



Coombe Academy Trust Knollmead Primary School Attendance Policy

Equality Analysis Impact

Title of Policy: Attendance

Considered at Governors' Committee meeting: Curriculum

Date: Summer 2018

Review: July 2019

Is there relevance to equality?

1. Does the policy have an adverse effect on employees, pupils or the wider community and therefore have a significant effect in terms of equality? If yes, then please answer questions 2 and 3. NO
2. Does the policy have an adverse effect upon a group with protected characteristics? (sex, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, age) NO
3. Does the policy affect one or more of the equality objectives set by the school?
(Please refer to the Equality and Diversity Policy) NO

If the answer to question 2 or 3 is yes, a full equality analysis will need to be completed by the SLT Lead before the next committee meeting.

Please detail the objective and explain the relevance of the policy to the objective and protected characteristics below.

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Knollmead Primary School and Nursery fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to 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. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

- Good attendance is important because:
- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. It is recognised that children missing from education could, be an indicator of other issues, for example neglect, abuse or child sexual exploitation.

Aims and Objectives

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

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters, through our school newsletter and on our website
- Celebrating good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Rewarding good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/ events
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

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 or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. The school may require medical evidence if the pupil has higher than normal levels of illness before authorising.
- Reporting an absence does not automatically mean that the absence will be authorised. Parents/carers will be informed if further information/evidence is required.

Unauthorised absence

- Unauthorised absence is 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.
- Absences where a reason has not been provided will automatically be recorded as unauthorised

If needed registration marks can be changed from an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.

- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Kingston Upon Thames LA and the DfE where requested.
- To ensure that we receive written confirmation from a parent / carer if their child is being educated outside of the school system.
- Work collaboratively with the appropriate local authority in order to share information about the attendance and/or absences of a child. If a child moves to another school they will not be removed from our school roll until we have written confirmation from their new school confirming the move. We will also inform the local authority immediately if a child is removed from roll so that the local authority can identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Ensuring that all students are registered accurately
- Informing the Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted on the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

The Senior Leadership Team

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the explanations for absence are on SIMS
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and /or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Where a child is absent from school for more than 3 days without notification the office team will make the leadership team aware. On the 5th day of absence a child is deemed as 'CME' - Child Missing Education. At this point a referral to SPA will be made.

Parents

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Education Welfare Officer

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits weekly to check and monitor attendance.

The EWO is responsible for:

- Carrying out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%) Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Providing school staff with advice and guidance around school attendance
- Working with families to identify areas of support which may be needed to help improve attendance.
- If necessary, inviting families to a Legal Attendance Meeting to outline concerns and discuss support and /or possible legal action.

Registration

The school doors open at 8.45am for KS1/KS2 and 8.40am for nursery. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00 (EYS, KS1, KS2) and PM session by 13.10 (EYS / KS1) 13.40 (KS2). (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present)

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software. School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years.

Lateness

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of the school day is when the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing for pupils leading to possible further absence. The school day begins at 8.45am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 9 am and closes at 9.15am.

- Once the classroom door (KS1) or the children's entrance (KS2) is closed at 9am pupils must report to the school office. All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as an unauthorized absence and coded U. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns. If lateness persists parents/ carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem, and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter.

Parents/carers must contact the school for each day of absence and it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. This allows regular communication with parents and also can be used as a prompt for asking a parent if they have sought medical advice yet especially if the absence is three days or more.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence we will send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

First Day Contact

If your child is absent from school you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- If a parent/carer contacts the school before 8am we request that you leave a message on the answer machine detailing your child's name and class, and the specific reason for their absence (ie. Chickenpox rather than unwell).
- Calls made after 8am will be answered by a member of the administration team.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service if absence is unauthorized and falls below 90%

Fifth Day Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 5 consecutive school days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then a Spa referral is made and the local authority is notified that the child is missing education (CME). An Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Twenty Day Off Roll Notice

After ten consecutive school days' absence, with no contact, we will write to parents/carers advising that we may remove your child's name from roll after twenty school days' absence.

The twenty day off roll notice also applies in the instance that a child is abroad and does not return on the date specified by the parent/carer, or a date of return has not been provided.

Once a child's name is removed from the school roll, admission can only be made via the local authority school admissions department.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a persistent absentee.

If your child has been absent and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for and patterns of absence, will invite you in for a school attendance meeting. The purpose of these meetings is to establish any barriers to attendance and help identify any support required for either the child or family.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance the Education Welfare Service will become involved on a statutory level.

If a child has repeated periods of illness the school will request that parents/carers provide medical evidence for each future period of illness. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card, copy of a prescription or medicine packaging. We may also seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There are no rules on

this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday.

In the case that exceptional circumstances exist the Headteacher will determine how many days of absence will be authorised.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

Unauthorised term-time leave will be reported to the school's Education Welfare Officer and legal action may be taken.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 97%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via personal contact and letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) after a period of involvement and if there has been no attendance improvement will consider legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Parents can encourage their child to attend school by:

- Making sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning
 - Ensuring your child leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped
- Showing interest in what your child is doing in school, chatting to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only (evidence must be supplied) and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, parents should enrol their child at a school in the new area (dual registration).

Traveller children will not be removed from the school roll while they are travelling, but will be registered with a 'T' code.

Leavers

If a child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) we ask that parents:

Give the office staff comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move the new address and telephone numbers, the name of the child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, this can include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Updated, Summer 2018

