



‘Old Heath is a safe place for your child
to learn, achieve and enjoy success.’

ATTENDANCE POLICY

SEPT 2015

‘TRY OUR BEST, THINK OF OTHERS,
TELL THE TRUTH & SHOW RESPECT’

Old Heath Community Primary School

Attendance Policy

Our Attendance Policy aims to:

- support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;

Being at school

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and are picked up on time.

Expectations

We expect that all children will:

- attend school every day
- attend school punctually
- attend appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually, prepared for the school day and picked up promptly when school finishes at 3.15pm
- ensure that they contact the school by **9.15am on the first day** of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.

Authorised Absences	Unauthorised Absences
✓ genuine illness of the child;	× shopping / day trip / visit to a theme park;
✓ hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the child;	× a birthday treat;
✓ major religious observances;	× oversleeping due to a late night;
✓ visits to prospective new schools;	× looking after other children / other family member;
✓ external exams or educational assessments.	× appointments for other family members.
	× holiday

- contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

We expect that the school will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere.
- provide a safe learning environment.
- provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns.
- keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality. Keep parents informed where we have concerns following the introduction of the new 'persistent absenteeism' %.
- contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition; termly 100% attendance awards for individuals, where this is not possible we will look at the top attenders in each year group to see if we can recognise high attendance rates. From September 2015 weekly class attendance % will be published via the 'Friday Flyer' to highlight the importance of good attendance. A class certificate and 'treat' reward for either 100% attendance or the class with the highest attendance that week.
- make initial enquiries regarding children who are not attending regularly.
- meet with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality as necessary.
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.
- will notify the Local Authority (LA) after 15 days sickness.
- will notify EWO after 10 days unexplained absence.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. In the morning the playground is supervised from 8.45am until 9.00am when children are collected by their class teachers to make their way into school for registration. We do not expect children to be on the playground before 8.40am.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every child.
- Registration takes place between 9.00am and 9.05am. Children who arrive after 9.05am will be recorded as late to school in the 'Late Book'.
- Registers close at 9.15am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.25pm.
- Persistent lateness by a child will be dealt with through the Headteacher and may be referred to Education Welfare Service
- Child's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.
- The school keeps a record of 'late pick ups'; from 3.25pm onwards. Parents will be spoken to in the first instance and then written to formally with details of persistent late 'pick-ups' and the involvement of the Education Welfare Service. Parents are advised to ring the school in the event of an emergency which will delay normal collection of children.

A Child Leaving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the children are during the school day.

- children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- parents are requested to **confirm in writing**, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return ~ separate signing in / out folder at the Front Office.
- where a child is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.
- if a child leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the children as a missing person.*

Leave of Absence

In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations (appendix 1), holidays during term time will NOT be authorised unless there are stated exceptional circumstances.

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, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.*

Term-time holiday

*The **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** did allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.*

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.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

In line with government guidelines, Essex County Council has carried out its annual review of the 'penalty notice code of conduct' and as from 1st September 2015, all penalty notices will be issued on the basis of 10 unauthorised absences within a six week period. This will include absences that are taken where a family chooses to go on holiday or take unauthorised leave for 5 or more days (10 or more sessions).

This new code took effect from 1st September 2015, please note that any holiday which is applied for after 30th June 2015, where the leave is to be taken after the 1st September 2015, will be subject to the revised Essex Code of Conduct which is available on the Essex County Council website

If a holiday is not authorised, and is taken without permission, the Education Welfare Service may issue a penalty notice to each parent, requiring them to pay a fine of £60.00 for each child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120.00. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Education Welfare Service will then institute legal proceedings in the magistrate's court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular attendance at school.

The attendance percentage for persistent absentees has now increased to 90%. This now means that if a child's attendance falls below 90%, the Education Welfare Officer will begin to monitor a child's attendance. The school already currently monitors absences and identifies a target group of children based on previous academic year attendance and will be monitoring individual attendance on a half termly basis and more frequently if a particular family or child is giving cause for concern.

The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

All leave of absence must be notified to the school using the 'Leave of Absence' application form. Where a leave of absence in term time is being sought due to 'exceptional circumstances', a written letter must be submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors before the requested date. The letter must outline the 'exceptional circumstances'.

If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare will be notified. Through the Education Welfare Service the school also has access to various example letters which can be used where

- absence when no leave of absence was applied for
- application refused but then taken as sick
- no application, taken as 'sick leave' but evidence via social network, child themselves

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Old Heath Community Primary School as soon as possible.

A child will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the child will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate

The child's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Tracking Officer and Education Welfare.

Evaluation and Review

The school will review this policy *annually* and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.

Appendix 'Guidance to Essex Schools on Leave of Absence effective from September 2015'

Previous Policy 10/11/09, reviewed 10/9/12

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in the light of the 'The Education (Pupil Registration) (england) (amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 'Penalty Notice Code of Conduct' review by Essex LA for September 2015

Amanda Mitchelson
Headteacher 14th September 2015