CLEVEDON LEARNING TRUST ATTENDANCE POLICY

YEO MOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Student achievement, starts with outstanding attendance

Key Points

This document replaces any previous guidance published by the school. The attendance documentation will be reviewed yearly by the Clevedon Learning Trust. It has been produced in accordance with the documentation set by the Department of Education[1].

Definition of a parent

A parent means[2].

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- And person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

Introduction

It is our aim at school to celebrate achievement. Full attendance is a critical factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes for our students. The school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all students.

Our school will give a high priority to emphasising to parents and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If problems are identified with attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and students to find a resolution as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clear focused approach aimed at returning the student to full attendance.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/581539/School_attendance_parental_responsibility_measures_statutory_guidance.pdf

[2] As set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996

Parent's Role

"Parents have a duty to educate their children "suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs which they may have" either by regular attendance at school or otherwise under Section 7 of The Education Act 1996. Parents whose children are registered at school are then responsible for ensuring that they attend punctually, regularly and stay at school" - **Section 7 of The Education Act 1996**

All schools must have two registrations during the day (two sessions), morning and afternoon. Any student arriving after the start of the school day but before the morning registration closes will be coded as **L** (late). Any students arriving after morning registration has closed will be coded as **U** which counts as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. An afternoon registration will take place daily. Failure to attend either will result in your child being marked as absent for the whole day. All truancy will also be coded as a **U** unauthorised code.

(See appendix #1 for further information)

Your child is feeling unwell, what do you do?

Before taking the important decision for your child to be absent from school, you are advised to consider the following 4 questions:

1. Will this illness prevent my child learning at school today?
2. When was the last day your child was absent from school? - Is this the first time this term?
3. Could there be another reason why they don't want to be in school?
4. As a parent/carer would I take a day off work for the same condition?

Please note that common conditions such as:

Headaches, colds, periods and sore throats can be treated with over the counter pain relief and your child should be able to attend school. If these issues continue we advise that you consult with your GP.

If your child appears or feels 'better' later in the morning, they can still come into school in time for the afternoon registration.

Do I Need to provide Medical Evidence?

Although we appreciate that students can become ill for a variety of reasons, as a school we have to take the decision whether to authorise or un-authorise the absence.

Authorised Absence is coded when an explanation from parents is provided on the day of absence and agreed by the school as suitable reason.

Unauthorised Absence is when at least one of the following may occur, the student does not attend school, the school are not notified by parents or the reason for absence is not deemed to be a reasonable explanation for absence.

The decision to authorise any student's absence can be done by providing medical evidence of the condition.

This is particularly important if your child's absence drops beneath 90% as all absences will be automatically un-authorised without medical evidence. However it is recommended that you provide medical evidence for any absences if below 93%.

Any absence your child has from school whether it is authorised or unauthorised will have a detrimental effect on their learning progress and their chances of achieving full potential.

School will authorise absence where suitable medical evidence is provided. Medical evidence can be obtained in the following ways depending on severity of illness or reason of absence.

- Prescription labels of medication
- Hospital//Dental appointment letters and cards are provided with appointment time and diagnosis
- A GP medical letter
- Proof of Diagnosis from a consultant such as a community paediatrician
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) assessment

What should I do if I my child has a medical appointment?

If your child is required to attend a medical appointment, where possible, try and make these for out of school hours. Where this is not possible, we would not expect a student to be absent for the whole day. Please bear this in mind when booking appointments and considering travel time. The school must be provided with evidence of a medical appointment for **every** occasion such as appointment cards or medical letters.

Can I take my child out of school during Term Time?

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended by Government in September 2013. Regulations have now removed a Headteacher's authority to authorise leave of absence for family holidays during term time unless there are exceptional reasons. *(Please see FAQ for further information)*

The school will not authorise term time holidays and we ask that our parents abide by this. Any exceptional requests for leave during term time, should be made 1 month in advance of the proposed absence and should be completed in writing on the Schools 'Request for Leave of Absence' form (see appendix #2 for further information)

We will reply to the request promptly to confirm if the request has been authorised or not. Please note any leave of absence (holiday) in term time is likely to result in a penalty notice being issued.

School Role

As a school we will regularly review each student's attendance and punctuality internally but also externally with Noble Education Services (independent company)[3]. All students will fall into one of 3 categories:

≥ 97% Attendance - no concern
93 – 96% Attendance – close monitoring
90 – 93% Attendance – concern raised, attendance monitored and possible action taken
Under 90% - Attendance - persistent absentee, action taken

[3] Attendance is reviewed as an ongoing process but can be considered for a 20 week period or year to date.

Please note: If a student arrives after morning registration (after registers have closed) this results in an unauthorised absence 'U code'. Ten U codes are likely to result in a fine.

During these reviews where a student's attendance is identified as a concern, we will consider the following actions:

- Letters home to express concern
- Telephone calls
- Meetings
- Legal non-attendance meeting
- Letter warning of a fine or court action

Throughout the year we will continually review all students' cases.

Penalty Notices and referral to the Education Welfare Service

Noble Education Services (independent company) and the local authority have a duty to follow up unauthorised absences which occur across schools.

Under section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority may issue Penalty Notices to parents of children with unauthorised absences from school.

Since September 2014 Yeo Moor primary school will be following Government guidelines and will be issuing penalty notices where unauthorised absence occurs and this includes unauthorised holidays.

The fines are issued to each parent, for each child, and are:

- £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

Only in very limited circumstances can a Penalty Notice, once issued, be withdrawn.

Failure to pay the fine will result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The court can fine a parent up to £2,500 and the court can also offer a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.

Policy Review

This policy has been reviewed and passed by the school Governors and will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains up to date with any changes in statutory requirements.

Date Policy Approved:

Signed:

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A signed copy of this policy will be kept with the Headteacher.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is regular attendance important?

Attending school is legal requirement. This is because a child with poor school attendance will be affected in a number of ways. Such as

- Significantly under achieve and leave school with fewer qualifications.
- Children who are not in school are more likely to become involved in various anti-social behaviours or place themselves in vulnerable situations.
- Struggle in social situations or with friendship groups
- Stress of falling behind with school work
- Future employment, training and opportunities
- Poor attendance certificates for references

Can I authorise my child's absence from School?

No. Only the school can authorise a child's absence. The education act 1996 outlines that it is the Headteacher's discretion to decide if an absence is acceptable or unacceptable.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended by Government in September 2013. Regulations have now removed a Headteachers authority to authorise leave of absence for family holidays during term time unless there are exceptional reasons.

What is not an exceptional circumstance?

Each case is looked at individually, but the following are examples

- Cheaper holidays
- Family day trips
- Relatives coming to visit
- Birthdays
- Weddings which incorporate holidays
- Trips with family which they deem to be 'educational'
- Booking holidays during activities week
- Child was too tired to attend following a late night to attend an event

When am I at risk of a fine?

A fine could be issued when there are 10 unauthorised session absences within a 20 week period. This could include accumulated or separate absences for holidays, illness and 'U' codes within a 20 week period (term time).

I am concerned that I am going to receive a fine?

If you have any concerns you should seek to discuss with school. Any student with unauthorised absence could be liable for a fine, but usual practice will be for a warning letter to be issued first, warning of a potential penalty notice.

However, School have the discretion to request the issuing of a penalty notice without warning where the parent has chosen to take the child out of school without requesting the leave or subsequent evidence on the balance of probabilities, suggests the child has been away from school with parental knowledge.

How much is the fine?

The fine is £60 per parent, per child for the offence period. This rises to £120 if it has not been paid by the 21st day

What if my child has a chronic illness?

Medical proof will need to be supplied to the schools attendance officer. School may request medical consent from you to speak to the doctor/ consultant to discuss and set up a plan to access education.

If absent from school your child must actively learn.

It's not my fault my child won't attend school?

By law, parents have legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school, no matter how difficult it is for the parent. If you have difficulties putting in boundaries to help your child attend school, you may want to speak to school, who can advise of strategies or other organisations that might be able to help. Likewise, if there are issues in school preventing your child wanting to attend, please inform the school so the matter can be addressed promptly.

Who should I speak to in school regarding school attendance matters?

For general issues, students or parents should speak to their tutor/ teacher in the first instance.

To report an absence or request term time absence, parent should contact the schools Attendance Officer.
(Please see appendix #1 for further information)