



Attendance Policy

Courtney Primary School

Created by: RISE Alliance Headteachers & Chairs of Governors

Date Ratified: 14 March 2018

Review Date: April 2021

Signed by: Janet Hinchliffe

Position: Chair of Governors



This policy has been agreed by the RISE Alliance:
Courtney Primary
Longwell Green Primary
Cadbury Heath Primary
Redfield Edge Primary
New Horizons Learning Centre



Introduction

We believe that full and regular attendance at school is a vital factor in pupils fulfilling their potential and benefitting from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school.

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered students of school age attend school regularly and punctually and that they receive an education suitable for their aptitude and ability.

RISE recognises and supports the importance to children and to family life of 'holidays together'. There are 14 weeks in the calendar year designated for this.

It is the Policy of the RISE Alliance that, in accordance with UK legislation, Head Teachers (or their approved delegates) are only allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied **exceptional circumstances** exist. Consequently, RISE schools will issue Penalty Notices where appropriate.

Attendance

We expect our students to attend school on time every day that the school is open unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so for example, illness.

We will celebrate and reward students who achieve our expectations of a high level of attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement.

We will share attendance information with Governors, parents, carers and students focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.

We will promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies, class discussion, the Newsletter, always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement.

The school will communicate attendance matters to parents and carers via text, telephone; email, letter and through the school website.

Absence from School

There are only two categories of absence from school: **Authorised which will be approved** and **Unauthorised which will not be approved**.

Only the Headteacher (or their delegate) can approve an absence from school. **That is the Law.**

Requests for absence in term time must be submitted in writing, where possible in advance to the Headteacher who will treat every request on an individual basis and respond accordingly.

The rules about what type of absence is acceptable is set out below:

Authorised (approved) absence – types of authorised absence that may be approved:

- Leave of absence - for bereavement, funeral, wedding ceremony
- Medical absence for appointments – at Hospital or Orthodontic appointments. (Non- urgent routine check-up appointments should be made for after school hours or during the school holidays.) Students are expected to be absent for the minimal amount of time and not absent for the whole day. N.B. Proof may be asked for these appointments before authorising.
- Illness
- Religious observance
- If a student is excluded from school for a behaviour related incident, this is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved

- Absence due to birthday, looking after family members.
- Holiday in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed to by the Headteacher – in line with changes to the law implemented in 2013.
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Penalty Notices

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated LA Officers, Headteachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in case of unauthorised absence from school.

The following circumstances may result in a parent/carers being issued with a penalty notice:

- general non-attendance of more than 10 unauthorised absence sessions (a session is a morning or afternoon)
- holiday during term time
- truancy
- persistent late arrival at school

Please refer to South Gloucestershire Education Welfare Penalty Notice Protocol and the Revision to the Local Code of Conduct for the issue of Penalty Notices and Parents and Carers guide to Penalty Notices; which can be found on the South Gloucestershire public website by searching 'Authorised and Unauthorised absence from school'.

Local Processes

Each school within the RISE will operate their own administrative procedures in respect of the above policy.

If the need arises, this policy will be subject to review prior to the renewal date indicated at the start of this policy document.

Rise Schools
Cadbury Heath
Courtney
Longwell Green
New Horizons
Redfield Edge

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Specific Procedures & Processes for Courtney Primary

1. Expectations

We expect the following from all our parents/carers and pupils:

- School is attended regularly.
- Children arrive on time and are appropriately prepared for the day.
- Any problems at home which may affect their school experience are shared with us.
- The Office staff are contacted, as soon as is reasonably practical, whenever a child is unable to attend.
- Medical appointments are made out of school hours if possible.

Parents/carers and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Support with any ongoing attendance issues.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, attendance must be a high priority for all and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition there are specific responsibilities allocated to individuals:

Governing Body

- To attend attendance meetings as requested.
- To set an annual target for attendance and monitor progress towards it.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

Family Link Worker

- To meet with and support parents/carers to improve attendance on advice from Headteacher.

Headteacher:

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to monitor attendance, including lateness and broken weeks.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- To ensure that the Attendance Policy is put into practice across the school.
- To meet with and support parents/carers to improve attendance as necessary.
- To liaise with the EWO.

School Secretary:

- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.
- To follow-up immediately on any unexplained absence by contacting parents/carers.
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To report to the Headteacher on attendance issues.
- To liaise with the EWO.

Class Teacher

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform Headteacher of concerns in a timely manner.

Parents/Carers:

- To contact school **on each day** of absence. If the absence will clearly be for longer, an agreement to forego contacting school each day must be agreed with the Office staff.
- To support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

Education Welfare Officer

- To enforce the law regarding school attendance.
- To support the whole school response to attendance through regular meetings and monitoring individual children's attendance.
- To work with specific families at the request of school.

3. Procedures

- The school doors are opened at 8.40 am. Registration is taken at 8.50am. Pupils arriving between 8:50am and 9:15am will receive a late mark. Any pupil arriving after 9.15am will have been marked as absent and a relevant absence code will be recorded in the register.
- The afternoon register is taken at 1.00pm.
- Parents/carers should telephone the school before 9.10am on each morning of a child's absence.
- If no explanation for absence is received, the school will phone the parents/carers.
- Pupils who arrive late (after 8.50am or 1.00pm) must report to the school office to be signed in.
- Pupils who are leaving school before the end of the day must report to the school office to be signed out.

Illness

- Pupils are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some pupils will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support pupils in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education.
- When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged with the parent or carer to discuss this with the either the Family Link Worker or Headteacher.

Medical or Dental Appointments

- We monitor the amount of time missed due to medical appointments carefully.
- We acknowledge that hospital and specialist clinic appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment may require a student having time out of school. Our expectation is that the minimum amount of learning is lost. We will seek an explanation from parents where a whole day is missed for this reason. Proof of unavoidable medical appointments in school time must be provided for the school.
- Routine, non-urgent appointments must be made after school time and during the 14 weeks of school holiday.

4. What you can do to help improve Attendance

What you can do at home

- Ensure your child attends school every day and on time.
- Make sure your child knows that they cannot have odd days off school – 'Every Lesson Counts'!
- Speak to the class teacher if your child is beginning to miss odd days.
- If your child is unwell, inform the school each day they are absent unless a special arrangement has been made.
- Seek medical advice if your child is frequently too ill to attend school.
- Don't keep your child off longer than necessary. The Office staff can provide you with the recommended times infection may spread for the common illnesses.
- Don't take family holidays in term time.
- Keep the school informed if there is anything worrying your child.

How we reward Attendance in school

- Children who achieve 100% attendance in a term will be presented with a certificate at the end of the term.
- Children who achieve 100% attendance for the whole of the year will be presented with a certificate and a badge.

5. How to make a request

Requests for leave for a child during term time must be made in advance and in writing to the Headteacher by the adult with whom the pupil normally resides. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The Headteacher will only approve the request in **exceptional circumstances** (see below).

Unauthorised leave of absence will be reported to the Local Authority and may lead to prosecution under The Education Act 1996 (see Section 11 below).

6. Term time leave of absence

From September 2013, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 removed provision for Headteachers to grant term time leave of absence in '**special circumstances**' and only allow leave to be granted in '**exceptional circumstances**'.

The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the 2013 regulations other than it is a 'one off' life time event - this does not include family holidays.

Each case will be considered on an individual basis but, as a guide, the following will not be considered as 'exceptional':

- Relatives coming to visit.
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad.
- Family day trips.
- Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holidays.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it is unlikely that the absence will be authorised.

Examples of Authorised Absence

- ◆ Sickness (if absences are excessive, a doctor's note will be required).
- ◆ Emergency medical/dental appointments.
- ◆ Days of religious observance.
- ◆ Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement).
- ◆ Approved sporting or musical activity/competition/examination.
- ◆ Fixed term exclusion.
- ◆ Attending a close family member's wedding (the day itself), a funeral or bereavement

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- ◆ Frequent absences attributed to minor ailments
- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Birthdays
- ◆ Day trips
- ◆ Looking after siblings or sick parents.
- ◆ Holidays

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance data will be collected twice termly to establish patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with:

- broken weeks;
- Monday and Friday absences;
- lateness;
- periods of extended absence;

- periods of un-authorised absence;
- all children with attendance between 85% and 95%.

This data will be discussed with the EWO as part of the regular termly meetings.

The Headteacher and EWO will discuss the impact of the School's Attendance Policy and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually and the Headteacher will recommend an Attendance Target to the Governors.

Attendance which is Cause for Concern

At the start of each term parents/carers of all children will be sent a standard letter informing them of their child's attendance for the preceding term(s), and, where appropriate, include the number of broken weeks and lateness. If a child's attendance is giving cause for concern the Family Link Worker will be asked to discuss with the parent /carer the reason for poor attendance and discuss support strategies which could be implemented to improve the attendance of the individual pupil. If, following the meeting, attendance does not improve the Headteacher with the support of the Education Welfare Officer may call the parents to an Attendance Panel Meeting and Educational Welfare Support procedures may be implemented.

Punctuality

- Pupils who arrive late to registration are recorded as L (late before registration closes.) Pupils should be in school for the start of Registration at 8:50am.
- Frequent late arrival will be challenged by the school and letters sent to parents/carers. Persistent late arrival will result in parents and pupils being asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher.
- If a student arrives after the register has closed at 9:15am, this will be recorded as U (unauthorised late arrival.)

Unauthorised sessions can result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

Broken Weeks

Broken weeks can be equally as damaging to your child's education as poor attendance. For us, this will become a cause for concern as follows:-

From September to Term 2 & 3 - 4 broken weeks, **From September to Term 4 & 5** - 6 broken weeks,
From September to Term 6 - 8 broken weeks

8. Reporting to Parents and Carers

As well as the termly Attendance letter, there will also be a statement in each child's Annual Report about attendance for the end of the academic year.

9. Penalty notices

What is a Penalty Notice?

Penalty Notices were introduced under Section 23 (1) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to address unauthorised absence from school. It is a fine issued by South Gloucestershire Council to parents/carers of a child who has failed to attend school regularly and whose absence is unauthorised.

It does not require the parent to attend court but is an alternative to prosecution in the magistrate's court. Parents/carers who pay the fine in full within the time limits cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Why have Penalty Notices been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority of the government and local authority because missing school may limit a pupil's attainment, disrupt school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour.

When might a Penalty Notice be issued?

A Penalty Notice may be issued to a parent/carers when more than 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised holiday are recorded and:

- a) the parent has not informed the school, **or**
- b) the leave was not authorised, **or**
- c) the child did not return on the agreed date

The final decision about when to issue a Penalty Notice will rest with the Head Teacher who will take individual circumstances into account.

Penalty Notices may be issued to one or both parents/carers regarding each of their children if more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence accumulate in a 7 week period (i.e. 70 sessions of possible attendance at school). A session is a morning or an afternoon. Any person with day to day care of the child may be issued with a Notice; this could include grandparents, step-parents and partners.

If a child is absent for 10 sessions, we may request the parents/carers supply a sickness certificate.

Penalty Notices cannot be issued:

- If the request does not comply with the South Gloucestershire Code of Conduct.
- If the child is not of statutory school age.
- If the child is in the care of the local authority (unless the pupil is still living at home).
- If there is no evidence that the school made the parents aware that a Notice may be issued.

Courtney Primary will request South Gloucestershire Council issue a Penalty Notice if:

- a child is absent from school for over 5 school days, and
- the absence has not been authorised

Courtney Primary will advise South Gloucestershire Council to issue a Penalty Notice if a child is absent from school for over 5 school days and the absence has not been authorised.

How much is the fine?

This fine equates to **£60 per parent per child** if paid within 21 days; £120 per parent per child if paid within 22-28 days. ***NB None of this money goes to the school.***

Is there an appeal process?

There is no right of appeal against the Penalty Notice but if you believe it to be incorrectly issued to you, you should contact the Senior Education Officer immediately. If you believe you are not guilty of the offence and therefore decide not pay the Notice, you have the right to represent your case at the Magistrates Court but you should seek legal advice before making this decision.

What happens if I do not pay?

If you have not paid the Penalty Notice in full before the 21 days allowed, the authority is required to commence legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

If proven, this could result in a fine of up to £1,000 under Section 444 (1), a Parenting Order or other sanctions at the Magistrates disposal. You are strongly urged to seek legal advice if you are considering not paying the Penalty Notice.