

Castor Church of England Primary School



Draft

Attendance Policy

'Let your Light Shine'

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Attendance Policy

Introduction

Castor Church of England Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of its pupils/students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based upon the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils/students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

Ours is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment, which enables and encourages all members of the community to achieve excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day on which the school is open unless the reason for the absence is exceptional.

All staff (teaching and support) at our school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our pupils/students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Peterborough City Council: Penalty Notices regarding school absence Guidance for Parents and Carers

Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities

At Castor CofE Primary School our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This guidance is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The important legal information – New from August 19th, 2024

The Government have introduced a single national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England. This threshold is **10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period**. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any

type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

In line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents have taken several term time holidays below the national threshold. The LA also retains the discretion to consider going straight to prosecution where appropriate.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. This period will start from the issue of the 1st penalty notice. The national framework also sets out the escalation process which applies to such penalty notices. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Peterborough, where a pupil's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a criminal conviction and fine of up to £2,500.

A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent/s with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance or the parent/s who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days.

There is no reduced sum available in this instance.

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

Requests for leave of absence

Working together to improve school attendance advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government 'does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.'

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise schools will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance.

A copy of Castor Primary School's Leave of Absence can be found at the end of this policy.

Support with ensuring regular school Attendance

A member of our staff will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared monthly with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils/students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half-termly. S/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

If you require any support with ensuring your child's attendance, please contact Mrs Baxter-Edwards in the first instance.

Why Regular Attendance is so Important:

Learning:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance	Behaviour Management
Health and Safety	Access to the Curriculum
Bullying	Anti-Bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and rate of progress;
- Celebrate and reward good attendance;

Understanding types of absence:

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (more than just a bad cold), medical/dental appointments which cannot be arranged out of school time, emergencies or other exceptional cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been authorised. This includes:

- 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 too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time not authorised as an exceptional circumstance.

This type of absence can lead to the Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team, using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be absent from 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/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. If your child is showing a reluctance to attend school, please contact us.

Persistent Absence (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss **10%** or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need full parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is at risk of moving towards the PA level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we may also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the **first day** of absence, before 9.15am;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

If your child is absent and we have not heard from their parent/carer we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with us;
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of Penalty Notices issued to each parent/carer for each child.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The School Attendance Officer:

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Officer from Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team. S/he will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can recommend that the Local Authority use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is **not acceptable**. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher/form tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school gate is opened and manned by a member of staff from **8.35am** when children can begin to enter the school and their classrooms

The school day starts at **8:45am** and we expect your child to **be in class** at that time. Children who arrive after 8.45am should be brought in via the school office entrance and will be marked as being late.

Registers are marked by **8:50am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9:05am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that will indicate that your child is in the school building, but will be marked with a 'U' Code which is recorded as an **unauthorised absence**. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

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

Non-Collection at end of day:

If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the end of the day (whether at after school club or being picked up from the classroom), their parent/carer will be contacted.

If the parent/carer responsible cannot be contacted, we will try alternative contacts from the child's file.

If no one can be contacted, the child will be placed in extended care provision (Castor Crew). Parents are then charged for the session.

If no contact with parents/carers is made by 4:15 pm then two members of staff will take the child to their home address.

If there is no one present or answering at home address, the child is returned to school and social services/the police contacted as appropriate.

Leave of Absence:

Taking leave of absence without exceptional circumstance in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence **must** be made in advance, using the appropriate form which can be found at the end of this Policy. In making a decision about whether to authorise this leave the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

It is important that you understand that we may **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional circumstances**.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school (in advance) and/or different from that agreed by the school will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice per parent/carer per child.

Religious Observance

As a Church of England school, we recognise that Peterborough is a diverse city that promotes equality and respect for all faiths and ethnicities. There are many religions celebrated within school and it is important that we recognise and respect them all.

The Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 state that absence for religious observance should be treated as authorised absence 'on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs'.

Peterborough City Council's guidance for Headteachers and governing bodies, is, that only one day is authorised for **each** religious festival with a maximum of two days in any one academic year. Castor C of E Primary School follows this Local Authority guidance and any additional days for extended celebrations will be treated in line with the leave of absence process detailed within this policy and at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Deletions from Register

Under Section 8.-(1) (h), (i), (ii), (iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 should your child fail to return to school by the time that registration ends on the 20th day of absence the school is permitted to delete your child's name from their register.

This is possible if your child(ren) have not returned by the date specified because the following applies under Section 8 (h) - that he/she/they will have been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and

- (i) at no time was the absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6 (2);
- (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil(s) is/are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness, or any exceptional cause;

The staff responsible for attendance matters at Castor Primary School are:

Mrs Suzie Phillips – Acting Head Teacher

Mrs Cathie Baxter Edwards – School Office Manager

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote good school attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Leave of Absence Request Form Castor Primary School

Child's Name:		DoB:	
Class:		Year:	
Main Parent(s)/Carer(s)			
Surname:		First Name:	
Surname:		First Name:	
Date of Birth: (for legal purposes in the event of prosecution)			
Date of Birth		Date of Birth	
Address and Postcode			
First written language if not English:			
Telephone contact No's:			
Siblings / Siblings School (if different)			
Siblings / Siblings School (if different):			
Additional Parent/Carer (Please complete if parents live separately)			
Surname:		First Name	
Address and Postcode:		DoB	
Telephone contact Nos:		Parent's Date of Birth (for legal purposes in the event of prosecution)	

Start date of absence:	
Last date of absence:	
Exceptional circumstance resulting in this request for absence, WITH EVIDENCE ATTACHED : Types of evidence can include, booking details, flight documents, invitations, certificates Appointment letters	

I/We understand that a penalty notice may be issued if this request is denied and my/our child is absent during this period. I/we understand that a fine will be payable **per child, per parent of £160 if paid within 28 days but reduced to £80 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days. Please read Attendance Policy.**
 (All parents/carers to sign where appropriate)

Signed:		Full Name:		Date:	
Signed:		Full Name:		Date:	

To be completed by the school:

Date Received by School:		Total Number of Days Requested:	
Leave of absence AGREED / DECLINED for the following reason/s:			
Date of decision letter sent to each parent/carers:			
Headteacher:			
Signed:		Date:	