

# **CRESWELL INFANT SCHOOL**

## **ATTENDANCE – POLICY AND PRACTICE**

### ***Aims***

This policy sets out the school's approach to attendance, absence and monitoring of pupils' absences. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage.

We at Creswell Infant School see the maximising of attendance rates as one of our key tasks. We believe that the school should actively pursue the goal of regular attendance and, in doing so, convey to parents and pupils that unjustified absence will not be tolerated, nor will it go unheeded. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously any problems which may lead to non-attendance. In accordance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) the school expects pupil attendance of at least 95%. The school has measures in place to support an effective attendance policy.

### ***Parent-School Partnership***

The 1996 Education Act requires parents (carers or guardians) of children of compulsory school age to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education, whether by regular school attendance or otherwise. In most cases, children attend school. Parents are thus primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school.

Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance. Parents should ensure that children arrive at school on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. Parents also need to see themselves as partners with school in the education of their children.

The school takes advantage of a variety of opportunities to state the school attendance policy e.g. school prospectus, newsletters, new parent's meetings, etc. The school's expectations are regularly communicated to parents. The parents of children whose attendance is a concern will also receive calls and/or written correspondence from the teacher responsible for attendance.

The school also informs parents of the role of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and her contribution to raising levels of pupil attendance.

### ***Reporting absences***

It is the parents' responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible. Parental contact, usually by telephone, on the first day of absence is the normal practice, followed by a written note upon the child's return to school.

Parents should inform school on the first day of absence of the nature of the illness, the expected length of the absence and the probable date of return.

It is the policy of the school that, where a pupil is absent without explanation, staff will operate a first day response system to enquire of the reasons for, and expected length of, absence. All explanations received in this manner are logged and the information passed to the Head of School Care and, where necessary, the Headteacher.

All day one response calls are logged, including those which fail to answer or reply to answer phone messages. Upon return to school, the parent is required to explain absence to the class teacher. This is monitored by Elaine Furness, Head of School Care, who is responsible for attendance. Explanations will be challenged, if required.

### ***Registration***

- All schools are required by law to keep attendance registers in which pupils are marked present or absent. These registers are completed at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Registers must also show whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Schools are permitted to use computerised attendance registers. Creswell Infant School uses a computerised system, a back-up laminated register is used if the network system is not working. The office administers a computerised system.
- Registers are legal documents and every care will be taken by staff to maintain accurate registrations and security of registers.
- Schools are required to identify absences into authorised and unauthorised absences, using a list of symbols to differentiate between the many and varied reasons for authorised absence. The school uses the symbols provided in the DCSF Circular 11/91 (Appendix 1). It is the responsibility of Senior Management to ensure that the system operates consistently throughout the school.
- Computerised registers must be printed out at least monthly. Registers must be retained for 3 years thereafter.

### ***Lateness***

The school has an active policy to discourage and record late arrivals. This is the 'Beat the Door' initiative. We have a 'late book' in the foyer for parents to sign. The school keeps registers open until 9.20 am. After this time, pupils are deemed to have failed to register for the morning session and are recorded as absent. Pupils arriving after 8.50 and before 9.20 a.m. are recorded in the office late book and as 'late' in the register.

In responding to lateness, the school actively co-operates with the EWO and school health services. Phone calls are made to all parents who bring their child late. Parents of pupils with recurring patterns of absence are contacted when necessary.

### ***Education Welfare Service***

- Where the absence or irregular attendance of a pupil is causing concern, the Local Authority (LA) can issue fixed penalties (see Appendix 2 for rates), apply to the courts for a supervision order or they can prosecute parents. Derbyshire LA employs Education Welfare Officers to help them to carry out their statutory responsibilities.
- The Education Welfare Service is the attendance enforcement arm of the LA and is part of the Multi-Agency Team (MAT). Education Welfare Service are able to support schools, pupils and parents in a variety of ways and, through their home visiting, may be especially well placed to assess a pupil's problems in the wider family context. Creswell Infant School maintains an effective working relationship with the Education Welfare Service and the Multi-Agency Team.

### ***Continuous Absences – Missing from Education***

- Under regulation 7 of the 1956 Regulation, schools are required to report continuous pupils absences of more than 2 weeks and those pupils who fail to attend regularly. However, this is a minimum requirement and in order to fulfil their responsibility the school monitors attendance closely. This information is passed to the LEA and the

DCSF. The EWO is consulted whenever schools are experiencing difficulty with a pupil's pattern of absence. School follows the Children Missing from Education Safeguarding advice and uses the Derbyshire SR1a referral forms.

The EWO is consulted whenever schools are experiencing difficulty with a pupil's pattern of absence.

### ***Categorising absence***

Under Section 199 of the Education Act 1993 no offence is committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- The pupil was absent with leave (granted by the school).
- The pupil was personally ill.
- The pupil was absent for reasons of religious observance on a day exclusively set aside for this by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- The school is more than 2 miles (for pupils under 8 years) or 3 miles (for pupils over 8 years) from the pupil's home and no arrangements have been made by the LEA for the child's transport to and from school. (This does not apply if there is a school nearer to the pupil's home at which the parents have chosen not to register the pupil.)

### ***Parental notes/explanations***

Parentally condoned unjustified absence can be as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy/absence and amounts to the same thing: unjustified absence of a pupil.

Only the school can approve/authorise absence – not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification 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. In these circumstances and where no explanation is forthcoming at all, the absence must be treated as unauthorised.

Where there is a problem with parentally condoned, unjustified absence, the school will involve the EWO.

Excessive amounts of unauthorised absence can seriously disrupt the continuity of learning. The school is constantly alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence.

The school may authorise absences retrospectively where it is satisfied as to the explanation offered.

Absences will only (may) be authorised for the following reasons:

- Personal illness of the pupil.
- Religious observance.
- Part-day absence for medical/dental appointments.
- Other instances of unavoidable absence approved by the school.
- **In very exceptional circumstances**, leave of absence for family leave of absence, **at the discretion of the Headteacher**.
- Family bereavement (for an agreed period).

A request for leave of absence in term time will **not** be authorised if a child has:

- Already had a leave of absence in term time during the previous 12 months

- A poor attendance record
- The request for a leave of absence is during September
- The request for a Keystage one (years 1 & 2) pupil is during the National testing week (Phonics test Y1 – Mid June and SATs for Y2 in May)

### ***Illness, medical and dental appointments***

The 1993 Education Act allows for absences as a result of personal illness of the pupil. In such cases the absence will be treated as authorised.

Where the school has reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered, further information should be requested from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied, then the absence should be treated as unauthorised and the problem may be referred to the ESW and school health service.

Leave for medical/dental appointments may be given if the school has been informed in advance by the parent (by telephone, in writing or in person). The school discourages parents taking pupils out of lessons for such appointments which should be made out of school time or in school holidays if at all possible. Too many medical appointments made during school time will be unauthorised unless a letter supporting the absence is provided by the appropriate medical service.

### ***Shopping during school hours***

Such absences can never be justified and will not be authorised. The school will investigate such circumstances and may refer to the EWO.

### ***Special occasions/birthdays***

Pupil absence on or for their birthday will be unauthorised.

A request for a pupil to attend the graduation of an older brother or sister or some other exceptional occasion should be made to the headteacher in advance. In considering individual cases, the school will have regard to:

- The nature of the event
- Its frequency, i.e. a 'one-off' or regular event
- The overall pattern of the child's attendance

### ***Family Bereavement***

The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. The school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals and has the discretion to authorise such absences. Where a pupil is absent for more than a reasonable or agreed period, contact will be made with the family and, where appropriate, the EWO.

### ***Leave of absences during term time***

The Headteacher has discretionary powers to grant or refuse leave of absence during term time. **Only in exceptional circumstances** will this be authorised. No parent can demand a leave of absence as a right (regulation 12 Education Regulations 1981).

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form stating the dates during which the leave of absence is to be taken and the reason why it needs to be taken in term time. The relevant orange forms can be requested from the office. This needs to be returned

to school, where each request will be considered on its merits and a written reply will be sent, informing parents of the decision.

Exceptional circumstances mean that the onus is on the parent to provide a compelling case for absence during term time. Exceptional circumstances DO NOT generally include cheaper deals, set holidays for parents or family weddings, unless there are other, more important reasons involved.

In almost all cases, the leave of absence will NOT be authorised. In cases where approval is given, the school will provide work for the child to complete while absent. Failure to apply for a leave of absence will also be considered as unauthorised absence.

The school will consider each request for such absence on its merits. Automatic or blanket approval will not be given.

### ***Religious observance***

Section 199 of the Education Act 1993 provides for pupil absence to participate in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Such absences are classified as authorised. Parents should give advance notice of religious observance days.

### ***Traveller children***

Part-time education for Traveller children is not legally acceptable, nor are parents exempt from their duties under the Education Act 1944 to ensure that their children receive education.

The aid of the DCSF guidance is to ensure that Traveller children attend school as regularly and frequently as possible.

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at the school and are known to be present at a site or house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

### ***Excluded pupils***

Where a pupil has been excluded for a fixed period s/he will remain on the school roll and such absences treated as authorised – but recorded as excluded in the register. Where a pupil has been permanently excluded they will remain on the school roll whilst any review or appeal process is in progress.

The school recognises its responsibilities towards excluded pupils by the setting of work. Such responsibilities cease once the decision is confirmed and the pupil removed from the admission register.

### ***Foundation Stage Pupils***

Parents of children of non-statutory school age are deemed, when accepting the place, to have agreed with our policy on attendance. Signing the Home School Agreement means you are agreeing to punctual and regular attendance of your child.

### ***Rewards for attendance and punctuality***

- Annual certificates and prizes for 100% attendance
- Weekly attendance trophy for the class with the best attendance.
- Beat the door, punctuality, prizes

### ***Procedures/strategies for monitoring attendance***

- Registers to be totalled each Friday morning for the previous week and praise and rewards given in Friday assemblies.
- Teachers must record all reasons for absence in the agreed way, whether given verbally by parents in person, by phone or in writing – otherwise a great deal of time is consumed in chasing up non-attendance reasons which have already been given
- School/staff to reinforce the attitude that pupils' attendance is valued because they are valued.
- Parent contacted when their child's attendance falls below 95%, unless we are satisfied with the given reasons.
- Persistent non-attending children will be put on an attendance action plan
- Pupils to be clearly informed that their attendance is being monitored.
- Each Monday morning, Head of Care to go through register printouts for each class and contact parents of children who have:
  - (a) persistent sporadic absence
  - (b) longer continuous period of absence
  - (c) absences without recorded explanations
  - (d) high numbers of broken weeks
- Teachers to stress the importance of attendance at new parents' meetings.
- Actions for Attendance annually on Action Plan
- Lateness book. Teacher is responsible for attendance and is required to follow up persistent lateness along current procedures.

## Appendix 1

### **Registration – absence codes**

- B** = Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)
- C** = Other Authorised Circumstances
- D** = Dual Registration
- E** = Excluded
- F** = Extended Family Leave of Absence (Agreed)
- G** = Family Leave of Absence (not agreed)
- H** = Family Leave of Absence (agreed)
- I** = Illness (not medical/dental)
- J** = Interview

**L** = Late (before register closes)  
**M** = Medical/dental appointments  
**N** = No reason yet provided  
**O** = Unauthorised absence  
**P** = Approved sporting activity  
**R** = Religious observance  
**S** = Study Leave  
**T** = Traveller absence  
**U** = Late (after register closes)  
**V** = Educational visit or trip  
**W** = Work experience  
**X** = Timetabled session for Non compulsory school age pupils  
**Y** = Enforced closure  
**Z** = Pupil not on roll  
**#** = School closed to pupils

## Appendix 2

### ***Fixed Penalty***

The Government has put in place systems for poor attendance and /or families taking leave of absence in term time without authorisation and doing so will, in most cases, end in a penalty notice. Penalty notices are currently £60 rising to £120 if not paid within 21 days.