

Attendance and Punctuality Policy *'Achieving Together'*

Introduction - *'Every Lesson Counts' / 'Every Day Counts'*

Irchester Community Primary school seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive full-time education, which maximizes opportunities for each child to realise his/her 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; children with high attendance levels tend to have higher levels of attainment. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

Irchester Community Primary School is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All staff show concern and care about each child's welfare.

Our Aims

- To emphasise the importance of and, to secure from families and pupils, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents, pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social behaviour. ***Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our pupils.***

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an

effective school and, as such, will clearly be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data plainly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance. Good attendance and punctuality is an essential skill for children to acquire in order to be successful in future employment.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The vast majority of our pupils achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all our pupils as a **minimum**. Sickness usually comes in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); pupils should **NOT** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at Irchester Community Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents, governors and the staff.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, Family Link Worker and if the need should arise, from the Head Teacher.

Parents/Carers

Attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences. As a school we place great emphasis on this in our communication with parents.

It is the parent's responsibility to check the school **term dates as set by the school** (see school website). As schools may set their own training days term dates may differ from those on the Northamptonshire County Council website.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are requested to notify the school **on the first day of absence and every day of absence thereafter**.

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

This means that parents should contact school before 8.45 am (but no later than 9.30am) on the first day of absence to inform us if their child is going to be absent from school. If we don't receive a call, school will contact parents, or other adults on the emergency contact list, in the morning to ascertain the reason for the child's absence. 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 e.g. stay in hospital. The School Office makes a written record of the phone call recording reasons for absence. This note is then placed in the class register and retained until archiving at the end of the year.

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 are unavoidably in school time.

Where parents have not contacted the school to explain their child's absence, a phone call will be made by the Family Link Worker or school office asking for a reason for the absence.

A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until satisfactory explanation is received from the parent. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns, which may arise over a child's attendance. We encourage parents to get in touch at an early stage about concerns they may have about their child's attitude to school.

If a child's absence relates to a bullying issue then the school will refer to the School's Anti-Bullying Policy to support the child and family.

If a child makes a disclosure, which could be a reason for absence, then the school will refer to the *Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy*.

Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

Persistent Absences

OFSTED define persistent absence as below 85% attendance over a school term. This is reported to the Education Entitlement Service and an action plan to improve attendance is put in place. The school regards below 90% attendance as being of significant concern and therefore the Family Link Worker will make contact to offer guidance and support.

If it is deemed that a child has persistent absences (90%) then the school will initiate the Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 and Stage 4 process.

Stage 1 - Face to face contact with Family Link Worker

Stage 2 - Letter sent to family

Stage 3 - Meeting with parents and an attendance target set (reviewed after 5 weeks)

Stage 4 - Follow up letter informing parents of referral to Education Entitlement Service

If a child is deemed to have a medical condition by the parents then the school can ask to see the Doctor's Appointment Card or the box that contains the medicine.

Persistent absence due to illness will be followed up with support / assistance to manage health concern or request made to GP / school nurse to assist.

If a child is missing for more than 10 school days and parents have failed to contact the school, a referral will be made to the Education Entitlement Service in line with local safeguarding procedures.

(Refer to Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy - Missing Children).

Children reluctant to attend school

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Contacting the school and discussing the specific issues initially with the child's class teacher and/or Family Link Worker best resolve any problems with reluctant attendees.

If a child is reluctant to attend, it is not appropriate 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.

Holidays

From 1st September 2013 the school must adhere to the following amendment to the Education Act .

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

*Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments will come into force on 1 September 2013.*

*Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten 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.*

Therefore to adhere to these regulations the school policy remains that holidays taken during term time are classed as unauthorised. Northamptonshire County Council will decide whether to impose a penalty notice. To ensure safeguarding procedures are met parents

are still required to complete a leave of absence form even though the holiday will be unauthorised.

The school can legally authorise a request for leave where there are 'exceptional circumstances'. This request must be put in writing to the head teacher at least 5 working days before the leave date.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff.

All teachers and support staff on term-time contracts must take their annual holiday during the school holiday. Information on school term dates and holidays for the current academic year and the following is available on the school website

(www.irchester.northants.sch.uk) and on the staff pages on our virtual learning platform.

Any exceptional requests for leave must be put in writing to the Head teacher, prior to any holidays being booked. Permission will not be granted retrospectively.

Staff punctuality and attendance is monitored and reported to Governors on a regular basis.

Staff will provide a high quality learning environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. Our ethos demonstrates that pupils feel their presence in school is important and that they will be missed when they are absent or late.

The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Staff will follow up promptly concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to attending or their feeling of well being. We recognise good or improving attendance, regularly reminding parents/carers of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Registration

Registration is important as a legal requirement and to ensure an orderly start to the session. Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

KS1 and KS2 children may enter the school building from 8:40am

Morning registration will be open from **8.50am - 9.00am**

Late Mark from **9.00am to 9.30am**

School Office to contact parents from **9.30am**

If the pupil arrives after the registration period, they must be signed in the late book in the school office giving a reason for lateness. They will then be registered 'late' for that session.

Arrival after 9:30am will be registered as an **unauthorised** absence for the session(s) unless an appropriate explanation is received e.g medical appointment.

Persistent late arrivals are monitored and the Head Teacher, Family Link Worker or Administration Assistant takes action in accordance with this policy.

End of School Day

Children must be collected promptly at 3:15pm, which is the end of the school day. If an unavoidable delay occurs parents should contact the school as soon as possible.

If children are not collected by 3:30pm then a phone call will be made to all the emergency contact numbers. If no contact made social services will be informed.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) When a child is ill or receiving medical attention persistent absence will still be followed up for support and management of illness.
- (ii) Days of religious observance notified in advance.
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

Department of Education guidelines state that the following activities would classify as **Unauthorised**:

- holidays
- caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

We ask parents to **notify the school well in advance** of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

The Department of Education guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.**

The Education Entitlement Service

The Children Missing from Education (CMFE) section of NCC Education Entitlement Service may initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school. They may also impose penalty payments on parents who take their children on holiday during term time.

Before a case goes to court Parenting Contracts will be drawn up setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be formal interviews, which could lead to a penalty notice or Court summons. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

Rewards

Pupils with 100% attendance for the year are rewarded in the end of year assembly. Each seasonal term bronze (97 - 98%), silver (98 - 99%) and gold (99 - 100%) certificates are awarded for good attendance too.

School Targets

The school sets annual attendance targets, which are reported to the Department of Education.

A Final Word

The Department of Education's "Policy and Practice on the Categorisation of Absence" states that:

"Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it, the best efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places children at risk and, in some cases, can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour."

We take attendance seriously at school and have put a great deal of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

The Head Teacher will monitor attendance in line with Department of Education guidance. The Head Teacher will inform the Governors, through the Termly Head Teacher Report of any attendance concerns.

Attendance will be reported on Y2-Y6 assertive mentoring reports three times a year. Attendance is rated as:

- Green: exceeds 96%
- Yellow: 90% to 95.9%
- Red: below 90%

These reports are discussed with the children then shared with the parents at parent consultation evenings.

All parents will receive a copy of their child's attendance record with their annual school report at the end of the year.

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



Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence during Term Time

Dear Parents and Carers

The main aim of our Attendance and Punctuality Policy is to emphasise the importance of and, to secure from families and pupils, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.

In line with the new amendment to the Education Act '**headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time**'. All holidays taken during term time are classified as unauthorised. If parents decide to take their child / ren out of school during term time they must inform the school in writing. Although holiday requests will be unauthorised parents may use the form overleaf to inform the school of the dates when their child will be absent. This ensures safeguarding procedures are met and all the children are accounted for everyday. If parents feel their request for leave during term time is due to exceptional circumstances then they need to complete the form over leaf and make an appointment to discuss the matter with the head teacher.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which you and we must seek to avoid.

We appreciate your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

on behalf of the school's Governing body

NB: The Educational Entitlement Team may impose fines for absences which are deemed unauthorised.

Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence during Term Time

To the head teacher
I hereby request leave of absence to be granted to:

..... class:.....
 class:.....
 class:.....

The first day of absence from school to be:

The last day of absence from school to be:

Total number of school days to be missed:

Reasons why leave of absence is requested during school term time:

.....

Signature: Date:
 (Person with parental responsibility)

Reply Slip

Child's name: Class:% pupil attendance:

Child's name: Class:% pupil attendance:

Child's name: Class:% pupil attendance:

- Leave of absence has been authorised for days.
- On this occasion I am unable to authorise leave of absence as requested.

Signed:
 Head teacher Irchester Community Primary School