



# Stoke Heath Primary School

## Attendance Policy

Reviewed: September 2018

Next Review : September 2019

This policy was adopted by the Governing Body

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Aim**

To ensure that children receive their full entitlement to teaching and learning opportunities through the best possible attendance and levels of punctuality.

## **Context**

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. Stoke Heath Primary School is committed to working to improving its levels of attendance year on year. This is embedded in our School Development Plan, and takes account of the Ofsted Report (2011) recommendation to:

*Use the very good links with parents and carers to improve attendance further by reducing the number of holidays taken during term time*

Our target for 2018-19 is 96% Any figure below this gives the school cause for concern.

## **We Seek to Achieve This By:**

- Working in partnership with parents and families
- Encouraging positive attitudes to learning in pupils
- Ensuring staff and outside agencies are proactive in supporting good pupil attendance
- Consistently implementing agreed policy and procedures

## **Partnership with Parents**

The importance of regular attendance is explained to parents when they first enrol their child and this message is reiterated at different points during the year, in a range of ways.

- Information regarding school terms, school hours, and the benefits of good attendance is regularly issued via the newsletter and is in the prospectus
- Parents are reminded via newsletters to telephone the school office on the first day of absence by 9am.
- Parents are involved in celebrating the achievements of children with very good attendance and they are alerted to concerns the school has about children's attendance:
- Strategies include the class with the highest attendance in each Key Stage is shared on the school newsletter. Each term class and individual attendance is recognised at the Awards Assembly which parents are invited to attend.
- The Governors' Termly Update includes information to parents about unauthorised absences and attendance at the school
- Children's attendance and punctuality data is recorded on children's reports.

Information to parents via written communication and verbally as needed remind them that poor punctuality gives the child who is late a difficult and negative start to their day and they miss valuable learning – usually in English or Maths.

The importance of registration time as a time for greetings and preparing the class for the business of learning is stressed

## **Positive Attitudes to Learning**

The school has identified a set of 'Growth Mindset' statements which are linked to key 'Qualities for Learning' which help children's resilience, persistence and motivation. This supports regular attendance and punctuality. Children are encouraged to strive for excellence in attendance and punctuality through praise and awards.

## **Staff Training and Updates**

The legal status of registers is regularly stressed to all school staff and meticulous effort is made to ensure they are kept accurately.

New teachers are inducted in accurate register marking (through SIMS), and strategies for encouraging children's punctual and regular attendance.

All staff receive information about the procedures for children who are late or absent who are a cause for concern

Clerical staff receive relevant information and guidelines regarding pupil attendance. They are encouraged to attend relevant courses and are made fully aware of the procedures which operate within the SIMS Attendance module.

School staff are reminded the authorisation of absence is at the Headteacher's discretion.

### **Implementation of Policy**

It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure, with the support of the Senior Leadership Team and Governors that the agreed policy for Attendance is fully implemented.

The Headteacher will:

- Provide opportunities for staff training and updates regarding attendance and punctuality
- Provide information about unauthorised absences for publication
- Maintain a high level of attendance and punctuality by encouraging pupils and parents to take personal responsibility
- Ensure that a member of the Learning Mentor team leads on the practical implementation of the Attendance Policy

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Attendance**

1. Where attendance gives cause for concern the Learning Mentor will contact parents to discuss the issue.
2. If there is no improvement the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will meet with parents to discuss the issue.
3. The school recognises the need for a multi agency approach to support the attendance and welfare of some children.
4. The Early Help Hubs and CAFCo can support the school in monitoring and addressing our persistent absentees

### **Unexplained Absence including 'Missing from Education'**

If the parent does not contact the Office by 9am the Learning Mentor will telephone the family on the first day of absence.

If a child is absent from school and the school are unable to make contact with the family or an emergency contact, or no reason has been provided, the school will carry out a home visit to check at the family home. If the school is concerned about the welfare of a child it reserves the right to contact other agencies, eg Police to request a 'Safe and Well Check' or Social Care.

If a child is absent without explanation for a period of five or more days, school will follow the statutory guidance from the DfE for 'Children Missing Education'. School ensure all of the above procedures have been followed, then on the fifth day the child will be reported to the Local Authority as 'Missing'. This procedure is also implemented if a child does not return to school five days after the expected date of return from a leave of absence.

### **Removal from Roll**

1. In the event of a school transfer or a child moving to another area, a child will normally remain on roll until notification is received from the new school, or from the LA Admissions Service.
2. The school will endeavour to locate any 'missing' pupils in conjunction with the Local Authority.
3. If unsuccessful, a Missing Person form will be completed and sent to the Local Authority, and the child removed from the roll after 4 weeks.
4. The school will take pupils 'off role' if they fail to return to Stoke Heath within 10 school days of the agreed return where leave of absence has been authorised by the Headteacher; or after 20 days of unauthorised absence if leave of absence has not been agreed.

## Lateness

All children who arrive after the playground gates are locked at 8.45am must enter school via the main entrance and must be signed into the school system by a relevant adult. This log can be used in prosecution evidence in court proceedings in the event of persistent lateness. Registers are submitted by teachers at 8.50am after which the child is marked late. Registers are formally closed at 9am.

## Nursery Children

We encourage regular attendance in Nursery. If a child's attendance falls below 85% the Learning Mentor will be in contact with the family. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a child can be removed from the Nursery register after 20 days of absence.

## Medical Appointments

Parents are actively discouraged from arranging routine medical appointments during the school day as dentist and GP surgeries are open outside of school hours and during school holidays. Parents are asked to inform the School Office in advance of any medical appointments and show the appointment letter/card.

## Leave of Absence (*no longer referred to as 'family holiday' or 'extended leave'*)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 previously allowed Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday in term time in 'special circumstances' of up to 10 days of leave per year.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations **remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days.**

The amendments make clear that **headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Stoke Heath Primary School strongly discourages all unnecessary absence from school for its pupils. As part of this, the school policy is **not to authorise term time holidays unless in the most exceptional circumstance.**

Where parents wish to apply for leave of absence, for example for a holiday, the following procedure will be followed:

1. A Request for Exceptional Leave Form should be obtained from the School Office, completed and returned there. Parents will be made aware that this should be done in advance of the intended leave of absence as it will not be authorised retrospectively.
  2. The Headteacher will consider each request on a case by case basis, on individual merit. The absence will only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**, such as serious illness or bereavement involving close family members. Requests for holidays are extremely unlikely to be authorised. This is in line with policies in all other local schools.
  3. Parents will be informed in writing of the outcome of their application and the reason(s) for the decision
    - a. Where a request is refused the letter will explain the reason and what action will be taken if parents ignore the refusal
    - b. Where a request is approved the letter will state the expected date of return, what parents should do if anything delays the child returning to school when expected, and what action will be taken if the child fails to return when expected
- **All families wishing to travel abroad in the school term will need to meet with the Headteacher or her representative**

Where parents take leave of absence for their child without prior permission, the school will explain the consequences to them in writing.

A summary of the school's policy on term time leave of absence will be included in the school prospectus, on the school website, and parents will be reminded of it annually, along with the procedure to request leave of absence.

Parents will also be made aware that in some circumstances, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued (in accordance with the Coventry Local Code of Conduct). See Appendix 1 for details. All parents will also be given details of the penalty to be paid, the timescale, and the consequences of non-payment.

The procedure for the school requesting a Penalty Notice for holiday in term time can be found in *Coventry City Council Holiday in Term Time Penalty Notice Procedures and Guidance (Sept 2013)*, Penalty Notice Leaflet 2018, a copy of which is held in the School Office

#### Appendix 1: **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Under the Local Code of Conduct (Coventry), Penalty Notices may be issued:

- If the parents have not sought permission from the Headteacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term time
- If the Headteacher has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway
- If a pupil has not return to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation and the pupil remains on the roll of the school

AND

- Where the absence has been recorded by the school as unauthorised in the attendance register on at least 10 sessions (5 school days)

Penalty Notices will not be issued if the parents are known to be out of the country.

Penalty Notices can not be issued against parents of children who are not of statutory school age.

Currently the Penalty Notice is for £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days and £120 per parent, per child if paid after this date but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in Coventry City Council starting legal proceedings against the parent for the offence of failing to ensure a child's regular attendance at school.