

Colburn Community Primary School Attendance Policy

September 2016

Introduction and background

Colburn Community Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave our school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance in the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers via a posted letter, each term, should their child's attendance cause concern.
- Contact parents/carers to celebrate good attendance or significant improvements in attendance.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason, such as illness, medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as Family Outreach Workers who work for the Prevention Service.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible, on the first day of absence before 9.00am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- Or they can call into the school office.

If your child is absent we will:

Telephone you by 10.00am on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.

Where attendance causes concern

Where attendance causes concern we will follow the guidance outlined in the document entitled:

'School Attendance - Advice and requirements of all schools for consideration of legal enforcement by the Local Authority'

Produced by North Yorkshire County Council.

A clear series of stages will be followed as outlined below:

Stage 1

As a school we will aim to support pupils and families to improve and maintain good attendance and reduce persistent absence levels.

In accordance with Ofsted Inspection guidelines we will implement a clear escalation of intervention to address absence from the first day. Some or all of the following

planned interventions will therefore commence as early as possible in those cases where it is identified to be appropriate:

- Telephone calls
- Letters
- Home visits
- Meetings in school
- Consideration of alternative education packages/programmes
- Referral to other agencies
- Referral into the LA's Prevention Service

Stage 2

The next stage of the procedure will begin if there is no improvement in attendance or engagement with support by the parent/child.

At this point, time restricted case management ('fast track') procedures will be followed.

If the attendance of a child in the current school year (also the preceding summer term if appropriate) includes evidence of unauthorised absence and/or early intervention not achieving the required improvement, then the following procedure will be followed:

An Initial Warning Letter will be issued to parents (which will include the intention of possible legal action being pursued). A copy of the Time Restricted Attendance Procedure and 'Information for Parents/Carers' booklet will be included with the letter.

Normal first day response, telephone calls and letters will continue to be implemented by the school. Absences deemed to be for justifiable reasons will also continue to be authorised.

There will follow a minimum 10 school days monitoring period. If the attendance of the child has not improved to the required standard, with further evidence of unauthorised absence, then the case will be progressed as follows:

A Panel Meeting will be held. The purpose of this meeting is to agree a support plan to address any problems the young person/family may be experiencing with attendance targets and timescales set. The parent, school and other agencies involved, will sign the actions agreed and this will then constitute a 'Parenting Contract'.

Stage 3

If there is no improvement in attendance following all support offered, an appropriate manager in the Prevention Service will refer the case to the LA's

Attendance and Enforcement Officer for consideration of legal action. This process includes consultation with schools and other agencies. If legal action is required then a PACE Caution Formal Interview will be arranged with the school and the parent and chaired by the Attendance and Enforcement Officer.

Stage 4

Following agreement that there is sufficient evidence to proceed to the next stage, a PACE Caution Formal Interview will be arranged and chaired by the Attendance and Enforcement Officer when the parent will be cautioned under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984).

A decision will be made from this interview regarding the most appropriate way forward, i.e. an Education Supervision Order is pursued through the Family Court. Prosecution in a Magistrates Court under s444 (1) or (1A) or a Penalty Notice Warning Letter is issued as an alternative to prosecution.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss vital learning. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage further absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness

The school gates open at 8.50am. Children have the option of playing in the playground at this time or going straight into their classroom ready for when the bell is rung at 9.00 and gates are locked.

Any child arriving after this time will need to report to the school office and be signed in by a member of the admin team.

Registers are marked by 9.05am and your child will receive a late before registers are closed mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.20am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. **Note – this is based on the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and could be used as evidence against parents if legal action were to be considered by the LA under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.**

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Holidays in Term Time

The 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. The amendments set out that

headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances". This applies to the term after your child turns 5.

All planned leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional. A parent / carer should complete an absence request form from the school office and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the date required. School will respond to the request within 10 working days. A requirement is to provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and a possible meeting with the Headteacher. Only exceptional circumstances will be granted.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as a part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotion problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

This is not an exhaustive list and the Headteacher will consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision. Leave is only acceptable against exceptional circumstances and will not be granted on the basis of a good attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school. The ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance. The decision of the Headteacher is final.

Parents are expected to make appointments for the dentist, doctor or optician outside of school hours. In the case of a medical emergency then an absence will be authorised.

The Government has introduced these regulations as evidence indicates:

- Poor attendance and persistent lateness disadvantages children;
- Good attendance enables children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available;

In the early stages of education pupils' attitudes are strongly influenced by those of parents / carers. It is therefore essential that parents set a good example to children by actively valuing good attendance and punctuality.

Where a request for leave of absence has been made and the school have sent written notification to parents that the absence will be unauthorised a penalty notice may be issued. Penalties are applied by the LA and as such are not at the discretion of the Headteacher. If the penalty notice is not paid, the matter may be taken to prosecution in a magistrate court.

Amendments to 2017 Penalty Notice regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from the 1st September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices in line with other types of penalty notices and allows LA to act faster on prosecution if the fine is not paid.

People responsible for this policy and its implementation

Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and the Governing Body

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

This policy has been checked and approved by governors.

Last reviewed: September 2016

Next review due: September 2017