



SMITHDON CLUSTER

ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Adopted by the Smithdon High School
Resources & Pastoral Committee
April 2013
Revised January 2016**

Rationale

The Smithdon Cluster of schools is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We have developed this as a Cluster Policy in order to give a consistent response to all students and families in our care.

We want to do our best for all our children and believe that regular attendance at school is vital for children as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by a parent.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills.

Each year the Cluster schools will examine their attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Norfolk attendance targets. The Cluster schools will discuss their attendance figures and the success of this policy on an annual basis and will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Lateness

The Cluster schools set their own registration times. Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.30am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Any pupil arriving after 30 minutes will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation such as delayed school transport. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

First Day of Absence

On the first day of an absence, parents and carers should contact their child's school before the registration period closes. If no contact has been made, the Attendance Lead will endeavour to contact parents or carers as quickly as possible during the school day and will transfer information to the registers, alerting the Headteacher or other key staff to any wellbeing issues.

If no contact is received from parents by the end of the morning of absence, we will phone or text them. We will continue to make daily contact until a response is received. We will also make general enquires during this time and try other contact numbers.

Ten Days' Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority as a 'Child Missing Education', by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Children in Need Team. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of all staff in each Cluster school to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

We monitor attendance periodically. When a pupil's attendance falls lower than the national average or causing concern, their parents will be contacted by the school. We will look for patterns and reasons for absence, making parents aware of the number of absences and the importance of attendance etc. Additional support may be available from outside agencies. In other cases the school will seek advice from the school's Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer (ASEO). Action may include the use of the Fast Track system and/or Fixed Penalty Notices. Monitoring will continue and a family support process meeting could be considered.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil received help to catch up on missed work and updated on any information which has been passed to other pupils.

Absence notes

Notes of telephone calls received and written notes from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the time which the pupil attends a particular school. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, then further medical evidence may be required (eg doctor's note, prescription, medicine label). Headteachers retain the right to un-authorise absence without medical evidence.

Promoting attendance

The Smithdon Cluster schools work actively together to improve attendance in our area and give consistent messages about the importance of good attendance. The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents and carers of their responsibility to ensure that their children receive education and will make clear the links between attendance and attainment.

Information about attendance, our procedures and attendance rates are published in the School Prospectus.

The Home/School agreement mentions the importance of good attendance and parent responsibility. A promotional leaflet will also be used.

Attendance Awards

The Cluster schools will reward pupils who have good or improving attendance, in particular through praising the individual child and, for example, by awarding certificates for 100% attendance on a termly basis.

Holidays in Term Time

Latest Government guidelines state that Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave but only in **exceptional** circumstances. Leave will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday, which will not be recorded as authorised.

Government guidelines also state that:

'Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school' Department for Education July 2013.

Requests for authorised absence should be made using a Leave of Absence form. Copies of the holiday letter and form are attached (Appendix 1).

In certain year groups, due to teacher and statutory assessments and controlled assignments, no holiday will be authorised during certain periods. No holiday will be authorised during Year 10 and Year 11.

The Registration System

The School will use a computerised system for maintaining attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years. Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes. Alternatively electronic back-ups or micro-fiche copies can be made. These should also be retained for at least three years.

Documents used to support this policy:

- A promotional leaflet: "School Attendance Matters"
- Cluster request for leave of absence form
- Template school letters regarding attendance
- Medical form to support absence
- Smithdon Cluster leaflet
- Holiday request form

Policy Review

This policy was drawn up in agreement with all schools in the Smithdon Cluster. It was accepted by the cluster governance in March 2012, and will be reviewed annually.

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have
either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those with parental responsibility and/or those who have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation which appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of the following categories:

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised Absence

This is for pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised Absence

This is for pupils who are away from school for a reason which is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site, but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

Date

«Parental_addressee»
«AddressBlock»

Dear «Parental_Salutation»

«Student» «Reg»

I am writing to you in response to your request that «Forename» is allowed to go on holiday from xx to xx.

As you will be aware from my inclusion of this item in newsletters and on the school's website, I am no longer able to authorise any absence from school unless the circumstances are unavoidable and exceptional. This is due to changes made by central government in their drive to raise attendance nationally and I therefore have to consider every case on its individual merits.

(insert decision here)

Therefore, if taken, the holiday will be recorded as xx days unauthorised absence in line with government directions. If you still remove «Forename» from school for this holiday and this results in either 10 consecutive unauthorised absence sessions (each half day is one session) or at least 15% unauthorised absence within a six week period, then the Local Authority's Attendance Team may issue a Fixed Penalty.

The fine is payable at £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days and these are issued separately to each parent, per student.

I would ask that you note the term dates that have been published in newsletters and on our website and try to take this information into account when making arrangements for the remainder of the year.

Yours sincerely

Mr P Marsh
Headteacher

Name of School: Smithdon High School

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

Please note: taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress

Full name of child(ren)

Address

Leave requested from _____ to _____

Total number of school days _____

Reason for application:

I/we have read the information on the reverse of this application and would like to formally request the leave of absence as shown.

Signature of parent(s)/carer(s) _____

Date: _____

The Headteacher will consider your request for leave of absence following government guidelines and the following points:

1. The child's previous attendance history
2. The child's stage of education.
3. The time of year (SATS or exams).
4. Whether the parents are restricted in terms of leave from their employer.

Your request for leave of absence from school during term time has been considered and has been agreed/not agreed.

Signature of Headteacher _____

Please note: Retain the original signed and completed forms in school records and ensure a copy is returned to the parent/carers of the student to confirm authorisation.

Leave of absence during Term Time

You are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure your child attends school regularly. There is however, a discretionary power to allow leave of absence in exceptional circumstances during term time. This is not an entitlement and purely at the discretion of the schools head teacher. Schools should not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of a student's education or if the absences are during school exam periods and SAT's.

Before completing this application we would advise that you consider very seriously how the absences will affect your child's education. National statistics show 10 days absence in any academic year does have a negative effect on attainment. Schools are not obliged to provide work for students taking leave of absence; however some schools may choose to do this.

The government advises that any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised by the school on the student's records. As you may be aware unauthorised absences may result in legal proceedings against you either through a Fixed Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court.

Discuss with the school any request for leave of absence prior to making a booking. Your child's school may have a designated person for this. It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure you receive confirmation from the school before the leave is taken. Do not assume permission is granted if you have not received written confirmation.

Fixed Penalty Notices

With the implementation of the Anti Social Behaviour Act (2003) the Local Authority has statutory powers to use Penalty Notices to help tackle irregular school attendance and unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the school has not given permission for or the parent/carer has been unable to provide a reason for the absence, which is acceptable to the school.

The school will discuss with the Local Authority any cases of unauthorised absence and whether the issuing of a Penalty Notice would be appropriate. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to a prosecution to the offence and can be issued when it is felt that parents/carers are failing in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly.

The penalty is in the form of a £60 fine per parent/carer per child payable within 21 days, this increases to £120 payable per parent/carer per child within 28 days. Failure to pay usually results in prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

*(Academic year =school year from September to July)