



# Attendance Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Swavesey Primary School aims to work in partnership with parents and carers to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

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 and there are no exceptional circumstances. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. The most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make each and every school day a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

### **Statutory Framework**

Under *The Education Act 1996*, parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually at the school where he/she is a registered 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, (see below).

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006* the governing body is 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 the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

## 2 Authorised and Unauthorised absence

### 2.1 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 carer; for example if a child has been unwell and the parent contacts the school to explain the absence. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance, October 2014, states, "*Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The application **must be made in advance** and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.*"

There are national registration codes (appendix 1) used by schools when absence can be authorised. Leave of absence can be authorised for the following reasons:

- a. a child's illness;
- b. a child's medical or dental appointment (which could not be made out of school hours);
- c. days of religious observance;
- d. participation in a supervised sporting activity;
- e. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational purposes.

Other exceptional circumstances, warranting authorised leave of absence, have been agreed by the head teachers of the Octagon Cluster (Swavesey Village College feeder schools) to include:

- f. the **day** of a family wedding or funeral;
- g. compassionate leave due to family circumstances;
- h. graduation of a sibling or parent;
- i. a parent / carer's restricted leave outside of school holidays;
- j. participation in a supervised activity/performance important to a child's specific high ability;
- k. visits to another school where she/he may/will eventually attend.

Proof of the above may be asked to be seen. For example, a wedding invite, doctor's letter, medical or dental appointment card, letter from employer or work-schedule.

## **2.2 Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is/or has been absent without good reason, as defined and agreed by the school, taking into account the list in 2.1 above. These absences will affect the child's overall attendance record which is monitored by the school and the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) and remains on the child's school file.

## **3 Requests for exceptional leave of absence**

The *Request for Exceptional Absence* form is available on the school website or from the school office. This should be completed by the parent or carer and returned to the school office **at least one week before the first day of requested absence**. Alternatively, parents can request an appointment with the headteacher to discuss the exceptional absence at least one week before the first day of requested absence.

Requests for exceptional leave will always be looked at on an individual basis and a decision will be made based on whether it is considered to be exceptional. The head teacher's decision regarding authorisation will be returned to the parent or carer as soon as possible either in writing or person. Taking additional leave than that which has been agreed will be marked as unauthorised, unless later agreed.

## **4 Registration & Lateness**

School gates open at 8.45am and are locked at 9.05am, at which time classroom registration also closes. Class teachers electronically mark children as either present or absent and office staff then enter the appropriate code relating to their reason for absence.

Pupils who arrive after 9.05am **must enter school via the main office and are recorded as Late (L)** on the register. **Pupils who arrive in school after 9.30am are recorded as Late (U)** on the electronic register, which the system logs as an unauthorised absence unless exceptional circumstances are

explained to and accepted by the head teacher (as set out above). If a pupil is persistently late the head teacher will contact the parents/carers. If this does not soon improve the LAO may be involved.

## **5 What happens when a child is absent**

At 9.30am each morning, office staff check class registers and begin contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent for unknown reasons. If no contact is made with the parent/carer and there are concerns about the child's well-being, a home visit may be made or contact made with outside agencies.

## **6 Repeated absences**

The head teacher monitors attendance at least every half-term. The Local Authority Attendance Officer will visit the head teacher at least once a year, and additionally when required where attendance issues arise, to discuss any pupil whose attendance is causing concern and to discuss appropriate intervention. The school follows the county letter system.

If a child has a significant number of absences (90% or below attendance over a half-term), the parent(s) or carer(s) will be contacted by the school. This may be through email, a letter or by arranging a meeting with the headteacher. Any letter will be accompanied by the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. The letter reminds parents/carers about the importance of regular school attendance. The letter also points out that regular attendance is a legal requirement. This is recorded in the record of letters sent file. Should the pupil's attendance improve but the improvement fails to be sustained, a further copy of the letter may be sent at a later date. From this point on, a greater level of evidence may be requested from parents/carers in order for any future absences to be authorized.

If attendance does not improve a second letter is sent to the parent(s)/carer(s), again with the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. This letter is copied to the Local Authority Attendance Officer and is recorded in the record of letters sent file.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance and no satisfactory explanation for the absences, parents/carers are informed by a third **letter** that their child is now at risk and a penalty notice may be issued.

## **7 Penalty Notices for Non School Attendance**

Repeated or prolonged unauthorised absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice, in line with appendix 2 below and the *CCC Penalty Notices for Non-school Attendance Code of Conduct* (see below for extracted key information and the school website for the full document).

### **Extract from CCC Penalty Notices for Non-School Attendance**

8 Penalty Notice may be considered as an alternative to prosecution for failure to

ensure regular school attendance in any given period of unauthorised school attendance as below:

**A. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:** As the Government changed the PA (Persistent Absence) threshold to 90% (in effect from Sept. 2015), the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice in relation to a child whose attendance at school is less than 90% over a given period. To allow time and opportunity for early intervention work with the family, attendance will be monitored by school and Local Authority before enforcement actions are considered. Such a Fine is intended to offer a rapid intervention, which may be used to address non-school attendance before it becomes entrenched, following guidance in section 13.

**B. UNAUTHORISED TERM TIME LEAVE (includes Holiday):** Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. **Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with a 'G' code in the attendance register.** Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. *(The Supreme Court Judgement in the case between Isle of Wight Council v Platt (6th April 2017) clarified the meaning of regular school attendance in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996. To attend school "regularly" means "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".)*

## 8 Children Missing in Education

The school follow the county guidelines for children missing in education (CME) and will require parents/carers to complete a Department for Education CME form when moving school or choosing to home tutor.

This form is in addition to any admissions forms which are required by schools and local authorities. This form requires parents to identify the home address at which they will reside after leaving the school, information regarding the new school or home tutoring and requires the parent to sign to endorse the information given. This information will then be passed onto the appropriate authorities so that children are tracked through to their next education setting.

## Appendix 1

Key to Codes			
/	Present (AM)	P	Approved sporting activity
\	Present (PM)	R	Religious observance
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)	S	Study leave
C	Other authorised circumstances	T	Traveller absence
D	Dual registration	U	Late (after registers closed)
E	Excluded	V	Educational visit or trip
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	W	Work experience
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	#	Planned whole or partial school closure
I	Illness	Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
J	Interview	X	Non-compulsory school age absence
L	Late (before registers closed)	Z	Pupil not on roll
M	Medical/Dental appointments	-	All should attend / No mark recorded
N	No reason yet provided for absence		
O	Unauthorised Abs		

**Process for dealing with requests for exceptional absence**

