

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed by: Sarah Fox

Reviewed: September 2021

Next review: September 2023

Related Policies: Leave of Absence Request Policy; Parent's Handbook; Child protection and safeguarding policy; Positive Behaviour and Discipline policy

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

Signed:



Date: September 2021

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). It adheres to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts and applies to all children registered at this school. This policy is readily available on our school website for all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the School works to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This policy ensures that all staff and trustees in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness amongst parents and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy includes Early Years children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils their own sense of responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance that ensures consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Inspiring children to seek out and enjoy their schooling experience
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and trustees on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification or a request from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without a legitimate reason, even with the support of a parent.

PROCEDURES

Our school will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, parents and pupils.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time. Work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality.
- Refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Report attendance statistics to OFSTED or a recognised official body.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Education Manager.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Each member of school staff has a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the school leaders to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Education Manager is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting to SLT and trustees (including analysis of reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups)
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Making sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively
- Monitoring trends in authorised and unauthorised absence, persistent absence and lateness at an individual pupil level
- Processing Absence Requests
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and to tackle persistent absence.

The receptionist is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and making a record of messages from parents regarding absence and passing these on to the class teacher.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.

- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Running regular attendance reports and supporting the Education Manager by keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Education Manager/Class Teacher.
- Sending out standard letters/emails regarding attendance as directed by the Education Manager.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to reception.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance and informing the Education Manager where there are concerns and supporting any necessary actions to improve attendance.
- Ensuring that any communication from parents regarding absence or lateness are forwarded to reception and the Education Manager .
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.
- Creating a welcoming and inspiring learning environment which meets the needs of all pupils

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, *we ask parents/carers to:*

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually (between 8:15am and 8:25am) unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contact the school on the first day of their child's absence, providing accurate details of the reason for their absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. All communication pertaining to an absence for illness must be done either in person, via email or telephone, where possible before 8.30am so that the teacher can be informed before school begins.
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school after an unplanned absence (i.e., illness). This should be handed in to reception and should give details of the date(s) your child was absent and the reason for absence. This is in addition to any telephone messages/verbal communication. Alternatively, parents may email reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk (copying in their child's class teacher) once their child has returned to school. This is needed for our records and also authenticates any telephone messages.
- Inform the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time, in writing (Appendix 1).
- Make written requests to the school (Appendix 1) for any leave of absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised. For more information about making a request for a leave of absence, please see the Leave of Absence Request Policy and Procedure.
- Get in touch with the class teacher at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school, or motivation to attend and arrive on time.
- Coordinate with their child's class teacher and support their child in catching up on work they have missed due to any absence.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 2 for the DfE attendance codes [sub-codes for use in relation to covid-19 are set out here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965878/Recording_non-attendance_related_to_coronavirus.pdf].

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Children are expected to arrive between 8.15am - 8.25am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:30am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:30pm and will be kept open until 1:45pm.

In Lower School it is the responsibility of the teacher taking the lesson after lunch to fill out the register.

Registers are returned to reception for monitoring and safe keeping after each registration (morning and afternoon).

If a child does not return at the start of the afternoon session, the teacher immediately informs the Education Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible (see section above).

If your child is unwell and you are unsure whether or not to keep your child off school please follow this link for guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Attendance issues relating to health are dealt with supportively and clearly, with special measures being provided for these children.

Long-term Illness:

- When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. In some cases, an Individual Education Plan will be set up to help facilitate this.
- Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school may write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from the child's parents for the school to make their own enquiries.

Taking your child out of school in an emergency: if you need to take your child from school in an emergency, this must be done by providing the class teacher with a letter explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect this time out to be.

This must be presented to the receptionist who will take this to the class teacher. Under no circumstances are parents allowed to disrupt the class to take their child there and then. The class teacher, if feeling that this is not appropriate, has the right to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Education Manager in order to assess further.

Any child arriving at or leaving school outside of registration must sign in/out at Reception.

Following up Absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by initiating our first day contact procedure. All registers are checked by 9am and where we are unaware of why a child is absent, the school will contact the parent (by phone and email) to check the reasons for the child's absence.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary (See appendix 1 - children missing from education)
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

It is the school, not parents, who are empowered to authorise absence. Teachers have discretionary power to grant a pupil time off school during the term, if they believe that there are extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify the leave. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Please see the school's Leave of Absence Request Policy and Procedure for further information.

Lateness and punctuality

- Any pupil who comes into school between 8.30am and 9am will be marked as late in the attendance record (code L).
- Children who have attended a medical appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical (code: M).
- Any pupil coming into school after 9am without a valid reason will have the absence recorded as unauthorised (code: U).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and settling in time. Persistent lateness (three or more days in a row, or more than once a week in a two-to-three-week period) will be addressed promptly (see appendix 3 for example template letter). Where there has been more than 10% lateness over a term parents will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Reporting to Parents

Attendance information is sent to parents termly and included as part of each pupil's end of year report.

Reducing persistent absence

We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via an email or letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Education Manager monitors pupil absence on a half-termly basis. We set a 96% attendance target, which equates to 7 days (or 14 missed sessions) over the academic year.

If a pupil's absence goes above 9 days (18 sessions), the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil individually to discuss the reasons for this and identify any support needed (see appendix 4 for example template letter).

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10% (17 days, or 34 missed sessions). If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Unauthorised absences are closely monitored by the Education Manager. The school is required to inform the Local Authority of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (ie. the absence is unauthorised) for ten school days or more, and of every pupil who fails to attend regularly, which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing ten days' continuous absence.

Attendance reports are run from the school's MIS system Engage in order to effectively:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by Sarah Fox, Education Manager. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

Further Guidance and Information:

- DfE School Attendance: Main Guidance: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf
- Addendum: Recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (covid-19) during the 2021-2022 academic year: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year>
- DfE Improving school attendance: supporting schools and local authorities: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities>
- DfE School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

Appendix 1: Children missing from education

A child going missing from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. Staff should be made aware of children in the school setting who may fall into an 'at risk' group.

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

Appendix 2: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 3: Template letter addressing lateness

[INSERT DATE]

Dear [INSERT PARENT NAMES],

Reminder: Arriving on time – [INSERT CHILD'S NAME]

Part of my role as Education Manager is to help monitor attendance and follow up on any persistent patterns of absence and lateness, offering support to class teachers and families in order to help bring about positive change.

In my recent review of Lower School attendance, I noticed that [CHILD'S NAME] has been late on a number of mornings so far this academic year (NUMBER OF OCCASIONS). Arriving on time makes a huge difference to how your child settles in the morning and their readiness to participate in class activities. At the same time, it shows respect for all the preparation and care the teachers take in planning the school day. At Cambridge Steiner School we expect all children to arrive promptly for school, between 8:15am-8:25am, so that they can be ready to start the day when the bell rings at 8:30am.

I hope that you can help support [INSERT CHILD'S NAME], his/her classmates and his/her teacher by ensuring that he/she arrives on time each morning. I look forward to seeing an improvement as I continue to monitor his/her punctuality.

I recognise that there are many different reasons that lateness might occur and that despite one's best efforts to get to school on time each day, particular family circumstances can make this a challenge. If this is the case, I urge you to get in touch so that together we can help find a way forward.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to reflect and respond to this.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Fox

Sarah Fox
Education Manager
Cambridge Steiner School
01223 882727
sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk

Appendix 4: Template letter addressing absence

[Insert date]

Dear [parent names],

Reminder: Attendance – [Child's name]

Part of my role as Education Manager is to help monitor attendance and follow up on any persistent patterns of absence and lateness, offering support to class teachers and families in order to help bring about positive change.

In my recent review of Lower School attendance, I noticed that [child's name's] attendance has been affected by illness [adapt as needed] this year; he/she has missed [...] sessions this year to date ([... unauthorised – omit if none]). We aim for 100% attendance for each student, however we realise students do get ill and therefore, we set a 96% target, which equates to 14 missed sessions over the academic year. We will continue to monitor [child's name's] attendance, but in the meantime, if you have any concerns about work [child's name's] might have missed in class, or would like to discuss the matter more generally, then please do not hesitate to get in touch with either myself or his/her class teacher.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to reflect and respond to this.

Yours sincerely,

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