

Goodleigh C of E Primary School and Ilfracombe Infant and Nursery School Federation

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Information for Parents and Carers

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 97%.
- Maintain parents'/carers' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.
- Maintain good time keeping.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders settle into school more easily

As a parent/carer you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty.
- Telephoning on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has any extended period of absence.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers (including child minders') and emergency contact details.

We shall:

- Always strive to ensure contact with the parents/carers of absent pupils on a daily basis.
- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary.
- Support children and parents/carers who are having difficulties with attendance
- Publish your child's attendance rate on his/her annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality
- Invite you to meet with a Senior Leader where attendance is not improving
- Make a referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, who visits the school to review and support attendance and punctuality issues, if we continue to have concerns

Categorising Absence

Where pupils of compulsory attendance school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

An absence is only classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer.

Authorised absence may be granted under the following circumstances:

- Exceptional circumstance
- Exclusion
- Days of religious observance
- Medical/Dental appointments that cannot take place out of school hours
- Illness – with written parental consent or medical note.
- Education off-site
- Education visits e.g. another setting
- Approved sporting activity
- Interview

An absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers.

Where there is no explanation for an absence, or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Illness

In most cases a telephone call, or written communication, from the parent/carer or named adult contact informing the school that their pupil is ill will be acceptable. However, if absence levels become a concern for the school, then parents/carers or named adult contact may be contacted and advised that future absences will no longer be automatically authorised unless suitable evidence is presented to the school (for them to consider) that justifies the absence as unavoidable. If evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

In circumstances where a child has been absent from school for a significant period of time the school will:

- Be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of returning pupils
- Involve parents/carers and other appropriate agencies in establishing a return to school plan.
- Agree a timescale for a review of the plan
- Involve/inform all staff in any return to school process

Medical Appointments

Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence of appointment dates/times to allow the school to authorise the absence.

Religious Observance

We acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of Authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to request that their children do not attend school on any day officially set aside for religious observance. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

Punctuality

If a child arrives to school late but before registers close at 9.30 am, then the child will receive a late coding ('L' code).

If the child arrives after the registers close (9.30 am) then Department for Education guidance means that the child will be coded as arriving after the registers have closed – 'U' code or another absence code that it is more appropriate. The 'U' code is an unauthorised absence for the entire session. See unauthorised absences.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller pupils, in common with all other pupils, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safer from prosecution if their pupil accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and that the pupil is regularly attending school when that trade/business permits (and the 200 sessions is met).

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller pupils is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their pupils are receiving suitable education when not in school.

Exceptional Circumstances and Family Holiday

Amendments have been made to the 2006 pupil registration regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013.

Schools can no longer grant up to 10 days' leave in special circumstances for the purposes of family holiday. The 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and schools may now only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances'.

Exceptional circumstances are when the circumstances leading to a request for absence are 'of unique and significant emotional, educational, or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time'. The school considers exceptional circumstances to be those that are highly unlikely to be repeated, or an event or situation that is unique to the children involved which would not apply to other children in the school.

In certain circumstances a parent/carer's employer might restrict annual leave to a certain time period. In these circumstances the school will ask for a written confirmation from the employer and will consider the request.

A parent/carer must complete an Absence Request Form from the school office or school website when asking for absence to be considered as authorised.

The school will always put the education of the child first when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. In doing so, the school will also take into account the child's prior attendance, age, stage of education, internal assessment weeks and educational progress when making a decision.

If a request is Unauthorised and the leave is taken anyway, then Devon Schools are expected to inform the Local Authority, who may instigate Parental Responsibility Measures (which may include Penalty Notice or Magistrate Summons).

Unauthorised Absences

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as unauthorised absences. Examples of unauthorised absences can include:

- Waiting for a delivery
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Parent's illness

Penalties for Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences may well result in the instigation of parental responsibility measures which could include a Penalty Notice, an Education Supervision Order or a fine from the Magistrates Court of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months for each parent/carer.

It is Devon County Council practice to only issue one Penalty Notice to a parent/carer in a 2 year period. If a Penalty Notice has already been issued within the two year period then it is usual practice for a Magistrate Summons to be issued.

Penalty Notice amendments have been made to the 2007 penalty notices regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which also came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments reduce the timescales for paying the Penalty Notice for Unauthorised Absence. From September 2013, if a Penalty Notice is issued, each Penalty Notice will be for £60 to be paid within 21 days extending to £120 if paid from day 21 to 28. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days a Magistrates Summons will be issued.

It is Devon County Council policy to issue Penalty Notices for fines for Unauthorised Absence. The general criteria for issuing of a Penalty Notice states that a Penalty Notice will only be issued to a parent(s) if the pupil has at least ten, half day unauthorised absences recorded against their name within the previous six months.

Further information can be obtained from the following link:

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/attendance/absence-from-school.htm>

Education Supervision Order

Where the Local Authority applies to the Family Court for a Court Order to support and manage improved regular attendance

Magistrates Summons, under the 1996 Education Act. If a Penalty Notice has been previously issued within two years, it is Local Authority practice to issue a Magistrates Summons. For a first offence for the maximum fine issued by the Court could be £1000 per parent/carer. If the matter returns to the Magistrates Court on a subsequent occasion the fines extend to a maximum of £2500 per parent/carer and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.

Monitoring Absence

We are keen that parents should realise when their child's attendance rate has slipped. We will regularly closely monitor attendance. An attendance rate of 90% means that in the whole school year of 190 days, there would be 19 days of schooling missed. This is nearly 4 weeks in a year and understandably will have an impact on a child's attainment. An attendance of 90% and below falls into the persistent absence category, as defined by the Department for Education.

Leaving School

If your child is leaving our school (other than when they cease to be of compulsory school age) parents/carers are asked to give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, contact details for your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to the school in writing.

When pupils leave and we do not have information about where they have gone, your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority (LA) has to be notified and the LA has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from our school's register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools and the pupil has started at the new school
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system and written notification has been received from parents/carers and forwarded to the LA
- Failure to return from an extended holiday
- An evidences medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school and alternate provision has been put in place
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil and 20 school days have elapsed.

Appendix 1:

CODES FOR EXPLAINING ABSENCES

/	PRESENT AM
\	PRESENT PM
B	EDUCATED OFF SITE
C	LEAVE OF ABSENCE AUTHORISED BY THE SCHOOL
D	DUAL REGISTERED - AT ANOTHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT
E	EXCLUDED
F	
G	HOLIDAY NOT AUTHORISED BY THE SCHOOL
H	HOLIDAY AUTHORISED AS EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
I	ILLNESS NOT MEDICAL OR DENTAL APPT
J	INTERVIEW
L	LATE ARRIVAL BEFORE THE REGISTER HAS CLOSED
M	MEDICAL/DENTAL
N	NO REASON YET PROVIDED FOR ABSENCE
O	ABSENT FROM SCHOOL WITHOUT AUTHORISATION
P	APPROVED SPORTING ACTIVITY
R	RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
S	STUDY LEAVE
T	TRAVELLER ABSENCE
U	ARRIVED AT SCHOOL AFTER REGISTERS CLOSED
V	EDUCATIONAL VISIT
W	WORK EXPERIENCE
X	NON-COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE ABSENCE
Y	UNABLE TO ATTEND DUE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
-	ALL SHOULD ATTEND NO MARK RECORDED