

Copeland Road Primary School

STATEMENT OF POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON ATTENDANCE

INTRODUCTION

At Copeland Road Primary School we aim to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality which will enable all pupils to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

SCOPE

This Statement of Policy applies to all pupils at the school, regardless of gender, race, creed or academic ability.

DEFINITION

This Statement of Policy sets out to clarify Copeland Road Primary School's response to the legislation relating to attendance.

RATIONALE

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

AIMS

Poor attendance has a direct relationship to poor achievement. It follows, therefore, that our main aim is to ensure that all our pupils attend as fully as possible. Maintaining and improving attendance levels at Copeland Road School is the responsibility of the whole school community, including pupils, parents and all staff.

STAFF

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff (not just teaching staff). The school will encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absences, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

HEADTEACHER

The Headteacher will:

- ◆ contribute to and support the school's policy;
- ◆ ensure that adequate and appropriate procedures are devised in order to promote the full attendance of pupils in the school;
- ◆ ensure that all members of staff understand and implement this policy and are aware of their responsibilities;
- ◆ assist parents/guardians, pupils and staff in resolving any problems brought to them in connection with attendance;

PARENTS

Parents are responsible by law for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible, by telephone or preferably in writing. A pupil's absence from school must be considered unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. Parents will be promptly informed of any concern which may arise over a child's attendance. A summary of the child's attendance record will be attached to his/her annual report at the end of the summer term.

Parents are requested, if at all possible, to avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours or to arrange holidays during term time. Parents whose first language is not English or who may have difficulty with written language will be offered appropriate support from school in the matter of communication.

PUPILS

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons punctually and regularly. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support from their class teacher and from the Headteacher.

GOVERNORS

This completed school policy document on Attendance will be placed before the *Governors* for information, discussion and approval. Future developments and amendments to the school policy will also be placed before the *Governors* for information, discussion and approval.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

When appropriate, the school will liaise with other agencies (e.g. Education Welfare Service, Schools' Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, etc.) when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties and, where appropriate, their parents.

EVALUATION

Review of all or part of the school's Attendance Policy will take place as and when necessary.

Mr Nodding

GUIDANCE

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Registers will be called as promptly as possible after 9.00 am and again 1.00 p.m. Registers will close at 9.20 am and 1.15 pm respectively and pupils arriving after this time will be marked "absent". If pupils arrive after this time, they should report to the school office where the school secretary will amend the entry on the register. If lateness persists, the Headteacher will contact the parents to discuss the matter. If the matter is not resolved it will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Completing the Register

The marking of registers can sometimes become such a routine matter that its importance is lost. However, incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils. They are documents that may be required in a court of law as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They may also contribute to pupil's end of term reports and to records of achievement. For these reasons registers are required to be marked in ink and not easily erased, and all alterations should be visible and explained. There must be no unmarked sessions.

- ◆ Black diagonal line to denote presence.
- ◆ Red circle to denote unauthorised absence.
- ◆ Red circle with correct symbol recorded inside in black for authorised absence.
- ◆ Any correction or alteration must be initialled and an explanation provided.
- ◆ Weekly/termly headings completed.
- ◆ Running totals of authorised and unauthorised absence to be maintained by the school secretary.

Parents are 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/School Secretary will inspect registers daily and will discuss any concerns with the Educational Welfare Officer.

AUTHORISED / UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- ◆ Authorised (where the school approves pupil absence)
- ◆ Unauthorised (where the school will not approve absence)

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise any absence. At Copeland Road School we decide upon how an absence is to be recorded according to "School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence" (DfES 1994). This states that:

Absence may be authorised if:

- ◆ 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 to which the pupil or pupil's parent belongs;
- ◆ the school at which the child is registered is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:
 - the child's transport to and from school;
 - boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school; and
 - enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school near to his/her home;
- ◆ the pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the guidance are met;

- ◆ there is a family bereavement;
- ◆ the pupil is attending an open day at a secondary school or visiting prior to receiving a place at another school;
- ◆ the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition or is attending a Pupil Referral Unit;
- ◆ the pupil is participating in an approved public performance or is involved in an exceptional special occasion;
- ◆ leave of absence is granted by the school for a family holiday of no more than two weeks. **(Parents should be reminded that they do not have a right to expect that the school will agree to a family holiday during term time).**

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- ◆ no explanation is forthcoming or the school is dissatisfied with the explanation;
- ◆ the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings. (The guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances. It is, in any case, inadvisable for children of primary school age to be left in such a position);
- ◆ the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- ◆ the pupil is absent for unexceptional special reasons (e.g. a birthday);
- ◆ the pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school (normally a maximum of two weeks in any one year, although longer leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances; e.g. visits to countries of origin by members of ethnic minority groups);
- ◆ 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.

HOLIDAYS

Parents should be urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Indeed parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. If, however, the parents apply to school in advance, the school may grant up to two weeks' term time absence in any year to go on a family holiday. Apart from this, leave in term time can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. **A child who is absent longer than 10 days after an agreed return date, can legally be removed from the school roll.**

Occasionally, holidays of more than two weeks to visit family living overseas may be planned and parents are urged to discuss with school staff the most appropriate time of year or point in the child's educational career for such a visit to take place. This will help minimise disruption to the child's progress at school.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave for a family holiday, the School will consider each case individually, taking into account a child's overall attendance and the reason for the holiday. The school will not authorise holidays taken in May, as this is the time we assess pupils in school, and also at the beginning of the academic year. New leave of absence forms can be obtained from the School Secretary, and all requests should be submitted to the School Office at least two weeks before the first day of intended absence.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt his/her continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which staff and parents must seek to avoid.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Our school seeks to offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and happy. We believe the school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late and that follow up action will be taken.

A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils, which is varied and flexible enough to meet the needs of all pupils, with learning tasks matched to pupils' needs.

The Attendance trophy is presented every week in the Achievers' Assembly to the class with the highest attendance. A certificate and special pencil is awarded to each child who has 100% attendance at the end of each term. A certificate and gift voucher is presented to each child who has 100% attendance for the whole year.

Parents who have not explained their child's absence will be contacted by telephone usually in the morning of the first day so that the school can be made aware of the problem.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be contacted as soon as attendance drops below 90%.

Attendance data will be collected regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy and practice.

Pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be set targets for improvement, in discussion with parents. Such targets will be monitored and reviewed by the Headteacher and class teachers.

Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, annual reports to parents, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.

Pupils who are absent for any length of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home for them, or set in advance, so that they should not fall behind or get out of good work habits.

The Headteacher Report will make regular comments to the Governing Body on issues relating to attendance.

Mr R Nodding
Headteacher

APPENDIX

SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE/LATENESS

The school has a policy of first day response to absence. If no message has been received from a parent about an absent child, then the school will do everything possible to contact the home during the day to find out the reason for absence. Parents will be sent a Reason for Absence letter and will be expected to return this with an appropriate reason.

If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will write to the parents and set up a meeting at school to discuss the situation.

If a pupil is persistently absent (or late without explanation) and the school's efforts to effect an explanation have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Notes from parents will be kept in the child's file in the school office.

Lateness

School begins at 9.00 a.m. and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Any child arriving later than 9.00 a.m. should report to the School Office. If accompanied, a parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness, which will be added to the register. The child will then be sent to the appropriate classroom.

What can parents do to help?

- ◆ Let the school know as soon as possible why their child is away.
- ◆ Send a note when the child returns to school.
- ◆ Try to make appointments outside school time.
- ◆ Do not allow children to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

If parents are worried about their children's attendance at school what can they do?

- ◆ Talk to the child; it may be something simple.
- ◆ Talk to the Headteacher and staff at the school.

If it continues:

- ◆ The school may refer the problem to the Education Welfare Service.
- ◆ Parents may contact the Education Welfare Officer, who will work with the family and the school to resolve the situation. (Number available from the School Office)