Attendance Policy

Approved Spring 2022
To be reviewed Spring 2024

Introduction

At St Catherine's, we are committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for all of our pupils and staff. We believe that only if children attend school regularly and punctually will they be able to take full advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities that are presented to them and therefore make as much progress as possible.

Our attendance policy is available on our school website and has been written in line with relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education as well as guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind, developing large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Our aims are:
- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm.
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school.
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.
- To keep whole school attendance above 96%

The role of leadership and management
- Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by all staff, pupils and families.
- Make sure all staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that all pupils understand its importance.
- Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Empower all staff to take responsibility for attendance.
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build and maintain systems and performance.

- Have a designated attendance champion with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures and school improvement plan.
- Make sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.
- Governors should have an accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate.

The role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:
- the implementation of the Attendance Policy.
- all staff knowing and understanding their responsibilities for attendance.
- agreeing whether an absence should be authorised. The power to authorise an absence rest with the Headteacher or delegated person within the school, and not with parents or the local authority
- working actively to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and the pupil body as a whole,
- having clear policies in place to address persistent absence,
- ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness,
- monitoring trends,
- Implementing a system for all parents to report a child's absence,
- reporting to the Governing Board the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets,
- reminding all parents of their commitment to this policy,
- building respectful relationships with all staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- communicating openly and honestly with all staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.
- taking into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively,
- understanding the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity,
- communicating effectively with all families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance concerns

- delivering clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families,
- using physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure,
- regularly communicating expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents,
- establishing and monitoring recognition for attendance and punctuality,
- monitoring implementation of policy and practice,
- monitoring whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions,
- establishing, implementing and monitoring robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME) See guidance on HCC Grid regarding Children Missing Education https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/children-missing-from-education,
- developing good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND),
- ensuring that parents fully understand the demands and responsibilities of elective home education See guidance on HCC Grid when a parent is considering EHE https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/elective-home-education

The Role of the Class Teacher
- setting an example of punctuality and good attendance,
- implementing the Attendance Policy,
- ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and are accurate and up-to-date,
- monitoring class and individual attendance patterns,
- informing the school office of any concerns,
- discussing with families any concerns about attendance at family conferencing sessions
- emphasising with children the importance of punctuality and good attendance,
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.

The Role of Parents/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. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.
- Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school. Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance,
- instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- informing the school on the first day of absence, by 9.30 am at the latest'
- providing the school with an explanation for the absence.
- informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
- taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
- working in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- avoiding arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- not booking holidays during term-time.
- treating staff with respect
- communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence require support

The Role of the Attendance Champion

The School Attendance Champion is **Mrs L. Steiger**. She is responsible for:

- implementing the Attendance Policy with the Head
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
- Developing robust school systems which provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:
  - children who have a social worker including looked-after children
  - young carers o children who are eligible for free school meals
  - children who speak English as a second language
  - children who have special educational needs and disabilities
- keeping the Head and all school staff informed of attendance figures and trends by providing regular reports to enable them to track the attendance of all pupils and to implement attendance procedures.
- compiling attendance data for the Head, the Governing Boardy and the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).
- ensuring registers are distributed to the teaching staff and are kept up to date,
- consultations with the LAAO.
- contacting parents if they have not reported their child's absence by 9.30 am.
- sending an email/text if no contact is made and following up with a home visit if no contact (via phone, text or email) is made by midday
- arranging meetings with parents to ensure clear channels of communication are in place and offer support/interventions where necessary.
- The escalation of procedures to address absence needs to be:
  - understood by pupils, parents and carers o implemented consistently

- o reviewed regularly
- ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly via a 10 Day Absence Form. See guidance on HCC Grid for form – https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/attendance-guidance-and-statutoryresponsibilities

Lateness

The office staff monitor lateness and inform:
- the Head/SLT/Teachers of patterns of lateness.
- parents of the school's concerns and arrange a meeting so that the problem can be addressed.

The school gates are opened at 8.35am and pupils are then expected to enter the school building and make their way to their classroom.

Children who arrive after 8.50 am must be signed in by school for purposes of emergency evacuation etc.

Pupils who arrive between 8.50 am and 9.10 am will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (Code L).

Pupils who arrive after the register has closed at 9.10 am and parent provides a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.

Pupils who arrive after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session (Code U).

Pupils at risk of being persistent absentees/persistent absentees

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance falls below 90%. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue by:
- establishing robust escalation procedures which are initiated before absence becomes a problem, for example by
- sending letters to parents and carers
- creating attendance clinics
- engaging with local authority attendance teams and/or independent attendance organisations
- engaging with children's social care staff, including Virtual School Heads and social workers where appropriate
- establishing a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
- monitoring the implementation and quality of escalation procedures (and intervention),
- engaging governors in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

Absence

Holidays during term time – changes to legislation which came into force in September 2013 made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there are exceptional circumstances behind the request it should be discussed with the Headteacher.

Part Time Timetables

As part of the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers (Ofsted June 2015) local authorities are required to provide detailed data on school age children in their area who are not in receipt of full-time education and schools are similarly expected to maintain data on students of compulsory school age who are on their roll but attending on a part-time timetable.

The Local authority has published guidance for all maintained school, academies, free schools, studio schools, UTCs, ESCs and PSBs on the use of part-time timetables for pupils of compulsory school age (the term after their fifth birthday to the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday)

All schools are required to return information on children who are on part-time tables within five days of the pupil starting or ending a part -time timetable. Follow guidance on HCC Grid when considering a part-time timetable - https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/attendance-part-time-student

Authorised/Unauthorised Absences

Absences will be authorised if:
- The pupil is absent with leave as agreed by the Headteacher.
- The pupil is ill and has not been asked to provide proof of absence.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision.
- There is a close family bereavement.
- Leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application (parents cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence).
- Leave of absence to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 © for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt

remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school may write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you to contact the school nurse if appropriate.

The school will continue to make contact with a family on a regular basis until they are well enough to return to school.

Re-integrating long-term absentees

Following the decision to agree a long-term absence from school a member of SLT will meet with the family of a pupil due to return to school to agree a re-integration plan. This will take into account the individual needs of the pupil to ensure that their transition back to full time schooling is supportive. The individual needs of the pupil are paramount and the re-integration plan will be devised on a case-by-case basis.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

If a child's attendance drops below 95% at the end of a half-term, the school will write to inform families of this, inviting the family to come into school to meet with a member of the attendance team to discuss reasons for absence and offer support and strategies to improve it.