

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed by: Sarah Fox

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Related Policies: Register Use Policy and Procedure; Absence Request Policy; Parent's Handbook

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

Signed:



Date: April 2020

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. Cambridge Steiner School fully recognises its responsibility to help ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

This policy adheres to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education 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 Leadership Team at our school work to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability. For example, a child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over eight years, have missed approximately two whole terms of learning.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- 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.
- 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.

The Education Manager is responsible for:

- Processing Absence Requests
- Monitoring trends in authorised and unauthorised absence, persistent absence and lateness.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for 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.

- 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.

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 their child's class teacher (copying in reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk) 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 class teacher (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.

ATTENDANCE

The law requires that parents ensure all children of compulsory school age receive full-time education during term time, unless they are being home-schooled (in whole or in part), in which case we require parents/carers to complete a Home School Agreement form for our records. Regular school attendance is the basic expectation of the partnership between parents and the School for positive child development and effective learning. Irregular attendance leads to a fragmented

learning experience and risks children not finding their true potential. The School therefore takes attendance seriously and does all we can to ensure the highest levels of attendance from everyone.

Children in the Early Years Department are expected to attend the following amount of days:

- Kindergarten Children, including those in Buttercups (Little Kindergarten), are expected to attend a minimum of four mornings per week up until they are of compulsory school age, at which point they should attend a minimum of four full days per week.

REGISTRATION

- Children are expected to arrive between 8.15am - 8.25am.
- All classes are to maintain daily pupil registers for morning and afternoon sessions.
- Morning registration is taken at 8.30am and each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance.
- Afternoon registration is taken upon return to lessons after the lunch break.
- Any pupil absence must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon.
- Registers are returned to reception for monitoring and safe keeping after each registration (morning and afternoon).

Attendance registers are legal documents, and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used. For more information please see our Register Use Policy and Procedure.

Lateness:

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

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 by the child's class teacher in the first instance. 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.

First Day Contact:

- Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process.
- The receptionist checks all of the registers by 9am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. Before this, we will check with the class teacher as to whether the child is in class. If the staff cannot contact the parent we may assume the child is missing and initiate our missing child procedure.

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 will 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) in order to assess this further.

ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE CONCERNS

The school expects attendance of at least 96%. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the class teachers, along with the School Leadership Team to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

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.

General:

- When filling out the register we use a coding system as set out in our Register Use Policy and Procedure. These national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations and minimizes error.
- All registers are to be checked by the receptionist and any unexplained absence investigated as per lateness and the missing child policy.
- Children who leave are reported to the Local Authority.
- Concerns about attendance are in the first place discussed with the parents then, if deemed necessary, with the Education Welfare Officer.
- Attendance issues relating to health are dealt with supportively and clearly, with special measures being provided for these children.
- 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/>
- Attendance information is included as part of each pupil's end of year report.