

South Otterington Church of England V.C. Primary School

Attendance policy statement

Aims and Principles

The ethos of the school and the actions of the Headteacher and staff are significant factors influencing pupils' behaviour and attitudes, including attendance.

Pupils need to feel supported, to have their attendance valued and noted, and to be helped by the school to participate successfully. The majority of pupils want to attend school to learn and to achieve and may not be able to do so for reasons beyond their control, which the school needs to identify and investigate.

The following aims will engender good attendance:-

- Pupils have the right of equal access to the curriculum and should not be deprived of opportunity by their own or others' non-attendance.
- Pupils are more likely to respond positively, to learn and to attend, where they are rewarded and supported.
- The start and end of the school day, and procedures for registration, have a substantial influence on pupils' attitudes and attendance. Good punctuality and school systems for ensuring pupils are punctual are a significant factor in promoting attendance.
- Pupils' achievements and progress are directly influenced by attendance, motivation and involvement and suffer when these are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are less likely to be poor attenders when attendance is monitored and followed up swiftly and when the school has systems for identifying and responding to the needs of different pupils' reasons for absence.
- Good communication with home is a fundamental ingredient in the school's success and in promoting good attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils and parents have responsibilities to the school, as well as rights, which should be made clear to them.
- Termly certificates are awarded to celebrate good attendance.

Responsibility of Parents

Parents are informed by the School Brochure and newsletters that the following requirements are made of them:-

- Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school for every session the school is open.
- We recognise that individual pupils and families may from time to time have problems. However the aim should always be to expect regular attendance.
- Lateness should be investigated and parents made aware of the school's expectations regarding prompt attendance.
- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation, an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming, the absence must be treated as unauthorised and the register annotated accordingly.
- We are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered.

- Parents should not expect or be led to expect that as of right we will agree to family holidays during term-time. Each application will need to be considered on its merits. See LA policy.
- Parents should see themselves as partners with our school and instil respect for education and those who teach their children.
- Parents should inform our school as soon as possible about the nature of the child's absence and the expected date of re-attendance, i.e. a telephone call on the first day of absence followed by a letter at the end of the absence.

Responsibility of Teacher

Registration

An accurate and consistent registration system throughout the school to monitor absence and lateness is essential in order to enable absenteeism to be tackled. It is important to ensure that pupils are aware that registration is taking place and is significant. The following practices should be adopted:-

- Registration must be completed 10 minutes after the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Absences need to be shown as authorised or unauthorised, using the symbols indicated in the authority guidelines.
- Lateness should be clearly indicated if a child arrives 10 minutes after the close of registration.
- Lateness of more than 10 minutes should be recorded by the time of arrival.
- The class registers should accurately reflect the enrolment register.
- It is essential that records are completed fully and correctly.
- Registers should be completed in ink.
- Registers are legal documents and schools may be required to produce them in judicial proceedings so they need to be up to date.
- All staff must take responsibility for monitoring the attendance in their class.
- If there are any problems of lateness, non-attendance, truancy, etc. teachers should inform the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher will comment and communicate about attendance and punctuality to pupils, parents and staff if necessary.
- The school will investigate non-attendance. Teachers should inform the school administrator of any absence. The administrator will contact the parents to ascertain the reasons for absence.
- If a pupil arrives late for school on a regular basis this may indicate a need for involvement of an Educational Social Worker
- Staff should be punctual at all times.

Collection and Use of Registration Data

Data arising from registration is needed to:

- Monitor absences or lateness of individual pupil so that the appropriate action can be taken.
- Monitor patterns of lateness and absence across the school to identify trends in relation to: gender; year group; seasonal patterns; patterns and nature of authorised absences; individual pupils.
- Analyse pupil attainment and exam results by reference to attendance data and trends.
- Monitor and evaluate existing procedures and improve school practices.

- This information needs to be easily accessible to the Headteacher and the Local Authority to enable them to plan effective responses and the set targets for improvements. We are also required to make attendance data available to the Governing Body so that they can work with the school in planning and setting targets for the improvement of attendance rates.
- Teachers will be involved in making decisions about a new policy or any amendments to be made to our existing policy.
- Include on each pupil's school report to parents any information relating to the number of authorised and unauthorised absences accrued during the school year.

General Features of the School Environment that Contribute to Good Attendance

The following points are aspects of the physical environment and resources that have been found to influence pupil attitudes and attendance:

- there are social areas and facilities for pupils - e.g.: resource area, play areas;
- there are planned games and provision of leisure and play facilities during breaks - balls, hoops, ropes;
- pupils are given some responsibility for decorating and maintaining spaces in the school;
- the school has an inviting entrance area;
- the school publishes attendance figures in their annual report to parents;
- there is a good level of adult supervision and presence around the school at all times, with positive interaction, which has a powerful influence on pupils, especially as they enter and leave the school.

Role of Governors

The governing body's legal responsibilities in relation to attendance are summarised in "School Governors: A guide to the Law" (DfE). The main requirements are:

- to ensure that attendance registers are kept, in accordance with legal requirements and the policy of the school;
- to ensure that the school informs the LA about pupils who do not attend school regularly (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate);
- to include data on authorised and unauthorised absence in the school prospectus and in accordance with DfE requirements.

More generally, governors should recognise good pupil attendance as one of the key features of an effective school. Apart from the fact that pupils absent from school are not receiving education, absence can be a symptom of deeper problems, e.g. bullying or an inappropriate curriculum.

Therefore, it is good practise for governing bodies to:

- ensure that all its policies and plans promote good attendance; having an effective attendance policy is a key aspect of this.
- Ensure that the school monitors attendance and evaluates the success of the attendance policy, as part of School Self-Review. The results of this process should be reported to the governing body on a regular basis - perhaps a more detailed report on an annual basis, with termly updates of key data;
- ask questions about:
 - the attendance of different groups within the school, e.g. boys/girls, year groups, ethnic groups, high attainers/low attainers.
 - any comparative information from other schools;
 - trends in attendance.

- ensure that parents are clear about the school's policy on attendance and about the importance of good attendance;

Responsibilities of the Local Authority

Local Education Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure children who are registered at school attend regularly. In North Yorkshire the Local Authority fulfils this requirement through the Education Social Work Service, whose primary responsibility is to enforce the regular and punctual school attendance of all pupils. Each school in North Yorkshire is allocated a named Education Social Worker who will work in close partnership with the School.

There are a range of circumstances which can adversely affect a pupil's continuing school attendance, for example:

- behaviour problems in school;
- exclusions;
- special educational needs;
- child protection;
- drugs and substance misuse; and
- other home problems, including domestic violence.

The North Yorkshire Education Social Work Service is frequently the first point of contact for a family in crisis. Its role is to support the child and the family by facilitating a return to school or a transfer to a new school, or to undertake an assessment of the wider needs of the family and to act as a channel for reference to other specialist services or agencies.

Role of North Yorkshire Education Social Work Service

The following services are offered to North Yorkshire schools:

The promotion of regular and punctual school attendance.

The Educational Social Worker for the school will make regular inspections of class registers, the frequency of which will be determined by levels of non-attendance. This helps to identify worrying attendance patterns either of an individual pupil or on a class basis such as:

- unacceptable levels of unauthorised absence;
- frequent/regular medical absence;
- odd days absence each week;
- odd days which correspond with brothers and sisters or other pupils;
- same day absences each week;
- pupils taking "long weekends" - Fridays and Mondays;
- holidays in term time;
- regular lateness.

Education Social Work Service Liaison arrangements

Each school has a named Education Social Worker who will visit the school on a regular basis on a level of frequency determined by degree of need.

Casework

The Education Social Worker will work with children whose unauthorised absences have reached an unacceptable level and where school strategies have failed to bring about an improved level of attendance. Education Social Workers may also work with children who are experiencing

difficulties at home or in school which may result in an escalation of development of non-school attendance.

When such a referral has been agreed with the school, the Education Social Worker will undertake a variety of interventions, appropriate to the situation.

These may include:

- home visits to assess the situation with the family and agree a way forward;
- arranging and facilitating meetings between parents, children and teaching staff;
- providing individual support to pupils and parents either in school or elsewhere;
- mobilising and enabling pupils and parents to access appropriate support from other agencies and services, and
- the use of legal proceedings in either Magistrates or Family Proceedings Court.

Schools will be kept informed of the progress of each case.

Legal Proceedings

If parents fail to ensure the regular attendance of their children, the Local Authority has the power to prosecute them or to seek an Education Supervision Order. Whether to prosecute and the precise point at which that happens are matters for judgement in the light of each particular case and the best approach to improving the pupil's attendance. In some instances prosecution will be as a last resort in others it may be instigated much earlier as part of a planned programme of intervention.

As a matter of course, Education Social Workers in North Yorkshire will review all work in regular supervision with their Senior Education Worker. They will, at each review, consider whether or not legal proceedings are appropriate. The decision to prosecute begins with Education Social Workers in discussion with school and rests with the Principal Education Social Worker. If it is considered inappropriate to prosecute, the reasons for the decision will be recorded in the case file and the relevant school informed. However, it is likely that further monitoring will take place. This does not, however, preclude earlier prosecution if such action is deemed appropriate.

OFSTED

All schools are subject to inspections by OFSTED. Part of the inspection will concentrate on attendance issues and inspectors will expect to see the school's attendance policy. They may wish to interview the Education Social Worker.

The Education Social Work Service can:

- offer advice on attendance issues pre and post inspection;
- be available for interview by the inspectors; and
- be involved in the "Action Plan" where attendance is identified as a cause for concern.

Child Protection Awareness

Our school has a designated member of staff who is trained to deal with children protection issues, which may impact on attendance (The Headteacher).

Approaches to dealing with Bullying

All forms of bullying can have an adverse effect on pupils which in turn can lead to attendance difficulties. Our school policy outlines the procedures which will be followed to tackle bullying. We may involve the Education Social Worker with the victim or perpetrator and their respective families. We also have the opportunity to draw on support and advice from Q and I on the development review and implementation of anti-bullying and positive behaviour strategies.

The provision of Staff Development

The Education Social Work Service may offer or assist with INSET sessions on a range of subjects related to the attendance and welfare of pupils and child protection procedures.

Working with Other Agencies

North Yorkshire Education Social Workers Service and all schools within the Authority are an integral part of the wider multi-disciplinary system that operates to protect children from all forms of abuse, harm or exploitation. It is important to understand that the system extends to all "children in need" and not just to those in need of protection.

Education Social Workers can, in some circumstances, undertake an assessment of the wider needs of children and families, beyond those of basic non-school attendance. Education Social Workers cannot, however, replace colleagues from the County Council's social Services Directorate, District Council Housing Departments and other statutory agencies in all matters concerning families. It is entirely appropriate for Education Social Workers to refer on to colleagues if their assessment would indicate such a course of action is necessary.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Parental Notes

In some schools parentally condoned and justified absence can be a serious problem. In our school we feel it more appropriate to refer to such absence in communications with parents and at parents' meetings in order to minimise subsequent difficulties. It is only the school within the context of the law that can approve absence, not parents. Where parentally condoned and unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, we will involve the Education Social Work Service at an early opportunity.

Absence will not be authorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parent or we are dissatisfied with the explanation.

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

Where the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence must be treated as authorised. Where the school doubts the validity of the explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information should be requested. If the school continues to be dissatisfied, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Special Occasions

It is for schools to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not.

Family Bereavements

Requests for leave of absence to attend funerals should be treated with sensitivity. Schools have the discretion to authorise such absences.

Family Holidays - See LA policy

Leave will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. No parent can demand, as of right, leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday.

The absence will be treated as unauthorised if the pupil is absent from school for a period of time longer than that negotiated, if the holiday is without permission or the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

Religious Observance

If the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs, approval will be given.

Application for a place at another school

Approval will be granted if the pupil is attending an interview for a place at another school.

Distance

Absence will be authorised if the school at which the pupil is registered is not within walking distance of his/her home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the Local Authority for any of the following:

1. the pupil's transport to and from school
2. enabling the pupil to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.

Travellers' Children

Approval will be authorised if the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return.

Further advice is available from the Education Social Worker - The school office can provide their contact details.