



'We want every child to be happy, caring and successful.'

Attendance Policy September 2023

Year: 2023-2024

Designated teacher: Headteacher

School target for attendance: 97%

School target for unauthorised absence: 0.0%

At Cedars Primary School and Nursery we recognise the importance of regular school attendance and believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is also vitally important that children arrive and leave school on time. Education provides a means of enhancement for all young people. Children need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines the educational process and leads to underachievement. High levels of attendance are the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents/carers, governors and all staff.

Aims

Cedars Primary School and Nursery aims to encourage and assist all children to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.

Cedars Primary School and Nursery sees regular school attendance as essential for all children if they are to be successful and aims to work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure the highest possible levels.

Cedars Primary School and Nursery aims to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school. Local Authorities have various powers to ensure that parents meet their duties.

Responsibilities of Parents

There are legal obligations on parents to secure education for their children of compulsory school age, whether at school or otherwise and to send them to school regularly once they are on the school roll.

If the school is to achieve its attendance targets, parents must see themselves as partners with the school in their children's education and support the school in the following ways:

- ensure that their child arrives at school and is collected from school on time

- ensure that the school has up to date emergency contact numbers
- when absence is unavoidable, provide a verbal or written explanation on the first day of absence
- in cases of long-term sickness (more than one week) a medical certificate should be obtained from the GP and a copy given to the school
- keeping request for leave for exceptional circumstances to a minimum

Responsibilities of the School

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to deal with problems which may lead to non-attendance. The school employs a range of strategies to improve and encourage good attendance and punctuality. The school will phone parents on the first day of absence if parents have not informed the school of their child's absence by phone or letter. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently with attendance being a regular feature of year group meetings. If a child's attendance is a serious cause for concern, Parents may receive a Penalty Notice (fine).

The Importance of Registration/Punctuality

Registers are important legal documents and are kept securely. The law requires schools to call the register twice a day:

- at the start of the morning session.
- once during the afternoon session.

Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents. At Cedars Primary School and Nursery children are marked either present or absent in the register. Particular attention is given to accurate registration; staff use consistent rules and coding for registration. It is our policy at Cedars Primary School and Nursery to actively discourage the late arrival of children at school. A child who arrives late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning but also that of others. A firm line is taken on late arrivals. When a child arrives after the registration period the child enters school through the only available entrance (school office front entrance) as all other entrances have been locked. The child must give a reason to the office staff for their lateness. The child will then be registered 'late' for that session. When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised. The school secretary enters this information onto the computer on a weekly basis. If this persists the class teacher will inform the Headteacher who will contact the parent/carer. Unresolved lateness will then be referred to the local authority.

Notification of Absence

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent giving a reason for the absence. This can be done by:

- **Telephone: phone reception between 8:30am and 8:45am to report your child's absence each day until they return**, the school secretary will enter the reason for absence directly into the register;
- **Letter:** the class teacher will place the letter in the envelope which goes up to the office with the register;

- **Personal:** an explanation may be given personally to either the class teacher or the secretary when the child returns to school. This will then be entered into the register.

In the first instance the Secretary will verbally follow up all absences which are unexplained. If no notification is received about a child's absence a standard letter from the Headteacher will be sent to parents asking for the reason.

School Responses to Absence

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Where a child is absent at the time of registration the law requires schools to indicate on their attendance register whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. The law requires that absences not agreed in advance to be recorded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory explanation is given.

The school will:

- investigate all unexplained absences
- contact parents for an explanation if no message is received after 5 days of continuous absence[where there is a problem with attendance, we will endeavour to make contact on the first day of absence]
- contact parents if it has any concerns over attendance
- involve the Local Authority if parents fail to support the school in ensuring the fullest possible attendance of their children

By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents. The school need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence if they doubt the explanation. If the school is satisfied that the circumstances are both genuine and exceptional the absence may be authorised. Where parentally condoned and/or unjustified absence appears to be a problem, the school will involve the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity. Excessive amounts of authorised absence can disrupt continuity of learning. The school will therefore watch for emerging patterns of authorised absence by individual children.

Examples of Authorised Absence

An absence will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- genuine illness
- unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- days of religious observance
- exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

The school cannot accept any of the following:

- at home due to family illness
- special occasions e.g. birthdays
- shopping during school hours
- no uniform/shoes

- overslept
- haircut

Holidays

Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The National Association of Headteachers define “exceptional circumstances” as “The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short”. This means the Headteacher cannot consider or agree to requests for holidays in term time. The Secretary of State for Education has stated that all holidays during term time are unauthorised and could be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

If Parents believe there are exceptional reasons for their child to be absent from school an email/letter must be sent to the Headteacher for consideration. Each case will be looked at individually. Parents are reminded to not book holidays during term time.

Exclusions

Where a child has been temporarily excluded [fixed term or permanent] he or she will remain on the school roll. The absence will be regarded as authorised. Once a permanent exclusion is confirmed, the child will be removed from the school roll.

Communication with Parents

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

Nursery/School Induction Meetings

At induction meetings the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for children who can be very upset if they are the only child left in the building.

Parental Concerns

Children learn best when they are happy. All the staff at Cedars Primary School and Nursery are concerned about children’s regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child’s learning. They are also concerned about each child’s safety, welfare and happiness. Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset a child which means they become unhappy and may not want to attend school. Parents are encouraged to communicate with the school, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. Discussions with the parent/carer and teachers will take place and appropriate action will be taken.

The Role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority is charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations, including where necessary, the taking of action through the courts.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The attendance of children will be monitored on a regular basis by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will keep governors informed on attendance issues through the Headteacher's and Key Stage Leader's Termly Reports to the governing body.

This policy and the procedures included within it will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure continued high standards in all aspects of attendance.

Reviewed September 2023