Attendance Policy

Ratified: January 2019
Chair of Governors: Charlotte Jeffery
Review: January 2022

1   Introduction

1.1   Hertfordshire County Council expects all schools to work closely together in partnership with parents in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils. Attendance targets for Cuffley School ==are set in line with local authority and government guidelines.==

To promote good attendance, we at Cuffley School work closely together in partnership with parents in order to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils. We also work closely ==with the local authority== and with relevant external agencies.

1.2   We expect all children on roll to attend every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and put in place appropriate procedures to ensure this happens, working with the Attendance Improvement Officer where necessary. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards the school and learning. To this end we strive to make our school 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; which may include working with other professionals, such as teachers employed to work in children's own homes or hospitals in the case of long term and serious illness.

2   Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

2.1   Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for all pupils registered at Cuffley School and is essential if pupils are to maximise the educational opportunities available to them.

2.2   Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and in a condition to learn.

2.3   Parents and carers are responsible for informing the school on the first day of their child's absence and must, at that time, give an explanation for the non-attendance. If this is by telephone, it will be recorded by the staff and placed on the child's file and a note will be made on the child's attendance record. Parents and carers should contact the school on a daily basis unless otherwise agreed.

2.4   If a child is going to be absent from school for any reason we ask parents and carers to:

- Telephone the school as soon as possible before 9.30 am **or**
- Inform the School Office in person **or**
- Send a written note or email to the school

2.5 Parents and carers are expected to avoid booking holidays during term time. If special circumstances exist, the permission of the Headteacher must be sought well in advance.

2.6 Parents and carers are expected to avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours if at all possible. In the event that this is unavoidable, please give details of the appointment to the school office in writing.

2.7 Parents and carers whose children are in Year 2 or Year 6 will not be expected to request any absences during the SATs period.

2.8 Pupils who have been sick or have had diarrhoea are to be kept home for 48 hrs from the last time of sickness.

3. Responsibilities – The School

3.1 Cuffley School is responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils and for working in partnership with parents and carers to resolve issues regarding attendance and punctuality.

3.2 We are committed to:

- the maximizing of attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole, which is one of our key priority tasks

- extending support to parents to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of pupils, responding to any issue which may lead to non-attendance

- being sensitive to the needs of individual parents in the way in which we address attendance issues. (We recognise that some parents experience difficulty understanding and producing written communications and we also recognize the reluctance of some parents to come into school).

3.3 We encourage all staff, including ancillary and administrative staff, to see the attendance of children as part of their responsibility.

3.6 We actively address all issues, such as bullying, which may lead to non-attendance.

3.7 We do not exclude pupils because of non-attendance.

3.8 We consider attendance from a whole school perspective. We explore the link between attendance and achievement.

We include in each pupil's annual report to his/her parents or carers, information relating to the number of authorised and unauthorised absences which the pupil has accrued during that school year.

3.8.1 We will discuss with parents levels of authorised absence where these become a cause for concern.

4. **Responsibilities – Attendance and Pupil Support Team**

4.1 The Education Welfare Service fulfils the statutory duty of the local authority in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so, it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

4.2 We work closely with our Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who visits the school regularly, in order to meet the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher and administrative assistant with responsibility for attendance.

The purpose of the visit will be to:

- Identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties; this will include the regular examination of attendance registers.

- Agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the AIO. Prior to that, the School will have undertaken some preliminary work by contacting the parents.

- Feedback and exchange information in relation to work, which has been undertaken by the AIO.

- Identify areas of concern and good practice in attendance matters.

- Advise the school on strategies for improving attendance.

4.3 Once a referral has been agreed, the AIO will undertake casework with pupils and their parents/carers. This may include:

- Facilitating meetings between the school, parents/carers and pupil.

- Making home visits when necessary in order to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken.

- Offering specific support to parents and individual pupils either at school or elsewhere.

- Facilitating case conferences and other meetings.

- Enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other agencies and services.

4.4 The AIO may also arrange for the pupil to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

4.5   The AIO will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised, and in some cases even when absence has been authorised.

4.6   The AIO will offer, or assist, with INSET sessions to staff on a range of subjects related to the attendance or welfare of pupils including:

- The promotion of regular school attendance;
- Child protection awareness;
- Approaches to dealing with bullying;
- Working effectively with the Attendance Improvement Service.

4.7   The Attendance Improvement Service will follow up all instances of pupils who are absent from school for more than four weeks and who subsequently cannot be traced.

4.8   Cuffley School will work closely with the Hertfordshire Attendance Improvement Service, who will work with the Attendance Improvement Service of neighbouring Local Authorities and will, when necessary, liaise and coordinate action.

4.9   The Attendance Improvement Service will maintain a 'Children out of School' Database in order to track the progress of individual children and facilitate the effective targeting of resources.

4.10   The AIO will advise the School on any appropriate legal action should this prove necessary.

5   Governors

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995* the governing body are responsible for monitoring attendance data.

6   Attendance Registers

6.1   The School recognises that attendance registers are legal documents, which may be required as evidence in court cases.

6.2   At Cuffley School we ensure that registers are taken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon to mark the start of session times.

6.3   We maintain an electronic register.

6.4   We record whether each pupil is present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent, we also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by us.

6.5   Registers remain open for 10 minutes in the morning.

6.6   If we are unable to establish the reason for a pupil's absence at the beginning of a session, we will record it as unauthorised and will send a text message to the parent or carer to obtain a reason for the absence. The relevant code will then be entered for that session.

6.7 We will notify the LA of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than ten school days, without a legitimate reason.   The Head will bring this concern up with the AIO as soon as is practicable.

7   Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

7.1   Authorised 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 guardian; for example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones or emails 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; for example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours..

7.1.1 At Cuffley School, absences are recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice of Categorisation of Absence' (DfES 1994). This states that absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil has had leave granted by the Headteacher in accordance with school policy
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body of which the pupil's parent belongs
- there is a family bereavement
- the pupil is attending an interview for a place at another school
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- the pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- the pupil is participating in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g. the graduation of an older sibling).
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return
- the leave of absence is granted by the school, **in exceptional circumstances**.

7.1.2 Parents and carers must be aware that the following issues will be taken into account by the Headteacher when considering a request for absence :

- the circumstances of the request
- the amount of time requested
- the age and year group of the pupil
- the pupil's attendance and absence records
- proximity of SATs or other statutory testing

- the pupil's ability to catch up work
- the pupil's educational needs
- the general welfare of the pupil
- the purpose of the leave
- the frequency of the activity
- when the request was made

7.1.3 Parents and Carers must be aware that authorised leave of absence is not a right and each case will be dealt with on an individual basis, i.e. no request for absence during school time can be guaranteed to be authorised.

7.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation; for example:

- the pupil stays at home due to a parent being unwell
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- the pupil is shopping during school hours
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. birthday)
- the pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school
- the pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday, and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

7.2.2 Repeated unauthorised absences

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

7.2.3 The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

8 Approved Educational Activity

Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities will be recorded as **approved educational activity**. For statistical purposes, such pupils will be counted as present even though they are physically absent.

A pupil will be recorded as **approved educational activity** if he/she is on:

- A field trip or educational visit
- A sporting activity

- A link course
- An examination with an external body (eg school entrance, music, dance, drama)
- A musical activity
- A recognised performance

The School recognises the key features of **approved educational activity** as being:
- Educational and directly linked to the our school's programme
- Approved by the Head
- Supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school.

9   Punctuality

9.1   We take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. We monitor and follow up lateness on a regular basis.

9.2   Registers are kept open for no longer than ten minutes.

9.3   When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she will be marked as 'late', but counted as present for that session.

9.4   When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she may be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.

9.5   When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and <u>fails </u>to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she will marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

9.6   When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, he/she will be expected to enter via the main doors and report to the office where his/her presence on site will be noted in a book for the purposes of emergency evacuation.

9.7   If a major accident or event has taken place causing mass lateness, the Headteacher may note the circumstances so that individual pupils are not penalised.

10   Registration

10.1   Children are expected to be on site by 8.45 am and the whistle is blown at 8.55 a.m. promptly. Registers will be called promptly at 9:00am and 1.05pm at the latest.

If a pupil is persistently late, the parents will be contacted.

Parents will be reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

The Headteacher and the Attendance Improvement Officer will regularly inspect all registers to ensure that correct procedures are being followed; with a minimum termly check.

10.2 When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence and will inform the school office, who will endeavour to contact a parent or guardian. If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The office staff will then contact the parent or guardian immediately, in order to check on the safety of the child.

10.3 A note must be sent to the school prior to the day of absence; for example, if a child has a medical appointment, except in the case of an emergency appointment where a call must be made to the school by 9.30am and a note sent to the office on the child's return.

11 Requests for leave of absence

11.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are exceptional circumstances where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend. We expect parents to contact the school to discuss the request or to write a letter formally requesting authorisation of a leave of absence. Requests should be made in good time, but with a minimum of 48 hours. The request may be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.

11.2 In exceptional circumstances, parents and carers may request a leave of absence for an annual holiday during term time. In those cases, the Headteacher may authorise absence to a maximum of ten days in one academic year if they believe the circumstances are exceptional.

11.3 In all cases, the Headteacher will take into account the attendance record of the pupil before granting any absence. As a general rule, attendance must be above 95% before an absence will be authorised.

12. Long-term absence

12.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to support the child's education.

12.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

13 Attendance targets

At Cuffley School we set attendance targets each year. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

14   Monitoring and review

14.1   It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Headteacher will update the Governing Body or relevant committee on a regular basis and no less than once per term.

14.2   Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardian.

15   This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.

<u>HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL</u>

Policy for Attendance Improvement Officers working with children whose absence has been authorised:

- if the AIO becomes concerned (through checking the attendance register) that a pupil has accumulated significant amounts of authorised absence this will be discussed with the relevant member of school staff

- if it is agreed that there is a concern about the pupil's attendance the school should share this concern with the parents

- if concerns about the pupil's attendance remain, the AIO will consider accepting the referral in accordance with the Attendance and Pupil Support Service referral procedures

- if the AIO, after making contact with the parents, is of the opinion that the absence is in fact unjustified he/she will advise the school to discontinue authorising the absence

- AIO will give priority to those cases when the absence has been unauthorised

(Note: if a pupil's absence has been authorised by the school, the LA cannot cite that absence as evidence of non-attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.)

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Do not use	Not counted in possible attendances
I	Non- compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils & staff	Not counted in possible attendances
*	Pupil not on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
-	All should attend/No mark recorded	Not counted in possible attendances

Further information on the correct use of these symbols can be found at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance/otherinitiatives/absence.cfm from which a Word document entitled Guidance for Absence Codes can be downloaded.