



*Our School is a Christian place where children come to learn more about themselves and the world and where they will develop a lifelong love of learning.*

## **Attendance Policy**

### **1 Introduction - School Attendance and the Law**

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 (amended 2016) take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2016), only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carers, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct the penalty for each parent is £60 for each child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice), where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carers in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority; Missing Education and Child Employment Service, who has a duty to investigate

the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Definition of 'authorised absence':

- an absence is classified as authorised when the school has ascertained that a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Exceptional cases of religious observances or particular family circumstances may also result in an authorised absence being granted by the school.
- only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, or allows a child to stay away from school to celebrate a family birthday or go on a family outing, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Definition of 'unauthorised absence':

- an absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **2 Aims and objectives**

Our aims and objectives in relation to pupils' attendance are to:

- maximise attendance so that all pupils can gain full access to our curriculum and be enabled to reach their full academic potential and achieve a high level of personal and social well-being;
- ensure that pupils are safe and that their whereabouts are known;
- eliminate unauthorised absence;
- discourage families from arranging holidays during school terms;
- ensure that parents and carers understand clearly when it is appropriate to keep their children off school and when this constitutes unauthorised absence;
- ensure that school staff and parents and carers are familiar with and adhere to our procedures for registering pupils' attendance, and reporting, recording and following up a pupil's absence or lateness;
- ensure that pupils and their parents and carers understand the importance of regular and consistent attendance;
- make clear to parents and carers the consequences of failing to ensure that their children attend school;
- ensure that children enjoy coming to school and are highly motivated to attend regularly and consistently.

## **3 Registration**

At Ardleigh St. Mary's a manual registration system is used.

Manual registers are marked in ink and where an alteration is necessary it is clearly identified showing both the original entry and change. Correction fluid must not be used.

Registers will be returned to the school office at the end of the registration period so that they are accessible in case of an emergency.

All notes from parents regarding an absence will be stored on the pupil's file and retained for three years.

Registration begins at 8.50am and 1pm each school day and registers will be closed 30 minutes after these times. If a pupil arrives after the register has closed, they should report to the school office and be signed in by their parent/carer.

#### **4 Procedure if a child is absent**

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office staff, who will endeavour to contact a parent or carer.

The school encourages parents to telephone the school to inform them of their child's absence through illness, on the first morning of absence. This prevents school office staff having to make numerous phone calls and provides reassurance of a child's safety in the event that parents cannot be contacted by telephone, for any reason. Parents can use e-mails to inform the school of an absence but not text messaging.

When the child returns to school, a note should be brought from a parent or carer to explain the absence, and confirm its duration, even if the parent telephoned the school on the first day of absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has an unavoidable medical appointment.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

#### **5 Long-term absence**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that, where possible, the child can keep in touch with the learning going on in their class.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school, where possible.

#### **6 Repeated unauthorised absences**

The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school to discuss the reasons. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action, possibly resulting in a fixed penalty fine, against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

#### **7 Rewards for good attendance**

While the school would always seek to avoid disadvantaging children who, through illness or other circumstances, have been unavoidably absent from school, we do award attendance incentive rewards or certificates for individual children with 100 per cent attendance over a term and the whole school year, in order to maintain a focus on the importance of regular attendance. We also award year group and class awards for the highest attendance rates.

#### **8 Attendance targets**

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors as part of our annual target-setting process. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

## **9 MECE ( Missing Education and Child Employment Service)**

- Works within 4 quadrant based Area Attendance Teams to reduce persistent absence, improve overall attendance and give advice and support to children, families and schools.
- Carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance

The school may refer a pupil to MECE where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. MECE will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

## **10 Monitoring and review**

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body have a named Attendance Governor. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they can be.
- 10.2 The register is a legal document and must be marked accurately, recording pupils attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised.
- 10.3 A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a child. The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- 10.4 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the headteacher, who will contact the parents or carers.
- 10.5 This policy will be reviewed every two years by the governing body - curriculum committee.

**Governor Consultation Date: 09.01.17 - 18.01.17**

**Signed:** *Mr T Barrott*

*D Parker*

**Chair of Governors - Mr T Barrott**

**Headteacher - Ms D Parker**

**Date: January 2017**

**Review Date: January 2019**

## Appendix A

Symbol	Reason
/	Present (am)
\	Present (pm)
B	Educated off site
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code / description)
D	Dual Registration (ie pupil attending other establishment)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
H	Family Holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical / Dental Appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code / description)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Y	Enforced closure
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
#	School closed to pupil