



## Garforth Green Lane Primary School

### Attendance Policy

#### 1. MISSION STATEMENT:

Our school is committed to providing a quality education for all pupils. We believe that pupils can only benefit from the education in our school through regular school attendance. We will, therefore, strive to achieve the maximum possible attendance for all pupils and we will make sure that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. Wherever possible, we will make contact with parents where a pupil is absent from school without good reason.

The Home-School Agreement presents schools with an opportunity to underline the importance of regular and punctual attendance at school. The following may be used as a basis for a statement in the Agreement.

#### 2. AIMS:

It is recognised that

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

#### 3. EXPECTATIONS:

It is expected that all parents will support the school by ensuring their child(ren) always attend lessons unless illness or some unforeseen problem arises. Appointments at hospitals, medical centres, clinics and dentists should be made outside school hours unless impossible to rearrange.

When there is a problem with attendance, parents are invited to a meeting to discuss the problem before a referral is made to the AIO (Attendance Improvement Officer). If there are child protection concerns then the Child Protection Procedures should be followed immediately.

#### We expect the following from pupils:

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

#### We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

**Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to anybody without the consent of the student or their parent).
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.
- A quality education

**4. ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE AND REWARDS**

**Attendance is encouraged in the following ways:**

- Registers are taken and accurately completed at the beginning of each session and within 15 minutes of the start of the session.
- Attendance checks at appropriate times.
- Recording of good attendance on individual reports and /or Records of Achievement.
- Identifying and supporting pupils who have attendance problems in advance of the transition between KS2 and KS3 or when leaving one school for another. Relevant information should be shared with the destination school.
- Establishing a mechanism for working with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- Sending parents appropriate absence reports as and when necessary.

**5. RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE:**

**When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.**

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, whenever possible the parents will be contacted early on the first day of absence by telephone or by letter if parents are not on the telephone.
- Where there is no response, a second letter will be sent after three days of unexplained absence or there may be a visit from the AIO.
- Where non-attendance continues, the case will be discussed with the AIO for the school and further action planned. This may, in appropriate cases, result in a formal referral to the Local Authority and may result in further action.

**Reintegration:**

- The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme as detailed in the DCSF Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Guidance (Circular 10/99)
- A designated member of staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in class as appropriate.

The success of the support programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the young person and parents. Support programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary.

**6. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:**

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences:

- Pupil illness
- Family bereavements
- Family holiday (up to ten school days) but see notes below.
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

**Family Holidays:**

Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday during the school term though schools are able to exercise their discretion when granting parental requests. However, each request should be considered individually taking into account the age of the child, previous attendance patterns, parental views and the educational progress of the child.

**Absence will not be authorised during the first two weeks of the autumn term.**

If a request is not granted and the parent takes the child on holiday, the absence should not be authorised. If a request is granted the absence should not normally be for more than ten school days in any school year. If the holiday goes on for longer than agreed, the extra days absence should be unauthorised.

The school is not responsible for setting work during a family holiday. However, independent work is encouraged.

**7, LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. It may be necessary in exceptional cases to require support beyond the remit of the school or the AIO. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people. The AIO may be able to help schools establish multi-agency meetings or may be able to advise on how schools can become involved in existing local arrangements.

**Other Agencies** to be used where appropriate in individual cases.

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Care.
- Local police

**9. REVIEW**

The policy will be reviewed during school year 2011-2012, unless there are changes to the legislation.

*Date:*

## APPENDIX

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, it is the legal responsibility of parents to see that their child/children receive(s) regular education suitable to their age, aptitude and abilities....

### **The Importance of Registration:**

- An attendance register, electronic or manual, must be kept on which, at the **BEGINNING** of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. Registers should be collected from and returned to the school office.
- Manual registers must be kept in ink and corrections must be made in such a way that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable.
- Authorised absences should be entered in red initially with the symbol for categorising the absence in blue or black.
- Where electronic registers are used, hard copies, current for each session, must be kept to observe the spirit of the law and for Health and Safety reasons.
- Accurate marking of registers, and appropriate maintenance of electronic and computerised systems can have a significant impact on overall school attendance and absence figures.
- Attendance registers, and bound copies of electronic registration print outs must be kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date that the last entries were made.

### **Categorising Absence:**

#### **Symbols to be used in Registers (Categories)**

From 1 September 2006 all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (Dcfs) believes that these codes are best used within electronic systems for recording attendance and absence of pupils. Such electronic systems are capable of producing the data necessary for absence returns to Dcsf without time consuming counting up of possible attendances and actual absences.

The use of fixed codes will also assist both Las (Local Authorities) and Dcsf in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

- **Only the school**, in the context of the law **can authorise absence**, a note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason then the matter must be referred to the Head Teacher.
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to the Head Teacher.
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.

- Class teachers who experience difficulty in receiving a parental note should inform the Head Teacher.

### **The Use of Penalty Warnings and Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time**

As a general rule, the LA will not issue a penalty notice for unauthorised absence due solely to a holiday without permission. However, there may be circumstances where this sanction is appropriate. The AIO (Attendance Officer) will work with head teachers to agree the most appropriate course of action for each individual case.

### **Resolving Disagreements**

Where there is a lack of agreement between the school and the LA as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

### **Approved Educational Activity**

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the Dcsf absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category:

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.

Absences should **not** be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been given
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Head teacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered. Further advice is available in DfES Circular No. 10/99.

### **Lateness:**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival by challenging young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Schools should have a policy on how long registers remain open, thirty minutes from the beginning of registration would be reasonable but this can be shorter. In the event of bad weather this period can be extended.

Where a pupil arrives during the period when the register is open they may be marked present.

Where a pupil arrives after register closure without good reason, they should be marked with an unauthorised absence in red and the letter L in blue or black to indicate that they are on site.

### **Removal from the school roll**

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These are detailed in Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (as amended 1997) and the Schools Administration Handbook (section A2). **Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal:**

#### **those detailed below is illegal:**

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the Head Teacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Head Teacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- Where a pupil in the nursery class has not transferred to a reception class at the school.
- Except in the case of a boarder, the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where a pupil will cease to be of compulsory schools age before the school next meets and has been notified an intention to discontinue in attendance.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

### **Ensuring Pupil Information is up to date**

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

### **Pupils who are missing**

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the Dcsf National Missing Pupils Database.

### **How parents can help:**

- Ensure that their children attend school regularly and that they arrive on time.
- Contact the school whenever their child is absent, giving details of the reason or the absence and the length of time the child will be away.
- Help their child prepare for the school day by ensuring that homework has been done and the child has everything he/she needs for the day ahead.
- Attend Parents' Consultation Evenings to discuss progress or problems and talk to the staff if there are problems or changes in family circumstances which may affect the child.

- Contact the school if problems arise which may keep their child away from school, so that the school can help.
- To avoid, wherever possible, taking family holidays in term-time. Term time absences, especially during SATs and examination periods, may seriously affect the progress of your child.



Date of policy implementation: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2010

Date of policy review: March 2012

Signature, Chair of Governing Body: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature, Headteacher: \_\_\_\_\_