

Carterhatch Junior School

Attendance Guidance

September 2019

To be read in line with the Enfield Learning Trust (ELT) Attendance Policy.

Legal Framework

Education Act 1996

If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.

This information is based on

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Copies of all above documents are available from the Education Welfare Service.

- If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school and does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school, the LA will serve the parent with an Attendance Order under Section 437 – 439 of the Education Act 1996.
- If a pupil who is registered at a school fails to attend that school regularly without legitimate reasons and attempts by the EWS and school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance the EWS will, unless there is a statutory defence, take legal action against the parents before the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or by applying for Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil Under Section 36 of the Children's Act 1989.

- If, after taking legal action, the child still fails to attend school regularly, the EWS will keep the case open and will, if deemed appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.
- In cases where parents withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at effecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the EWS will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

Responsibilities: Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for

- Ensuring their children attend regularly.
- Ensuring they arrive on time.
- Ensuring they are properly dressed and in a condition to learn.
- The collection of their children at the end of the school day

Parents should:-

- Impress upon their children the importance of attending school regularly and the need to observe the school's code of conduct regarding behaviour, code of dress, homework etc.
- Work in partnership with school to resolve issues that may lead to non-attendance.
- Ensure they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school.
- Notify the school regarding absence on the first day of absence. The explanation of this absence should be confirmed, in writing, when the child returns to school.
- Where possible arrange dental and medical appointments outside school hours. Where they are made in school hours, parents should provide evidence that this was unavoidable.
- Not arrange absence in term time unless classed as 'special circumstances' at the discretion of the Headteacher.

- Be aware that a note covering absence will not automatically guarantee authorisation and that only the *Headteacher* can authorise absence.
- Be aware that absences for shopping, looking after siblings, birthdays etc. are not acceptable *and will not be authorised*.

Responsibilities: School

The school follows the Enfield LSCB procedures covered in the guidance “Children Missing Education 2016” in line with “Keeping Children Safe in Education – September, 2016”.

The School is responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems which may lead to non-attendance.

Staff are required to call the attendance register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity (guide to symbols in Appendix 1 of this document).

The cut-off point for lateness in the morning is 8.55 a.m. If a child arrives after this time the *Attendance Officer* records the attendance as “late.”

Schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised.

The school will:

- Make it clear to pupils and parents that regular attendance is the expectation.
- Support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils.
- Have clear rules for parental contact with the school in the event of absence (see Appendix 2).
- Be clear on action to be taken when absence is unreported by parents (see Appendix 2).
- Ensure prompt follow up on unexplained absences (first day calling)
- Respond promptly to issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil and parent.

- Recognise that some parents have difficulty in understanding written communication.
- Work in partnership with the EWS.
- Enforce Fixed Penalty Notices where necessary.

Attendance Registers

- Under The Educational (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 we are required to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and at some time during the afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. *Registers are computerised and maintained electronically.*
- Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.
- Registers must 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 the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.
- The Attendance Officer/Office staff will investigate the reasons for absence and amend the *electronic* register as appropriate following the symbols contained in the guidance found in registers and in Appendix 1 of this policy.
- Entries in registers should be written in ink and any correction made in such a manner that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable
- A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register.

Grounds for deleting a pupil from the school admission register:-

- In the case of a pupil who has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than four weeks and both the school and EWS have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil.
- Notification has been given that the child is receiving education otherwise than at school.
- That the child has been registered at another school.

Punctuality

The school takes steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is monitored and followed up. The school *prospectus* clearly states the time at which school sessions begin and finish including the time at which registers open and close.

Categorisation of Absence

Authorised Absence and Approved Educational Activity

- In the context of the law, only 'the school' can approve absence. Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. Accurate use of the register codes within schools will allow staff and EWOs to address the matter quickly.
- Only school can authorise absence. If, after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming – the absence should be treated as unauthorised.
- Parents should be notified (newsletters, Attendance Policies etc.) of categorisation of absence.

If a member of staff is unclear as to whether an absence should be authorised or not, the matter must be referred to the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are monitored for patterns of non-attendance and acted on.

- **Approved educational activity** – code should be V and not zero.

Pupils who are engaged in off-site activities are recorded as approved educational activity – although these pupils are physically absent they may be counted as present if there is:

- Participation in/attendance at approved activity.
- Educational trip/visit.
- Approved work experience.

- Attending another institution under link course (no dual registration).

They key features of approved educational activity are that they are:-

- Educational/directly linked to the school's programme.
- Approved by the school.
- Supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school.

Study leave is not an approved educational activity.

- The pupil is absent with leave (authorised by the Headteacher).
- The pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance.
- Family bereavement (*Evidence is requested*).
- The pupil is attending an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place in higher education or a place at another school.
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
- Exceptional circumstances.
- Exclusion.
- The pupil is dual registered under a formalised arrangement.

Medical Appointments

- Non-urgent appointments for the GP, dentist, optician should be made where possible outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- Appointments for more urgent issues or hospital appointments will require evidence to be shown such as an appointment card or letter in order for the pupil's absence to be authorised.
- Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment unless there is a reasonable explanation why this would not be possible. The absence may be recorded as unauthorised if evidence is not produced.

Unauthorised Absence

A circle should mark the absence of a pupil from registration, and subsequently from school. This absence can be subsequently authorised if the school receives a satisfactory explanation.

The absence of a pupil from registration and the subsequent arrival of that pupil without a satisfactory explanation should remain as unauthorised. However, time of arrival will need to be recorded and the appropriate symbol entered as set out in the Appendix 1.

Absence should be unauthorised if:-

- No explanation is forthcoming from the parent.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house.
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday.
- The pupil is on holiday without permission
- The pupil is taking a pet to the vet.
- The pupil is looking after brothers and/or sisters.

Where an unauthorised absence is recorded, a Penalty Notice Warning should be issued to the parent/s or carer/s (see note on Penalty Notices).

Holidays

*From 1st September, 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that **headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time** unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.*

Absence for Special Circumstances

Applications for special circumstances must be made to the Headteacher in advance. Depending on the reason for the request, the Headteacher will consider to authorise or unauthorise the absence. Evidence may be requested. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Each request should be considered individually. Some factors to consider but not regarded as conclusive:

- Age of child
- Time of year for proposed trip
- Nature and purpose of trip
- Duration of trip and its impact on continuity of learning
- Circumstances of family
- Distance being travelled
- The overall attendance pattern of the child
- Cultural considerations i.e. minority ethnic pupils who are returning to their country of origin.

If the school grants permission such absences are authorised. If a child fails to return on the agreed date, the additional absence should be treated as unauthorised *and a Penalty Notice Warning should be issued*. Such situations may call into question approval of any further applications made by the family.

If permission is not granted, a *Penalty Notice Warning* will be issued and parents/carers will be required to sign that they have understood school could apply to the Local Authority for a *Fixed Penalty Notice (fine)* to be issued without further warning. There would be no monitoring period.

Religious Observance

Parents/Carers must ask the Headteacher in advance for time off for religious reasons. A period of three weeks or 15 school days in advance of the religious celebration will be considered as a reasonable timescale. Only days set apart for religious observance by the parent's religious body will be approved. Where necessary, advice will be sought from the parent's religious body to clarify this.

Penalty Notices

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives schools the power to issue Penalty Notices in cases of non-school attendance. This is an alternative to prosecution.

As from 1st September, 2013, amendments to the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Failure to pay a penalty fine, will lead to prosecution. However, prior to a Penalty Notice being issued, a formal warning letter will be sent to parents/carers advising that there will be a 15 day monitoring period for attendance to improve and for them to contact the Headteacher to discuss school's concerns.

A warning that a Penalty Notice may be issued will be sent to both parents or carers (where applicable) for any of the following reasons:

- *their child has an unauthorised absence;*
- *their child is taken on holiday during term-time;*
- *parentally condoned absences;*
- *truancy;*
- *Persistent lateness after registers have closed.*

Only the Headteacher (or his representative) can authorise any absence. Evidence of the reason for absence may be requested.

If a child continues to to be absent without authorisation for 20 sessions or more (10 school days) during a three month period, school will apply to the Education Welfare Service for a Penalty Notice to be issued. Where there are two parents or carers with parental responsibility, it is likely both will receive a Fixed Penalty Fine.

Marking of Attendance Registers

Guide to Symbols

Electronic registers are pre-marked:

/ am \ pm	Present
O	Absent
L	Late during registration period
U	Late after registration period – indicate, in column, time of arrival and reason given (note required from home)
I	Authorised absence for sickness

Symbols for absence

C	Other Authorised Circumstances to be specified
M	Medical – doctor/dentist/hospital/optician appointments
H	Family Holiday (10 days only – granted leave)
F	Extended Family Holiday (agreed)
E	Exclusion
R	Religious Observance
G	Family Holiday – NOT agreed
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code)

Symbols for absence – **NO zero**

B	Educated off site (this code will not apply to part-time placements unless the child is registered at an appropriate educational provision – not dual registration)
J	Interview
P	Sporting activity
V	Education visit or trip

Teachers/Attendance Officer must obtain a reason for all child absences

Actions to Promote Regular Attendance

- The Headteacher is the Senior Manager responsible for Attendance.
- *ScholarPack MIS* is used to collect data and inform the Headteacher of best class attendance each week.
- First day of absence 'phone calls are made by the Attendance Officer.
- Text messages are sent to parents/carers by the Attendance Officer on a daily basis to inform them of childrens' lateness.
- Promotion of regular school attendance/punctuality is made through the weekly newsletter, staff contact with parents and early intervention clinics.
- Letters of concern are sent to parents when attendance drops below 95%, 93% and 91%, following which the Headteacher will meet with parents/carers.
- The Parent Support Adviser will identify barriers to regular school attendance by working with parents/carers.
- Letters of concern regarding punctuality will be sent out advising parents/carers of the frequency of lateness and number of minutes lost to learning.
- Education Welfare Service will be asked for support when attendance or lateness continues to be a concern despite intervention by school.
- Clear guidance to be given to staff on marking of registers and monitoring of attendance.
- Termly award to be given to children/class to reward good attendance.
- Publication of attendance in the fortnightly newsletter.
- 100% attendance rewarded on class basis.
- Use of fixed penalty fines.
- Parents to be prosecuted where necessary.

Guidance for Staff

- Registers must be completed by class teachers by 9.00 a.m. and the School Office by 9:30 a.m. when registers will close. After lunch registers must be completed by 2.00 p.m.
- The Attendance Officer will maintain registers with the correct symbol shown in Appendix 1.
- Only the Headteacher can authorise or unauthorise absence.
- Every effort should be made to obtain a note from the parent.
- Parents are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence.
- There will be a first day of absence 'phone call from the office for those families who have not contacted the school.
- Please check reasons for absence. If a child is absent on a regular basis, with no real explanation given, please alert the HT.
- If parents have any concerns at all about attendance, please alert the HT.
- "*Requested absences*", of any duration, must be authorised by the HT.
- Any absence for other reasons, e.g. confirmation classes, taking part in sports, must also be authorised by the HT.

Flow Chart – Attendance

Attendance Officer

Daily

Manually record late children

Check registers and enter lates

First day calling – log reasons for absence and authorise/unauthorise

Inform PSA of absences or any concerns

Send text messages to parents of late children

Send out letters to parents whose children have returned from an absence without reason

Monitor children who continue to be absent after first day advice and follow-up (is medical evidence required?)

Maintain spreadsheet

File hard copy of letters in children's files

Weekly

Meet PSA to monitor all attendance/punctuality concerns

Analyse data for drop in attendance of individual children and send out letters of concern where attendance has dropped below 95% (Stage 1), below 93% (Stage 2) and below 91% (Stage 3)

Standard letters of concern will be sent out regarding poor punctuality

Half-Termly/Termly

Provide data to EWO for his/her report



Parent Support Adviser

Conduct home visits where necessary

Analyse data provided by Attendance Officer and initiate discussions with parents to support issues of attendance

Monitor absences without reason, discuss with Headteacher

Support parents to prevent Penalty Notices being issued and referrals being made to EWS

Monitor punctuality – initiate discussions with parents to support any issues

Liaise with EWS in respect of children with under 90% attendance
Liaise with EWS when necessary to raise concern about vulnerable/missing children
Make referrals to the EWS through the EHF process
Maintain the Attendance Guidance in conjunction with Headteacher & Attendance Officer



EWS

Monitors the school's registers and initiates early intervention in liaison with the Attendance Officer
Receives referrals from school
Conducts statutory work