



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Summer 2018

### **Aims**

At St Cuthbert Mayne Primary School we aim for our pupils to attain the highest levels of achievement and to foster their development so that they benefit fully from the opportunities and responsibilities presented to them. As part of this we consider excellent attendance at school to be vital. Schools are open for 190 days each year and all of our pupils have the right to these 190 days of learning, teaching and school experience. It follows, therefore, that all children should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

### **The Role of Parents/Carers**

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school punctually, regularly, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. It is accepted that young pupils tend to be accountable to their parents and do not usually truant from school. However, all children are occasionally reluctant to attend school and disaffected pupils may exhibit symptoms of illness, whether real or imagined, and be allowed to remain at home. Pupils who experience difficulties need support and understanding. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a 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 makes things worse.

### **The Role of the School**

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through example. Attendance is the responsibility of all staff. The school expects good attendance and punctuality and will investigate all lateness and absenteeism. Staff will respond firmly and consistently.

### **The Role of the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)**

The AIO regularly visits the school to meet with the Administration Manager and/or Headteacher. The purpose of the visits is to identify students who are experiencing attendance difficulties and agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or AIO.

## **Registration**

Pupils are expected to be on the relevant playground at 8.50am, ready to enter the classrooms at for registration. A pupil will be recorded as late, with a code of 'L', if they arrive late and via the office because the rest of their class has already gone into school. Parents of children arriving late at school complete the 'Late Book' giving an explanation. Registers remain open until 9.30am (after 9.30am code U can be used if appropriate). Afternoon registration is at 1.15pm. Registers are completed electronically in the classroom in SIMs. Reasons for absence are recorded via SIMs in the office.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either Authorised or Unauthorised. This is why information about the reason for each absence is always required.

An absence from school is an authorised one if:

- The pupil was absent with permission from the Headteacher
- The pupil was unwell, or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong
- There is a family bereavement
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion

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

- No explanation for absence has been forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil stays at home to help look after parents or younger siblings (other than in exceptional circumstances)
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday without an authorisation from the school
- Any pupil arriving too late to be entered into the Register

## **When Problems Arise**

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and work with 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 HCC Attendance Office. HCC will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but parents/carers who fail to respond to requests by the school to send their children to school or who take unauthorised holidays during term time may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Local Education Authority.

The Notices will be issued at the discretion of the Headteacher and will be applied to parents whose children have at least 15 sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term. The fines will apply to cases where the Parent/Guardian is able but unwilling to ensure the attendance of the student. Fixed Penalty Notices will operate following the Hertfordshire County Council Guidance for Schools (see attached Appendix A).

Parents, carers or children may wish to contact the AIO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

The school puts a lot of effort into re-integrating pupils who have had extended absence, for whatever reason, and will work closely with the parents/carers to provide support.

Parents whose first language is not English, or who have literacy difficulties, will be offered appropriate support in matters of school communication. Please note that Teachers will not provide work during absences, unless in exceptional circumstances.

### **Procedures**

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences or lateness:-

- Parents/carers are asked to inform the school either by letter, phone or email if a child is absent. If you are aware that your child will be absent in advance, please complete an Application for Leave of Absence Form. Absences for illness and medical/dental appointments will be authorised. Wherever possible medical appointments should be made to take place outside of school hours.
- If a teacher has concerns about an absence or a pupil is absent and no communication has been received, then the school will attempt to contact the parents/carers.
- When a pupil returns to school after an absence, they should bring a letter from the parent/carer explaining the reason for absence. The absence will not be authorised until this note of explanation is received and even then the authorisation is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Notes from parents are kept in the office. Telephone messages regarding lateness and absence are recorded in SIMs.
- Pupils requiring Leave of Absence to take part in examinations, e.g. music, ballet, etc., or other legitimate educational activities will generally have absence authorised.
- Pupils' attendance figures, including unauthorised absences, will be recorded on their Annual Report.

### **Family Holidays and Other Absences**

Absences in order to take family holidays and outings will **not** be authorised except in very exceptional circumstances.

A request must be made at least 2 weeks before departure (except in the case of funerals when this time constraint does not apply) by completion of a "Leave of Absence" form obtainable from the school office or the website. The parents/carers may be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the request. All other absences will be recorded as unauthorised unless special permission has been granted by the Headteacher. Should the child remain absent beyond the time granted, any further absence will be recorded as "Unauthorised".

### **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

St Cuthbert Mayne Junior School offers an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late, and that follow-up action will be taken.

Attendance registers are monitored daily and analysed monthly in order to identify attendance patterns of individual pupils, correlate attendance and standards of achievement, and inform policy and practice.

Parents are regularly reminded via newsletters, prospectus, etc., of the importance of good attendance. School holiday dates are published on the website well in advance and as soon as they are known in order to assist parents in booking family holidays outside of term times.

Pupils who are absent for an extended period of authorised absence will, where appropriate, have work sent home to them, and will be supported in school on their return.

The school issues special certificates to pupils who achieve 100% attendance and almost 100% attendance over the school year. These certificates are awarded in the end of year assembly.

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's policy cycle or following an agreed change to practice. This will be done by the Headteacher in consultation with Staff and Governors.

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Date of next review: September 2020**

**Appendix A**

For the Hertfordshire County Council Penalty Notices, unauthorised absence

Hertfordshire County Council

**Penalty Notices**

**Unauthorised Absence (Truancy)**

**Hertfordshire Code of Conduct**

**February 2016**

## **Local Code of Conduct – Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence (Truancy)**

### ***Introduction***

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers the police, designated Local Authority Officers and Headteachers and Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence (truancy) of pupils of statutory school age.

The government requires Local Authorities to issue a Code of Conduct to which all parties involved must adhere. Penalty notices may be issued only in accordance with the terms of the Code of Conduct.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that:

- the powers are applied consistently and fairly
- duplicate notices are not issued
- issuing a notice does not conflict with proceedings proposed or being taken by the Local Authority under section 444 of the Education Act 1996
- suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the penalty notice scheme.

### ***The Law***

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added sections 444A and 444B to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for that offence by paying a penalty. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 set out the framework for the operation of the scheme.

All those defined as a parent under section 576 of the Education Act 1996 are considered to be parents for the purpose of these provisions.

As with prosecutions under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 a penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence in respect of each child.

Penalty notices apply to parents of children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at maintained schools, academies, Pupil Referral Units (Education Support Centres), City Technology Colleges, Studio Schools, UTCs and any other alternative education provision arranged under section 19 of The Education Act 1996.

Parents cannot be prosecuted for the offence for which the penalty notice was issued until after the final deadline for payment has passed and the penalty remains unpaid. Parents cannot be convicted of that offence if the penalty is paid in accordance with the notice.

The Local Authority will retain any revenue from penalty notices to cover the administration of the scheme and any legal actions arising from it.

## ***Rationale***

Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils registered at schools, academies or other maintained or alternative provision.

A penalty notice may be a suitable intervention in circumstances of unauthorised absence where the school considers a parent is capable of securing their child's regular attendance. It may be particularly effective at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched.

## ***Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued***

- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence
- The pupil must have at least **15 sessions** (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
- The school must have sent a formal warning to the parent
- The school/academy/police or Attendance Improvement Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- A maximum of **two** separate penalty notices will be issued to a parent within any twelve month period
- Penalty notices will be issued for pupils of compulsory school age, up to the end of the spring term of year 11
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the Local Authority without the prior agreement of the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance

## ***Responsibilities of the Local Authority for issuing penalty notices***

Primary responsibility for issuing penalty notices rests with the Local Authority and may not be delegated. Schools, academies and the police may issue penalty notices if they wish to do so but any notices issued by them **must** comply with the Local Authority Code of Conduct and a copy of any penalty notice issued must be provided to the Local Authority.

In Hertfordshire all parties agree that the Integrated Service for Learning Attendance Teams administer the scheme and issue penalty notices on behalf of police, schools, academies and other settings to ensure fairness and consistency and in the event that subsequent legal action may need to be taken.

The Local Authority receives applications to issue penalty notices from schools, academies and the police. Penalty notices will be issued provided that:

- the circumstances of the absence meet the requirements of the Code of Conduct
- the information is provided in the specified manner
- the request is received not more than 10 school days after the final absence cited

The Local Authority retains revenue from the scheme to cover the costs of issuing and enforcing notices and prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

### ***Appealing against the issue of penalty notices***

There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. The Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. If the penalty notice has been issued in accordance with Hertfordshire's Code of Conduct there is no facility to overturn the decision to issue the notice.

### ***Effect of issuing penalty notices***

If the penalty is not paid in full before the expiry of the period for paying it the Local Authority named in the notice shall either institute proceedings against the recipient for the offence or shall withdraw the notice.

### ***Payment of penalty notices***

The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice.

Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

Penalty notices are sent by first class post and are deemed to have been received on the second day after posting.

Arrangements for payment are detailed on the penalty notice and payment by cheque, postal order and by debit/credit card is accepted.

### ***Withdrawal of penalty notices***

The Local Authority may only withdraw penalty notices in circumstances where it determines that the notice:

- has not been issued in accordance with the Code of Conduct
- ought not to have been issued
- ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient
- has not been paid but it is not appropriate to prosecute the recipient for the offence

### ***Prosecution of unpaid penalty notices***

If the notice remains unpaid after the expiry of the payment period and the Local Authority has not withdrawn the notice, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

All decisions to prosecute (or not) rest with the Local Authority

