

**Article 29** Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.



### **Cockton Hill Junior School** **Attendance Policy 2020-2021**

#### **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. Cockton Hill Junior School 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.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

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 Head teacher 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.

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. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

#### **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff 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 96% 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.
- 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:

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- 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.
- 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.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised 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.

#### **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 maintain 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 the LA and the DfE where requested.

### **COVID-19**

- In line with government guidance absences related to COVID will be identified in registers as an X in 2020-2021

### **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.

#### **School Staff**

School staff with a responsibility for attendance are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence

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- 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 LA attendance team
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's LA attendance team
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### **Administration staff**

Administration staff are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- 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 the safeguarding team or head teacher
- Communicating with home regarding attendance

### **Parents**

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.

### **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8.55am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil.

Children who arrive at school after 9:15 a.m. are classed as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session and parents/carers may be asked to provide the child with a dinner after this time if they usually have a school dinner.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment will have the absence recorded as a medical absence. Evidence may be requested by school. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will be contacted by school by means of phone or a home visit to advise of the concerns and to provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

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### **Absence**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. 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 Head teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we use all resources available to us to make contact with parents or carers to discuss this. The process below outlines this procedure:

- Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process via text message and phone call to all the numbers we have on record for a child. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent.
- The second day contact process involves additional phone call attempts and then a home visit from the schools Positive Futures Worker to attempt contact. If no contact is made on day three then a second home visit attempt will be made and if unsuccessful then additional services will be contacted.
- If a pupil is already below the persistent absence level of 90% or there are additional concerns around attendance then a home visit will be made on the first day of absence.

### **COVID-19**

It is vital that parents keep school updated daily if their absence is related to COVID-19. This allows the school to monitor absences and take action where necessary for the school community.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact Medical Needs team within the local authority to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

### **Parental Request for Leave of Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Head Teachers to authorise absences for holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reasons if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without the school's permission. Leave of Absence requests must be made in writing to the Head Teacher using the schools leave of absence application form. This can be obtained on request from the main office.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

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Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via a range of communication methods including home visits. 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 LA Attendance Team.

Parents will be kept up to date regarding their child's attendance over the school year.

Where attendance does not improve then parents or carers will be required to demonstrate absences with medical evidence to ensure that they are authorised absences.

The LA Attendance Team will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

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.

The LA Attendance Team visits regularly to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%). They work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support provided by them or the school do not improve attendance.

### Monitoring Attendance

The office staff, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the attendance team to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings.

General Absence	Attendance <96%	Attendance <90%
<p>Office staff maintains school registers from 8:55am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent.</p> <p>We initiate a first day contact process via contact to all the contact details we have on record for a child.</p> <p>Day 2 of unexplained absence- attempt contact and if no reply then home visit will be attempted.</p> <p>Day 3 of unexplained absence- If no response then home visits will be made by school staff and additional agencies contacted if required.</p> <p>Reasons logged in SIMS system and added to pupil chronology.</p>	<p>Each case will be discussed on an individual basis.</p> <p>Attendance awareness letter to be sent to parents/carers. This will request their child maintains an improvement in their attendance over a 4 week period.</p> <p>If attendance continues to decline and does not make sufficient improvement then an attendance meeting will be held where medical evidence will be required.</p> <p>Where appropriate a referral to additional services will be made.</p> <p>These cases to be monitored weekly as part of attendance review meetings. UA's will result in referral to AIT to begin process</p>	<p>Persistently absent pupils- a meeting will be arranged with school to set targets where medical evidence is required for any absence.</p> <p>Day 1 of an unexplained absence will result in a home visit from school staff. Parents are invited to meetings with Local Authority representatives.</p> <p>If unauthorised absences continue then the Local Authority Enforcement Team will proceed with formal meetings alongside.</p>

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	of formal warnings and formal interviews.	
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**Monitoring**

This is a whole school policy of which staff, children and parents have ownership and therefore working together as a whole is essential for it to work effectively.

Ratified September 2020 and to be reviewed annually

Signed: *E Stevens* Head Teacher 21.09.2020

Signed: *Malcolm C Cresswell* Governor 21.09.2020

Signed: *A Kipling* Governor 21.09.2020