



West Coker CE VC Primary SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statement of Intent

The School aims to work together with parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually. Through this attendance policy we will:

- Ensure parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- Improve attendance
- Improve punctuality
- Maximise opportunities for our pupils both in school and in later life.

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. We do all we can to encourage children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

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 and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have an easier transition to their next school

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 the governing body are 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 whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Definitions:

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/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. An explanation of absence does not automatically make it authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a child is absent

Parents should contact the school on the first morning of absence, preferably before 9.00am, giving the reason for their child's absence and when their child will return.

When the child returns to school the parent should submit a letter to the class teacher explaining their child's absence. This letter will be forwarded to our school office so we can cross check our records.

Parents should send a note to the class teacher prior to the day of any planned absence, for example if a child has a medical appointment.

In order to safeguard the children in our school we will always follow-up un-notified or unexplained absences after registration with a phone call on the first day of absence. This is to ensure that if a child is not at school they are safely in the care of their parent or an authorised adult.

A daily log is kept of all children for whom no notification for absence has been made and of phone calls made.

Punctuality

The school day starts at 08.50am. This is the time that the school bell is rung and children are expected to line up and be met by their teachers. It is important that pupils are on time as the first few minutes of the school day begin with key teaching. If a child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and may be embarrassing for the child. Arrival after the close of registration may be marked as an unauthorised absence.

Lateness

All children arriving after 9.00am must be accompanied to the school office by the parent/carer where they will be asked to sign in.

Alongside attendance, lateness is also monitored regularly.

A daily log is kept of all children who arrive late.

Requests for leave of absence

The regulations state that Headteachers can only grant leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances.

Any request for leave must be made in writing for the attention of the Headteacher in advance.

There is no formal definition offered for exceptional leave by the Department for Education at present. However, it is suggested by the DfE that exceptional leave may include:

- Forces staff returning from lengthy active service abroad
- Police, Fire Service staff being told when they can or cannot take leave
- Parents having to work abroad for a fixed, minimum term period

Somerset County Council supports schools in ensuring the law is upheld.

Parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance at school of their child.

Any unauthorised absence such as taking holidays in term time when they have not been approved by the school, can result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by the Education Attendance Service. The Fixed Penalty Notice fees are currently £60/£120 per parent per child. Any Penalty Notice unpaid is taken to Magistrates Court as failure to secure the regular attendance of their child. Being found guilty of such an offence, may result in a criminal conviction and a potential fine of up to £1000.

Somerset County Council cannot override a school's decision not to authorise any term time leave. There is no right of appeal.

Long-term Absence

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 send material home, so that they keep up with their school work.

Persistent Absentees or Lateness

Any child whose attendance falls below 90% will be discussed at regular attendance meetings. The school will contact the parent/carer of any child whose attendance is considered to be of concern. Each half term the school will contact parents of all children whose attendance is less than 93%. If the situation does not improve the Education Safeguarding Officer (ESO) may intervene.

If a pupil is persistently or frequently absent through reported illness, then the school may request medical evidence in order to authorise the absence.

The school will remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters and will let them know of concerns regarding their child's attendance.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

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

Further information and guidance can be found in the Yeovil Federation of Schools leaflet (Appendix 1).

Review Date November 2019

Next Due 2021