

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Codsall Middle School

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a school to be proud of

Pupil Attendance Policy

September 2023

Principles

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory age attend school regularly.
- Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.
- The school will promote positive behaviour and attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance appropriately.
- All children should be in school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- This policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the wellbeing of children including safeguarding, behaviour, bullying and support for children with medical needs.
- We will work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance and will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team such as Education Welfare Workers where required in order to ensure all children can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance.
- We will never cover up absence or to give in to pressure to excuse pupils from attending.
- Our attendance policy will include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils.
- We will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern.

Legal Framework

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) empowers designated Local Authority (LA) officers, Headteachers (as well as Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

- Parents have a duty to ensure that children of school age attend school. Permitting absence from school without a good reason (condoned absence) is an offence by the parent.
- Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and record whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent.

- If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent from school every half-day absence from school has to be classified, as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**.
- Only the school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.
- Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more, where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence, to the Local Authority to seek advice from an Education Welfare Worker.
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- The Issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1996 and the Equality Act 2010.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence if a parent fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school at which they are registered, if that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under s444 Education Act 1996 or s36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

The Regulations also require each local authority to publish a code of conduct for issuing penalty notices, after consultation with governing bodies, Headteachers and the Police. Guidance from the Secretary of State states that this "should set out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice".

Parents or Carers Responsibilities

- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day.
- When a child is absent parents/carers should telephone school on 01902 843177 on the first day of absence, before 9.30am, giving the reason for the child's absence. An answerphone is available for parents to leave messages regarding absence. The absence code and reason for absence will be recorded on the system for staff to view when the register is taken in the classroom.
- Parents should contact/inform school on each subsequent day of their child's illness.
- Where the school is advised that a child will be absent from school due to a recognised illness, condition or infection, the school will advise parents as to information in the 'Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and Other Childcare Settings' document produced by Public Health England. This may, at times, be different to the advice provided by individual doctors where doctors recommend a child is absent from school which opposes the recommendations for schools, the school reserves the right, through consultation with Staffordshire and Public Health England, to ask that a child is away from school so as to minimise infection and further spread (e.g. in the case of Norovirus).
- Ensure that school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance.
- Do not book holidays in term time – this will only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**.
- Ensure school has all up to date contact details with a minimum of two contacts.

The importance of good attendance and its link to attainment:

- The Department of Education has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on chances of succeeding in tests and exams. February 22nd 2015 (Department of Education). The research is based on data from all schools in England going back several years.
- The results are very clear – missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement.
- For example, at the end of the 2012/13 Academic year 94% of pupils who were present all the time achieved 5+ GCSE A* - C or equivalent. Where attendance dropped to between 85 and 90% only 75% of pupils achieved these results. This equates to an absence of around 1 week per year during Years 10 and 11 and clearly illustrates the impact of attendance on attainment.
- The same pattern is also seen at primary school level, where pupils missing up to just 14 days of school in key stage 2 (normally age 11) are a quarter less likely to achieve level 5 or above in reading, writing or maths tests than those with no absence.
- 90% attendance is the equivalent of an afternoon per week or 7 school days per term which could affect a whole units worth of knowledge.

Definition of Authorised Absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause.

Definition of Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- Holiday during term time.
- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.

Procedures for Parents and Pupils

Absence/lateness

- Absence should be reported by telephone to the school on the first day of absence and each subsequent day of illness.
- When absence is expected (known in advance) it should be notified in writing in advance to the school for approval e.g. a family funeral or hospital appointment and appointment notification letters supplied to office@codsall-middle.staffs.sch.uk
- Registration in the morning closes 30 minutes after school starts in the morning and afternoon. Afternoon registration is taken during lesson 3 which starts at 11.15am.
- Pupils arriving late to school should report directly to Reception to register. However, any arrival after 9.05am will be given a late mark until 10.00am.
- School will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc.,

Family Holidays

On 1st September 2013 a new law came into effect with regard to authorised holidays for pupils' during term time. Prior to the change the law stated that "a pupil may be granted leave of absence from the school to go away on holiday" where the Headteacher/Head of School considered that there were "special circumstances relating to that application". This section has been deleted and there is now no rule which allows for authorisation be given specifically for holidays. The replacement section states that "leave of absence shall not be granted" unless the Headteacher considers that there are "exceptional circumstances relating to that application".

All requests for leave of absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher.

What are "exceptional circumstances"?

- Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement).

The changes make it clear that Headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance. It is the decision of the Headteacher/Head of School as to what might be considered an exceptional circumstance and parents should not expect their request to be granted as a right.

It is our policy:

- It will be the exception, not the rule; that would lead to a 'Leave of Absence' request being granted.
- Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence in term time need to put the request in writing to the Headteacher/Head of School in advance and before booking.
- Each application will be judged individually and on its own merit.
- Full disclosure of reasons must be submitted, however further information may be requested should the Headteacher/Head of School feel this would support an application.
- Any leave not granted will be recorded as unauthorised absence should this leave still be taken.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence is at the Headteacher's/Head of School's discretion and is not an automatic right.

Penalty Notices

Codsall Middle School **will** work closely with the Education Welfare and have employed 'VIP Education' to act as the schools Educational Welfare Officers and we continue to work with the LST18 team to ensure regular attendance at school. Education Welfare can take legal action against a parent/carer if the student does not attend school regularly and there is not a medical reason for the absence.

This action might take one or two forms, either issuing a penalty notice or prosecution in the magistrate's court.

Penalty Criteria and Guidance – New Guidance as from 1st January 2018

Penalty Notices for leave in term time may be considered appropriate if the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. “Persistent” means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the Headteacher/Head of School or in excess of the period authorised by the Headteacher/Head of School (e.g. family holiday).
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. “Persistent” means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of a suspended child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child’s first five days of suspension. An “suspended child” is one who has been suspended from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

Other conditions

- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence / lateness will be restricted to one notice / warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.

Admissions Register

School keeps an admission register which records the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school.

All schools (including academies) must keep a record of attendance register entries for at least 3 years and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside of the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;

- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child, then we will inform the Local Authority via Entrust at enquiries@entrust-ed.co.uk of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

Support

Parents whose children are experiencing attendance difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

School Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in dealing with individual absences:

- First day contact is in place; where a parent has failed to notify school of absence for that day, admin staff will send a text asking parents to contact school with a reason for their child's absence. Where a parent fails to respond to the text, admin staff will endeavour to make contact via telephone call.
- If a child is not present for am register; even if they have been marked as absent the previous day, a parent text will be sent home for parents to verify this subsequent absence.
- Where a pupil goes missing during the school day i.e. after registration parents will be notified by telephone.
- We send termly 'traffic light' letters using the Red, Amber and Green system which has been adopted by CLASP. This is to ensure parents are informed before their child's attendance becomes a cause for concern. This will also provide a mechanism for celebrating excellent attendance.
- Admin staff will notify Head of Year and relevant form tutor of any pupil with a "0" mark at the end of each week.
- An absence door knock by VIP Education will be requested to be carried out on day 3 for any pupil that has a "0" mark.

Persistent absenteeism

- Every three weeks an attendance check is made for pupils with less than 90% attendance and the names of these pupils passed to Mrs Deas for action (unless there is a known medical condition which necessitates absence).
- Any child who in the previous academic year had attendance of 90% or less are classed as persistent absentees (PA) and in the current academic year if they are absent from school, contact will be made to ensure there are no issues and support will be put in place where necessary.
- Mrs Deas meets regularly with the EWW and they see pupils whose attendance is giving serious cause for concern. They also carefully consider the absence of any vulnerable pupils.
- A first notification letter of concern, with a copy of the registration certificate, will be sent home to the parents of identified pupils.
- If there is no improvement within two weeks in the attendance of identified pupils, a second letter of notification will be sent home requesting their parents to attend a meeting with Mrs Deas and VIP Education (the pupil will be brought into the meeting at an appropriate stage).
- Medical evidence for future absences will be requested at this point and absences will be deemed unauthorised if medical evidence is not produced e.g. sight of doctor's appointment card or other document issued on a relevant date.
- If attendance still fails to improve a formal referral will be made to 'VIP Education'.
- A 'cold call' will be made to parents to warn them of intended prosecution if the pupil reaches 20 unauthorised sessions.
- When 20 unauthorised sessions (including unauthorised leave of absence) have been reached the EWW may issue a penalty notice which could result in a £60 fine if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not received by the Authority, there may be an automatic prosecution in court for which a £1000.00 fine may be possible.
- Prosecution will be made under the Education Act 1996 s.444. The court could issue an Educational Supervision Order for the child. The maximum penalty for parents convicted is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Attendance Initiatives

- Attendance is recorded by pupils in their planner on a half term basis.
- All parents/carers receive a 'traffic light' letter informing them of their child's attendance termly.
- Pupils with 100% attendance receive a bronze, silver or gold pin badge and certificate each term.

School Targets

The school has adopted the following attendance target:

The attendance for 2022/2023 was: 95.2%

The attendance target for 2023/2024 is: 97%

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

School Staff with Attendance Responsibilities:

Mrs S Deas Assistant Headteacher responsible for Whole School Attendance.
Email: st@codsall-middle.staffs.sch.uk

Mrs W Griffin Responsible for Holiday applications on behalf of the
Headteacher/Head of School.
Email: wg@codsall-middle.staffs.sch.uk

Mrs R Wafer Responsible for register attendance, first day contact, late arrivals and
attendance data.
Email: office@codsall-middle.staffs.sch.uk

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Signed *D Smith*

Mr Danny Smith
LAB Lead