Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

School Mission Statement

Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School is a vibrant, stimulating and caring educational community which exists to celebrate the uniqueness of every person, made as they are in the image and likeness of God.

At Carnforth Christ Church, we believe that God is with us as our guide; 'we know it by the Spirit He gave us' (1 John 3:24) and 'the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, against such things there is no law.' (Galatians 5: 22-23) We live by the Spirit, for the Spirit and with the Spirit – this is our central ethos.

Rationale

At Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. We will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

Aims

We will

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school; including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels

It is important that the school's policy on attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it. This document sets out the responsibilities of each party in ensuring good attendance, and the procedures that the school will follow in recording and monitoring attendance and in managing absence. The governors have determined that:

- Details of this policy, parental responsibilities and the procedures for requesting absence in term time and signing in and out of school will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process e.g. induction package, talks to new parents, home-school agreement.
- Reference to the school attendance policy regarding leave during term time is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year.
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality will be regularly included in newsletters with details of the absence record of the school communicated at the end of the year.
- Attendance will be reported to parents termly via attendance record cards.

- Governors will review the principles underpinning this policy and the procedures contained herein annually

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities:

Parents and Carers

- Ensure the child(ren) in their care attend school regularly and punctually.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent to inform the School Office on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent for more than 1 day, to inform the school office of the continued absence and update as to the reason for the absence regularly.
- Provide the School Office with a written explanation of the absence when the child returns to school.
- To avoid leave in term time wherever possible. Where this is not thought possible, contact the school as soon as possible prior to the first proposed day of absence to request authorisation using the leave of absence request form.
- To advise the school, by contacting the School Office, immediately if they become aware of problems with attendance.
- To co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance e.g. attending meetings, participation in parenting contracts and supporting the school in agreed intervention/action plans.
- Adhere to systems for late registration, signing out and signing in.

Pupils

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Adhere to systems for late registration, signing out and signing in.
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school to ensure good attendance e.g. early bedtimes and getting uniforms, equipment and lunches/snacks ready the night before.

School Staff

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate. The Headteacher is also responsible for liaison with individual families, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) to ensure appropriate support is given where attendance concerns are identified and for liaison with the local authority and DfE to ensure that the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.

However, Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School believes that all staff have a responsibility to promote good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere for children.
- Providing a safe learning environment.
- Ensuring an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns.
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance.
- Being aware of the role all staff can play in ensuring attendance is seen as important for all pupils and parents.
- Adherence to the systems and procedures in place within school to promote good attendance and highlighting any concerns to the Headteacher.
- Participation in training regarding school systems and procedures.
- Willingness to communicate with children and parents about attendance.
- Completion of the attendance registers in accordance with the legislation and under the direction of the Headteacher.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.
- Adopt an attendance policy and review its principles and procedures annually.
- Agree targets for attendance at Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School.
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring or school profiling exercise.
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance.
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively.
- Authorise the Headteacher to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Procedures

Registration

Morning Registration is between 9.00am and 9:10am.
Afternoon Registration is between 1.10pm and 1.15pm.

Each class teacher (or their nominated representative) is responsible for marking children present or absent in the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers are returned to the School Office by the end of the registration period.

Late Registration

Pupils arriving at school after the registration periods have ended must request entry via the School Office in the main entrance. For health and safety reasons parents, or another responsible adult, **MUST** accompany late arriving pupils into the building in order to sign the child(ren) into school and provide a reason for lateness.

In accordance with current guidance, the attendance registers are closed at 9.30am/1.20pm. Arrival after 9:10am/1:15pm but before closure time will result in a late (L) mark in the register. Arrival after closure time will result in a "late after registers closed" (U) mark, which records a pupil's physical presence in school for part of the session but is classed as an unauthorised absence. The significant amount of schooling missed by pupils registered with U codes puts their educational progress at risk and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the local authority attendance team and consideration of the use of legal measures.

Office staff may also use the facility to record the number of minutes late for each pupil and the reason given for lateness. This allows school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively, making a clear link between lateness and missed curriculum so that such information can be shared with parents.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The Headteacher is responsible for determining what is classed as authorised and what is classed as unauthorised absence. As the register is a legal document, evidence of reasons for absence may be required before authorisation is granted.

Examples of Authorised Absence

- Medical or dental appointments (which relate directly to the pupil and unavoidably fall during the school day - evidence may be required prior to authorisation).
- Illness of the pupil (evidence may be required prior to authorisation).
- Leave which has been authorised by the Headteacher due to exceptional circumstances.
- Self-isolation or shielding due to Covid-19 (remote learning will be provided)

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed.
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher.

Where no explanation for absence is provided, or the reason provided is unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be addressed with parents promptly. Schools have a responsibility to report such absence to the local authority after a period of 10 school days, or sooner if appropriate.
If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the School Office will contact the family on the first day of absence, as the registers close at 9.30am. If contact cannot be made the Headteacher is informed and, in the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Headteacher will determine whether a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team should be made.

Persistent Absence

The minimum expected level of attendance for Primary aged children nationally is 95%, at Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School we aim for whole school attendance to average at least **96.5%**. Persistent Absence (PA) describes pupils whose attendance falls below 90%, regardless of whether absences are authorised or not.

School will initiate parental contact to offer support when a pupil's attendance falls below the school's own target; however, those pupils whose attendance is nearing PA level are putting their educational progress at serious risk and parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation, supported by school's robust systems for managing PA. This may involve the need for parents, and children of an appropriate age, to agree to a parenting contract. Due to the seriousness of PA status it is highly likely that such cases will be referred to a local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Support Team). Furthermore, absence data for individual pupils who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to the Department for Education along with whole school absence figures.

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring consistent referral of regular or unjustified absence. A request for support will be made to the local authority Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) when:

- School have informed parents of their concerns regarding attendance.
- School have attempted to employ appropriate strategies in order to improve attendance.
- School strategies have failed to prompt the required amount of improvement in attendance OR parents refuse to engage with school support.

School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence

School will send "Attendance Report Cards" to all parents on a termly basis in order to keep parents informed about attendance levels. These report cards will follow a traffic light system and indicate the following:

Green Card = Good Attendance, Well done (100 to 96.5%)
Yellow Card = Attendance Below Target, Improvement Required (96.4 to 93%)
Red Card = Red Alert, Pupil Progress at Risk (below 92.9%)

The School Office is responsible for advising the Headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise. The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Headteacher as issues arise. Once concerns have been raised:

- The Headteacher will discuss the matter informally with the family (including the pupil).
- Parents and children, if appropriate, will be asked to agree to a parenting contract, or take part in attendance panels, which will include the setting of targets and will be reviewed regularly.
- When persistent lateness is an issue and/or parents fail to follow procedures by not accompanying late arriving pupils into school to sign them in, this will be communicated to parents via letter or a meeting in school as appropriate.
- If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to promote the required level of improvement, the Headteacher will contact the Pupil Attendance Support Team who will attend meetings with the family and Headteacher as appropriate and help school determine whether any further interventions are required. These interventions will include consideration of the use of legal measures (penalty notices and prosecution).
- Incentive and reward schemes will be used for individual pupils, as appropriate.

Signing Out

When a child leaves the school site after the morning or afternoon register has been taken, they can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member. The School Office is responsible for ensuring that the authorised adult completes and signs the school signing out book, so that this can be referred to during an evacuation situation to ensure all pupils can be accounted for.

Leave of Absence

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. In Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School the Headteacher is the person authorised by the 'proprietor' i.e. the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, under the term 'exceptional circumstances', approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- A request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- The Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.
- The Headteacher is satisfied that the child generally has good attendance i.e. at or above **96.5%.**

Additional Factors for Consideration

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year and the local authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Is the proposed absence during the run up to annual national tests or school assessments?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as supporting evidence towards an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays.

Parents/Carers who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 5 days whether the absence will be authorised or not. The Headteacher may request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

Self-Isolation and Shielding due to Covid-19

If a positive case of Covid-19 is confirmed, the child must self-isolate for 10 days, whilst they recover. As this absence is due to illness, it is marked as I.
All close contacts of the positive case must also self-isolate for 10 days, in this case, the absence is recorded as X, and does not affect the percentage of attendance for that child. As this absence is unavoidable, remote learning will be provided for close contacts during the period of self-isolation (see Home Learning Policy and Remote Education Offer).
If a child falls into the Extremely Clinically Vulnerable category, they may be advised to shield. If this is the case, remote learning will be provided until the period of shielding ends.
This may alter at short notice due to changing Government guidance as the pandemic progresses.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Use of Penalty Notices

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate. Furthermore, Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School will request that the local authority issue penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence, in line with Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996. This includes leave which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice. Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School will also request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site

When pupils are **dual registered,** their registration status will acknowledge this. For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend Carnforth Christ Church C of E Primary School the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment our registers

will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the **Main School** we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful. When this is not the case, appropriate action will be taken. In cases where we are the **Subsidiary School** our normal first day absence procedures will be used and any concerns regarding attendance will be reported to the **Main School**. In addition, we will provide other information regarding attendance to the **Main School** on request.

When pupils are **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity** school will decide which of the following codes is most suitable: Code P – Supervised sporting activity, or Code V – Educational visit or trip. The Headteacher is responsible for the pupil's education and well-being during these sessions. Therefore, school must ensure that the activity is broadly educational in nature, that it is suitable for the pupil's age and ability, complements the pupil's curriculum, is suitably supervised and is taking place during the session for which the approved off-site educational activity code is being used.

Alternative provision and use of directions

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period (for more than 5 days) or permanently.
- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons.
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move).

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1st September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils, whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be by providing or adapting specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this will always be done via the use of a formal direction.

School System for reintegrating pupils who have had long term absence

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the Headteacher, the class teacher and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

Policy written: November 2017
R. Taylor

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