

Attendance Policy

Date of policy: November 2011
Responsibility: Head teacher
Date of review: November 2012

AGREED ATTENDANCE TARGET FOR 2011/12: 96.3%

RATIONALE

At Longwell Green Primary School we believe that strong links exist between attendance and achievement and that if key material is missed during a time of absence then a child may experience difficulty in catching up missed work. Non-attendance can also have a negative affect on social relationships with others in school.

LEGISLATION

By law, children are entitled to an education, provided at a school or at home. When a child is registered at a school, it is essential that attendance is high so that the school can carry out its duty to educate the child.

All leave for holidays is at the discretion of the school and not an automatic entitlement, and an application from the parent/carer must be made at least two weeks in advance of any planned absence for holiday.

STRATEGIES

School procedure for agreeing requests for absence during term time

The school recognises and supports the importance to children and to family life of 'holidays together'. There are 12 weeks in the calendar year 'designated' for this.

The school will actively encourage parents not to take holidays in school time and will clearly communicate to parents those times in the school year when holiday absences will not be authorised and what the possible consequences could be. (See below)

All authorisations for absence will be considered individually and will be directly linked to the child's absence record as outlined below.

School must have notice for requests for authorised holiday absence explaining why the holiday must be taken at the requested time. This cannot be granted retrospectively. A form is available from the school office. A reply

slip will be completed by the headteacher and returned to the parent/carer via the child.

Absence for holidays during term time may be authorised **at the discretion of the headteacher** for up to a maximum of ten days per school year (September – July).

The Headteacher will consider all requests for absence on its merits.

All requests should be:

- On the school request form (available from the office).
- Well in advance of the proposed absence (minimum two weeks).
- By the parent/carer with whom the pupil resides.
- Addressed to the Headteacher.

The child's attendance rate over the previous 12 months will be monitored. If a child's attendance rate is below 90% the Headteacher will have to be assured that any planned absence is not going to have a major affect on the child's future learning in school. If the attendance is at least 90%, then permission under normal circumstances will be granted.

Where absence is granted for holiday purposes, 10 days is the absolute maximum during a school year (under normal circumstances).

In cases in which parents do not both live with their children, and therefore they may be taking separate holidays, the school considers it appropriate to ask the parents to agree on a maximum of 10 days in total per child.

Following guidance provided by South Gloucestershire (autumn 2007) there will be no authorised absence for holidays during these periods:

- Anytime during term 1 and 5 (September/October and April/May))
- At the start of term 3 (January)

The school also discourages absence during other assessment periods (these will be communicated to parents)

The cheaper cost of holidays in school time is not a basis for authorising absence from school.

Where the school and the parents/carers fail to reach an agreement in terms of authorised absence and the child is then absent, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Where the parents/carers keep a child away for longer than the agreed period then the additional time will be marked as unauthorised.

In line with legislation, the school reserves the right to fine parents who take children away on holiday during term time if the absence is unauthorised. The fine chargeable is £50 per child per parent and is levied in conjunction with South Gloucestershire Council.

Registration of attendance

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Class teachers fill in the attendance register everyday at 8.55 to 9.00 am and 1.00 to 1.05 pm (EYFS/KS1) and 1.15 to 1.20 (KS2)

In the morning, the school registers stay open until 9.10. A child who arrives at school after 9.00 but before 9.10 will be registered by the class teacher as late (L).

The school gate is closed by 9.10 and after this time all entry is through the reception area. Any child arriving at school after registers have closed at 9.10 without adequate reason (e.g. medical appointment) is classified as an unauthorised absence (U).

Early Years Foundation Stage

Due to settling in times, meetings with parents etc the registration process for reception children is slightly different in one respect: registers will be kept open until 9.20 in the morning instead of 9.10.

Unplanned absence

If a child will not be attending school due to illness or an emergency, the parents/carers are asked to telephone the school by 9.15 on the first day of absence to give the reason for absence and expected return to school. Parents can leave a message on the answerphone or email the school office if that is convenient. If the school has not received any reason, we will always endeavour to contact parents by 10.00am on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason for a child's absence.

Some 'illness' is obvious (for instance the medical guidelines are that children should not attend school less than 48 hours after vomiting). In other cases children may have an ongoing medical condition which school knows could result in non-attendance. In these cases it is crucial that home and school have an 'ongoing dialogue' so that the negative impact on learning caused by absence can be minimised.

However other 'patterns of illness' (e.g. 'tummy aches' on Monday mornings, 'headaches' on PE days!) may have causes that are not necessarily 'medical'. The school will always work together with parents/carers to attempt to resolve issues like this so that absence from school can be reduced and damage to learning minimised.

If a child is frequently absent from school for 'medical reasons', support can be sought from the School Nurse or other appropriate medical/welfare sources.

The trigger for this support can either be through a request from parents/carers (through the school) or by the school raising concerns with parents usually as a result of monitoring patterns of absence in 'broken weeks' (see below).

Reasons for absence must be provided by parents/carers as soon as possible. A note or telephone call is required on the first day of absence and a note is required following the return to school after any absence that has not been planned in advance e.g. for illness. This note or telephone message from a parent/carer does not automatically authorise an absence.

If no reason for absence is given the office staff will phone home asking for reasons for the absence. The office will continue to try to contact home, however if there is no response from a parent/carer, a letter will be sent inviting the parent/carer in to discuss the matter. If there is no response after 10 days, a referral form will be completed by the headteacher, with the child's recent attendance and details of action taken by the school attached, and sent to the EWO.

If after a period of intervention the EWO is unable to bring about a positive change in a child's attendance the EWO may have to adopt Non-Attendance Proceedings.

This process may lead to legal action through either the Family court or a Magistrates Court.

Penalty notices could be issued for unauthorised absence. Please see South Gloucestershire information for more details.

Parenting Contracts may be offered by the school if appropriate.

Medical appointments

Whilst we appreciate that appointments have to be taken when they are on offer, parents/carers are encouraged to make them for out of school hours or during the school holidays. If this is not possible, it is best if appointments are made for 10.00-12.30 or after 2.30 so that a child can be registered for attendance at the beginning of the morning and afternoon.

Celebrating attendance

The school celebrates good attendance in the following ways:

- Awarding certificates to all children with 100% attendance for a whole year
- Identifying the class with the best attendance in each term, publicising this in a newsletter and giving the class a certificate and reward e.g. extra play time

PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE 2011-12

The head teacher carries out termly monitoring of attendance, using the following procedures:

- 1 Figures are drawn off Attendance Manager to identify which children have had one broken week in three on a rolling basis. Reasons are ascertained for this and action is then taken as appropriate:

- if it is the first time a child's name has appeared for no specified reason then a letter is sent home to parents
 - if a letter has been sent in a previous term, then the Head teacher invites the parents in to talk about the importance of 'complete weeks' and agree on steps to take to improve attendance
 - if the above meeting has already taken place then the HT will assemble a panel to meet with the parent. This panel to include a member of education welfare service and/or a governor as well as the HT. The outcome of the panel meeting will be a formal action plan for improvement.
 - if the previous steps have been taken, then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service
- 2 Current attendance figures are compared with the target for the year. Action is then considered according to the outcomes of the analysis.
 - 3 A comparison is made between the term's attendance figures with the same term the previous year. This will help s to evaluate the impact of the policy.
 - 4 The figures for class attendance are drawn off and the class with the highest attendance are given a reward e.g. extra play/ chance to play games in class
 - 5 Any class with much lower attendance will be monitored for any patterns
 - 6 The outcomes from the above actions are recorded and copied to the Governing Body Children and Families Committee.
 - 7 The outcomes are used to update the SEF in terms of current standards, actions being taken and impact so far.

Penalty Notices (Fast track to attendance)

Based on the DFES guidance from 2003, South Gloucestershire has adopted the Fast track to Attendance Framework. This involves:

- Parents being made aware of the importance of attendance
- Action taken if attendance falls below 80% or if there is a pattern of one in three broken weeks- a letter to parents informing them of the situation and giving a timescale of 4 weeks for improvement
- If there is no improvement, move onto next step: setting up an attendance panel to meet with the parent; the panel to include a governor and/or member of Education Welfare Service. Targets are agreed and an action plan is set up for period of 5 weeks.
- If there is no improvement, move onto next step: the parents are invited to a Local Authority meeting chaired by a Senior Education Welfare Officer. A warning is issued and court date is given for legal action if a sustained improvement in attendance is not achieved over the next 6 weeks
- The school continues to monitor the situation and after 6 weeks a decision will be made as to whether the case should proceed to court or be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

The School is required to submit absence data termly, and with the parents/carers cooperation we can ensure that the number of absences is kept to a minimum. The school will ensure that termly reminders are given concerning the process of requesting a 'holiday' absence. In addition all new parents will be advised of the process to follow.

We believe that our policy on attendance will help parents support our attempts to provide the best possible education for the children.

Appendices:

- Absence request form
- Parents' leaflet

Supporting documentation (in the school office):

- Fast track to attendance for South Gloucestershire Schools
- EWS Good practice document
- School action plan

DS Oct 2011