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# Attendance Policy

# OUTWOODS PRIMARY SCHOOL and NURSERY

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Rationale

Regular attendance is important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all pupils. This supports a child to develop emotionally resilient behaviours, confidence and eventually become competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

### Introduction

We regard the child's time at school as a partnership between school and home and we hope to have the support of parents/carers in ensuring that their children make the most of their time here and attend regularly. The school takes the view that every lesson counts.

Parents and children sign up annually to regular attendance in the Home/School Agreement. The responsibility for regular attendance is shared between parents, L.A. and the school. The Government has decided that Parents who fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly are liable to prosecution. The DfE definition of a parent is:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

Schools must monitor attendance by keeping a register on which a child is marked present or absent. These registers must be marked at the beginning of each session i.e. morning and afternoon. The register must also show whether or not an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Guidelines have been developed by the LA to assist schools in deciding whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

In accordance with the regulations relating to pupils' attendance at Outwoods Primary School we keep a paper attendance register on which (at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session,) pupils are marked present or absent. An entry must be

made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

### **Categories of Absence**

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.

b) Prior to the engagement of the Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service (ACE), the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for ACE involvement.

There are two categories of absence:-

(i) Authorised (approved)

(ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as 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.

**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, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. Persistent lateness can constitute as unauthorised absence.

## **Entitlement**

Children are entitled to a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum delivered by the school over a period of 190 days in each school year. There is no automatic right for any pupil to be absent from school, including for a family holiday during term time. Any requests for holidays will be refused.

All parents are given, at the start of the new school year, the school term dates so that holidays can be arranged within the allocated holiday periods.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

The school registers are held on the administration computer in the SIMS database. Teachers have a legal responsibility to mark the registers accurately at the beginning of each session. (8:50am and 1:15pm).

Children are recorded as present or absent. Any child who arrives after his/her name has been called is deemed late. The register is coded using the 'WCC Guidance to schools on the correct use of Register Coding - November 2016'. Children who arrive late between 8.55 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. are coded as authorised late (L code). Children arriving after 9.30 a.m. are coded as unauthorised late (U code) unless they have a valid medical appointment. Any changes to the register should be clearly distinguishable. A copy of the most frequently used codes is issued to class teachers for retention in their register folder. The school office can advise on appropriate coding for more unusual circumstances. Registration sheets, in folders, are sent to the school office after completion and the information is transferred to the SIMS Attendance database at least weekly

Parents are requested to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible by telephone or text followed by a note of explanation in the link book. Outwoods operate a first day text system by 10 a.m. for any unexplained absences. The school attendance officer records all absences and these records are monitored regularly by the senior leadership team and governors.

## **Punctuality**

We encourage punctuality at school; children should arrive no earlier than 8.40am and no later than 8.50am. Children who arrive late between 8.50 a.m. and 9.20 a.m. are coded as authorised late (L code). Children arriving after 9.20 a.m. are coded as unauthorised late (U code) unless they have had a valid medical appointment. If your child is late you will be asked to sign your child into school giving a valid reason for lateness.

Parents of pupils attending appointments during the day will be asked to sign their child out and then back into school. If a child is late to school and they miss the registration period or a regular pattern occurs then an unauthorised absence will be given. The Head teacher or class teacher may ask to discuss the issue with parents if lateness becomes a concern.

### **If a child is absent:**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school by 9.45am on the first day of their child's absence.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. If parents call in to say that their child will not be in school, it will be recorded on the register. If a child is recorded as absent and notification of absence has not been received by the school as part of day to day monitoring, the following procedures will be adhered to:

**First Day Calling/Texting** - If no reason for absence is received, parents will be contacted by text or telephone. This is noted in the comments section of the child's attendance record. The school will monitor the impact of first day calling and keep a record of those parents who regularly do not inform us of absence.

**Uncontactable Parents** - Letters need to be completed and put in addressed envelopes for any parents who we have not been able to contact. The office staff will be responsible for posting these. We ask that parents keep the school informed of all telephone number changes as this is a Health and Safety concern in the event of an emergency.

### **Illness and Medical Appointments:**

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school by 9.45am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- b) An appointment card from the doctors/ dentist/hospital is required.
- c) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- d) If your child is absent due to vomiting then they should not return to school for the next 24 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- e) For more than three days of absence the school require an explanation of why the child was absent. The school office may request the reason in writing or in person, this may take the form of providing medical evidence to support the absence.

Long-term absence:

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school. However, medical evidence supplied by the parent may be required to authorise this absence and for a referral to the school nurse for support.

### **Attendance reports**

A variety of SIMS Attendance reports are used to keep teachers and the senior management team aware of class, family or pupil concerns.

The headteacher's report to governors includes comments on the LA target, school current position and areas of concern.

Class Teachers are also responsible for highlighting attendance concerns to their phase coordinator / Headteacher.

Teachers have attendance data available for parent meetings throughout the school year, it will also be recorded termly in the Assertive Mentoring meetings.

The child's attendance report will be included in the annual report to parents.

### **Registers**

The computer print out of children's registration from the SIMS database is the school's 'official register'. This is kept in the school administration unit.

Attendance data and details of unauthorised absences are passed to the L.A. and D.f.E as required (usually electronically via internet).

Similar data relating to the schools previous year will be included in the school profile.

The use of the computer for storing children's registration and attendance data is registered with the Data Protection Agency as required by the Data Protection Act.

### **Persistent absence**

**Attendance is rigorously monitored on a regular basis.**

Parents will receive a concern letter from school when their child's attendance reaches 95%, and the school will monitor that child's attendance.

If a child's absence reaches 92% a further letter will be sent expressing concern and asking that parents contact the school if support is needed to improve attendance.

At 90% a letter will be sent to parents letting them know that we are monitoring their attendance and that no further absences will be authorised without medical evidence. Parents will be invited to school to meet with the Head teacher to discuss any issues the child may have and school will attempt to support the child. If a parent refuses to attend these meetings or a child's attendance does not show significant improvement, the school will have no option but to refer to the Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service (ACE).

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. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problems.

### **Attendance Targets**

The school sets attendance targets every year and these are discussed at the first Governing Body Meeting of the year.

**The current target is 95.5% with an aspirational target of 97% in future years.** 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.

### **Review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years. The rates of attendance will be reported annually on the school website and in any future school prospectus.

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 work closely with Head teacher and within current policy in order to resolve any issues.

## **Leave of Absence**

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

- Head teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.

- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.

- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and if refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

## **Promoting Good Attendance**

The school aims to promote, among parents and pupils, a high level of awareness of the need for regular and prompt attendance e.g. a statement in the school prospectus, induction meetings, and reminders in school newsletters.

Throughout the year regular feedback on attendance will be given to parents.

## **Good Attendance**

Class attendance is displayed within each class on a weekly basis and a reward system for best class attendees every term is in operation.

100% attendance will be celebrated on a termly basis with collectable badges being given. Children who attend every day for a whole year will receive a special prize.

**Approval of policy and next review**

Signed B Dandy Headteacher

Signed D Brown Chair of Governors

Date: June 2018

Review date: Summer term 2019

