



LITTLE HARROWDEN COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY FOR: ATTENDANCE

Responsible person: Mrs J. Foo

Date adopted: August 2016

Review by: August 2018

INTRODUCTION

All children have a right to attend school and receive an education.

Little Harrowden Primary School aims to ensure that each child is able to discover their true potential. This can only be achieved if a child attends school regularly and punctually. There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attainment. Put simply, teachers can only teach children who are present in their classes.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent, as all children have a right to an education.

To meet these objectives Little Harrowden Primary School works with partner organisations, parents and children. We also recognise that often high absence and lateness is a symptom of wider issues and we use tools such as the Early Help Assessment and the Northamptonshire Neglect Tool, to understand the difficulties better so that we can offer support.

AIMS

1. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including pupils, parents, staff and governors.
2. To ensure that all children meet their full potential academically.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness.

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

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily, for example because of a birthday
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a present mark
- term time holidays

Absences will be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness (evidence regarding on-going illnesses may be requested by the school before authorisation)
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Leave for exceptional circumstances e.g. bereavement
- Attendance at examination e.g. music, dance

At any time the school may consider seeking advice of the Education Inclusion and Partnerships team or submit evidence regarding regular unauthorised absence to the LA which may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

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

Parents should contact school before 8.30am on the first day of absence to inform us if their child is going to be absent from school. There is an automated voicemail service available. If we don't receive a call or voicemail message, school will contact parents in the morning to ascertain the reason for their child's absence. This FIRST DAY RESPONSE call is for safeguarding purposes. **A phone call should be made each day the child is absent, unless it is known in advance how long the child will be absent from school.** We may ask that this is followed up with a written note or completion of a school 'absence form' available from the School Office.

A note/letter from a parent does not automatically make the absence authorised. Reasons for a pupil's absence such as shopping, birthday treats and siblings' birthdays are not unavoidable causes warranting authorised absence. Parents should avoid, where possible, making medical and dental appointments for their child during school time. Leave may however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Where parents have not contacted the school to explain their child's absence, the absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Every two weeks, statistical information regarding the levels of absence and lateness are reviewed by our Behaviour Support Worker and any concerns regarding a child's absence levels or whole school trends will be identified.

If a child's attendance begins to fall then parents will be contacted and support offered. If no improvement is seen then school will make the decision to unauthorise attendance unless supporting evidence is supplied, such as a GP note. A Parent Contract Meeting will

take place. The school may recommend an Early Help Assessment to understand the issues contributing to the absences.

If there are 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence (equivalent to 5 days) over a 6 week period, including late marks after registers have closed then a referral will be made to Education, Inclusion and Partnership team.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

We understand that there are many reasons why a child may have poor attendance at school and that these reasons are sometimes very complex. We are committed to informing parents regularly about their child's attendance and offering advice and support. Where we notice a rise in absence, we adopt mentoring techniques to support change.

We reward the class with the highest attendance each week in Achievement Assembly. Children who achieve 100% attendance for the school year will get a special reward.

REQUEST FOR LEAVING DURING TERM TIME

Any application for leave during term time must be in exceptional circumstances only and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of authorised leave. The Headteacher cannot categorise any term time holiday as exceptional. Parents can be fined by the local authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without the authorisation of the school.

It is important that parents / carers understand that the initial fixed penalty notice of £60 is issued to each parent for each child. A two-parent family with two children would be fined £240.

Request for term time leave will usually be refused unless the parent or carer can prove that the request is in exceptional circumstances.

Examples of exceptional circumstances that may lead to authorised leave include, leave to attend the funeral of a close family member or the wedding of a parent for which the child is a bridesmaid.

Procedure for requesting leave during term time:

1: The Parents / Carers complete a Leave Request Form and submit it. You may also wish to make an appointment with the Headteacher to make a case for exceptional circumstances.

If parents do choose to take their children out of school during term time, the school will not usually provide supplementary work for the child to do whilst not at school.

2: If a child has 10 or more unauthorised absence sessions over a 6 week period, (approximately the equivalent of 5 days of unauthorised absence) then we will refer the case to the Education, Inclusion and Partnerships team. They will then decide whether to administer a fine.

3: Occasionally parents have been tempted to withhold the fact that their child is on holiday. By doing this, parents are putting their child in the very difficult position of having to lie on return to school. If school has strong evidence that this is the case then they will ask for written evidence that the child was absent from school for an authorised reason, such as illness. If no evidence is provided, then the absence will be unauthorised.

4: A copy of all letters regarding attendance will be placed in the child's school file.

THE IMPACT OF TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

When a child has a block of absence during the term they inevitably fall behind their peers. This impacts on the rest of the class as teacher time and resources have to be used to enable the child to 'catch up'. Therefore when one child has a holiday, the rest of the class is affected unnecessarily. Teachers note that some children who have been away for extended periods during school time display anxiety, lack of concentration and also low confidence on return. This is invariably because they have to make the progress up rapidly. Moreover their friendship groups will move on quickly without them leading to friendship difficulties.

LATENESS

Children are expected to be punctual and lateness without a good reason is of great concern to us. Children who are regularly late are usually anxious when they arrive and are in danger of falling behind their peers as they miss the morning activities which are designed to boost learning.

Children should be on the playground by 8.40am. The school day officially starts at 8.45am. Children who arrive after this time will be marked as late. A record will be maintained of all children who are late. Those children late after the close of the register will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Registers close at 9.15am.

We will help to support parents who are struggling to ensure that their child attends school on time. The kinds of support we offer are:

- Attendance at breakfast club
- Early Help Assessments to understand the underlying problems and offer support.

Parents of children who are persistently late after register closes may be referred to the EIP team who will decide whether to administer a fine.

CHILDREN RELUCTANT TO ATTEND SCHOOL

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved by contacting the school and discussing the specific issues initially with the child's class teacher. 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 may make things worse.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Absence due to religious observance will be authorised, but the day must be:

- exclusively set apart for religious observance; and

- set apart by the parents’ religious body (not the parents)
- **CHILDREN NOT COLLECTED AFTER SCHOOL HOURS**

There are rare occasions when, perhaps due to an emergency, parents are not able to collect their children promptly from school, or make arrangements for their collection at the end of the school day.

In accordance with Northamptonshire County Council policy, if the child is not collected, the school will make enquiries to find the parents using the emergency contact numbers provided by the parents. If, after one hour, it has not been possible to contact parents/carers then the Headteacher will also contact the MASH team (social services) to inform them of a possible child concern.

MISSING CHILDREN

- If a child new to school fails to attend on the first day the school will attempt to contact the family on the first day. Continued efforts to locate the pupil might include phone calls, letters and as a last resort a home visit.
- If a pupil is absent by the 10th consecutive date, school will contact the Education Inclusion and Partnerships team to report the child as ‘missing from education.’
- If a child fails to attend for 10 consecutive days and school is unable to make contact with the family through first response, letters and home visits, then we will consider the child ‘missing from education’ and refer to EIP team.

SCHOOL TARGETS

The school has a target to keep absence below 4%.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Governing Body will review this policy periodically and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Chair of Governors _____

Date _____

What is a Parenting Contract Meeting and what is it for?

It is a meeting of those involved with your child's school attendance. It will consider why attendance is so low and set targets to effect an improvement.

Why have I received this leaflet?

Because your child's school attendance is low and this is having an impact on their progress..

Who will be at the meeting?

You, your child, depending upon their age, and a senior member of staff from school. You may wish to bring a friend/family member for support. Other professionals involved with the family may also be invited.

What will happen?

You (and your child) will be encouraged to explain why the school attendance is so poor. Be honest – the meeting aims to find solutions and to avoid any further action by working together.

How will I know what has been agreed?

You will be asked to sign a written Parenting Contract, stating what action is to be taken, who is to do what and when. There should be actions for all and an attendance target of 90-95% You will receive a copy of the agreement which will be reviewed within 5 school weeks.

How many meetings will I have to attend?

The Parenting Contract Meeting may be followed by a further 5 week review if attendance has improved considerably but not reached the agreed target. If attendance targets are not met and there is little improvement we will request the intervention of the Education, Inclusion and Partnerships Team.

Remember

From the date of the first meeting all absences will be unauthorised unless a medical certificate or other supporting evidence is provided and agreed by the Headteacher.

Actions you are advised to take

Check with the school on a regular basis that your child is attending full time. Request that the school put your child on attendance report. If your child is failing to attend school, take your child to school each morning; hand your child over to a designated member of staff and get written evidence that you have done this.

Appendix 2

Attendance Procedures – A staged Approach

The following attendance procedures are designed to ensure that the correct level of support has been offered to families of children for whom attendance is a concern. The purpose of the procedures is to bring about lasting change so that attendance is improved and children have access to the education to which they are entitled.

Stage 1:

Every two weeks the attendance officer will review attendance and begin to note any significant patterns in lateness or absence.

If a child presents as a concern, the child's teacher will be contacted. The attendance officer will contact the family informally to offer support.

The child's attendance will then be monitored until an improvement in attendance or punctuality is seen.

If the child's attendance improves, there will be no further action.

Stage 2:

If attendance or punctuality continues to be a concern after 6 weeks, parents will be contacted to attend a Parent Contract Meeting. This meeting is designed to understand the issues affecting attendance or punctuality in order that school and home can work together to overcome them.

At this meeting, actions will be set alongside targets and school will no longer authorise absence unless a GP note or equivalent is produced. An Early Help Assessment may be suggested at this stage.

A meeting will be scheduled to review targets. If attendance or punctuality improve (targets are met) then the case will be moved back to stage 1 and no further action will be taken.

Stage 3:

If attendance or punctuality continues to be a concern then a decision will be made whether to review in a further 5 weeks or refer to EIP team.

If there are 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a 6 week period then a referral will be made automatically.

At this stage school may use the Northamptonshire Neglect Tool to consider whether the case meets the threshold for level 3 or 4 safeguarding intervention.

If after further monitoring, there is a significant improvement, a decision may be made to move the case to stage 1.