is required to inform the Local Authority and linked social worker immediately.** At this time, the school will also issue a 20-day deletion warning letter.

The school and Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer then work together to continue to carry out reasonable enquiries to try and identify the child’s current whereabouts/destination and where/if he/she is currently accessing education. After a further 10 school days, 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 is required to complete a **CCC Elective home education deregistration form** for any child when the parent or carer chooses to home tutor. Parents/carers should put in writing their intention and supply the school with any other necessary information required to complete this form.

When moving school, parents/carers should supply Cottenham Primary School with their new home address and contact details (if applicable), as well as submitting the necessary admission forms required by the new Local Authority and school. This enables us to track children 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. elective home education
- 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.

Rewards

School Attendance Matters (SAM) bears are shared weekly during the Friday certificate assembly with the highest attending classes in EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

Each child who has a 100% attendance in any given week receives an extra house point.

Bronze, silver and gold attendance badge system that rewards attendance of at least 98%.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Cottenham Primary School recognises that pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place, where necessary, to help them access their full-time education.

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil

from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There will be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing the timetable with parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, we have agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore will treat any resulting absence as authorised.