

Leave of Absence Request Policy and Procedure January 2019

Reviewed by: Sarah Fox
Reviewed on: January 2019
Next review: January 2020
Related policies: Attendance Policy; Register Use Policy & Procedure; Parent's Handbook.

Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

Signed:



Date: January 2019

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the school's policy on the authorisation of pupil absence and the procedure parents and staff should follow when a leave of absence request is made.

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.
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AUTHORISING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

There are several categories of authorised absence which parents can request leave for. These include:

1. Doctor or dentist appointment
2. Examinations
3. Exceptional family related situations, like weddings or funerals
4. Days of religious observance
5. Interview
6. 'Taster' day at another school

Parents should request an absence within the above areas 1 - 6, with as much notice as possible before the event is taking place. This needs to be done in writing, detailing the reason for the absence, the time the child will be out of school, and their expected return date/time (as set out in Appendix A), with a copy of the appointment attached to the request, where applicable. The request needs to be given to the class teacher or handed in at reception and confirmation of its authorisation will be communicated back to the parents within 3 days.

Absence request for holiday/travel: Time off for family holidays is not a right. However, at the school's discretion we can authorise absence during term time for a family holiday *if we believe that the circumstances warrant it*. Reasons for authorisation may include parents in service or other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time; and when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

The Cambridge Steiner School is an international community with families and connections across the globe. The rich experiences a child may encounter by being immersed in another culture, learning about his or her heritage and spending time with relatives are important and have clear benefits (educational and other). However, these must be balanced with the continuity of a child's formal education. The school may, in *special* circumstances, allow a holiday/travel absence during term time, if the experience will be of particular value to the child or the travel is for a wedding or funeral. However, in order to obtain this the parent must apply to the class teacher in writing at the earliest stage possible, stating the reasons that the parents wish to take their child out of school and what benefit it will have on the child. Before a decision is made to authorise the absence, teachers will consider asking parents whether their plans could be changed to overlap with school holidays and thereby reduce the effect on their child's education. Holidays taken during term-time due to the availability of cheap holidays or the desired accommodation, or to poor weather during school holiday periods, will not be authorised. Requests made retrospectively will not be authorised.

All applications for a leave of absence (other than for those listed above 1-6) for children over the compulsory school age (from the start of the term after the term during which they turn five) must be made by the child's parents/guardians, in writing, at the earliest stage possible and at least four weeks before the date of departure (exceptions may be granted in extenuating circumstances). The request must include details of the absence, the length of time the child will be out of school, and their expected return date (as set out in Appendix A). The request may be hand written or sent via email, but for the school's records/ease of administration, the Leave of Absent Request Form must also be filled in so as to highlight the key pieces of information required. The parent's written request can be attached to this form. The applications are treated on a case by case basis.

Any period of leave under two weeks can be authorised by the teacher, in consultation with their Department Coordinator. Any requests longer than a period of two weeks require authorisation by

the School Coordination Team. Authorisation may be granted in whole or in part, as the teacher/School Coordination Team deems appropriate.

Teachers will take the following into account when considering a request for a leave of absence:

- The amount of time requested
- Whether the request has been made within the given timeframes
- The age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence / attendance record
- The pupil's ability to catch up on school work
- The pupil's educational needs
- The general welfare of the pupil
- The circumstances of the request
- The purpose of the leave
- The frequency of the activity

The teacher (in consultation with their Department Coordinator) will respond in writing, clearly stating the decision, the reasons for the decision, and confirm:

- The expected date of the pupil's return
- The expectations to contact the School if there are any delays
- Actions that will be taken if the pupil fails to return at the expected date.

Similarly, a letter refusing a request should explain the reasons for the refusal, and what action will be taken if the parents ignore the refusal and keep their child away.

Parents/guardians of children under the age of five, or within the term during which they turn five (the age of compulsory schooling), are not obliged to receive authorisation from the School, but must still inform the Kindergarten teacher in writing. If claiming Early Years Funding, parents must discuss the implications of any prolonged absence with the school office.

Please see Appendix B which gives a summary of attendance information for parents and provides a flow chart for the procedures surrounding the request of a leave of absence.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

These are absences where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carer(s);
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above;
- a request for absence is not submitted within the given timescales.

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- minding the house;
- caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

The DFE guidelines make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised.

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.

APPENDIX A - Leave of Absence Request Form for Parents

Parents to Complete	
Name of Child:	
Name of Teacher and Class/KG:	
Date Request handed in:	
Period of Absence Requested:	
Date of Child's Expected Return to School:	
Reason for Absence: 	
Written request from parent(s) attached	
Parent Signature:	Print Name:



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Teacher to complete	
Date this request was authorised or denied:	
I authorise the full period of absence requested.	
I authorise part of the period of absence requested -	From: To:
I do not authorise any of the period of absence requested.	
The reason(s) for my decision are:	
<p>I have discussed and agreed this decision with the Department Coordinator and/or School Coordination Team, to ensure consistency and fairness, in accordance with the School's Absence Request Policy. If your child is absent without authorisation outside of School holidays and any dates authorised above, this will be clearly marked in the class register. We are required to report recurring unauthorised absences to our Trustees and to the Educational Welfare Service. Please ensure you inform the school immediately if there are any delays in your child's return to school.</p>	
TEACHER'S SIGNATURE:	
Teacher's Signature:	Print Name:

APPENDIX B – ATTENDANCE INFORMATION - SUMMARY FOR PARENTS

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 should be handed in to reception. Alternatively, parents may email 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 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.

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 (more than two 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.

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

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

