



# ***Northumberland County Council***



## *Attendance Policy*

## **Tritlington C of E Aided First School**

### **Ethos**

Reflecting the Trust Deed, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.

The school will aim to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers all pupils.

These values include love, caring, sharing, forgiveness, tolerance, perseverance and goodwill to all people.

We aim to ensure everyone reaches their full potential by providing an education that stretches the mind, strengthens the body, enriches the imagination, nourishes the spirit, encourages the will to do good and opens the heart to others

# **Tritlington C of E Aided First School**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Rationale**

All children of compulsory school age (5 – 18) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, parents have primary responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both first and secondary school.

### **Facts about school attendance**

- ❖ A two week period of absence is over 5% of a child's school year.
- ❖ There is a clear link between a child's poor attendance at school and resulting underachievement across the curriculum.
- ❖ A child's absence from school is seen as significant if they are absent for more than 6.4% (12 days) of the school year.
- ❖ A child's absence from school is seen as persistent if they are absent for more than 15% (24 days) of the school year.
- ❖ Out of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of their primary school education, only 35% achieve 5 A\* to C at GCSE.
- ❖ Pupils with poor attendance are more likely to become 'Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) when they leave school (Department for Education).

### **The Government expects:**

Schools and local authorities to:

- ❖ reduce absence including persistent absence;
- ❖ ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ❖ act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents to:

- ❖ perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and arrive punctually to their lessons.

At Tritlington, we expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

We will do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

We will reward those children whose attendance is very good.

We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

### **Recording Attendance and Absence**

Under the education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure that two registers are kept; one for admissions and one for attendance.

An admission register is the school's roll. It must give details of every pupil currently at the school including their full name, date of birth and the name and address of at least one parent or guardian in case of emergency.

### **Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register**

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

### **Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register**

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **Guidance**

The Governing Body have adopted the Leave of Absence in Term Time Guidance for Schools 2014 (revised) issued by the Local Authority and will use the 'Promoting Good Attendance' document as a guide to levels of intervention.

### **Procedure**

The attendance register is called at the start of each morning session and once during each afternoon session and must show whether each pupil registered at the school is present, attending an approved education activity such as a school trip or absent.

The attendance register must indicate whether the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age was authorised or unauthorised. Since all absences are to be treated as unauthorised unless and until schools agree on a satisfactory explanation, it is clearly important that our school has procedures, consistently applied, for following up and, if necessary, challenging explanations and amending registers.

### **Authorised Absence from School**

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil

of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence can only be authorized by the Headteacher or another member of the teaching staff, who is acting with the Head's authority. Even when parents telephone or submit a note explaining absence, the school is not obliged to authorize the absence until they are satisfied that the excuse given by the parent is valid.

The reasons for absence will be recorded and parents will be made aware that excuses such as birthdays, shopping, looking after siblings etc are not acceptable reasons for authorized absence.

All absences which appear doubtful or spurious will be challenged and the absence recorded as unauthorised unless there is a genuine reason, consistent with DCSF absence codes, for the absence.

### **Timekeeping**

Poor timekeeping by pupils can disrupt educational achievement and may lead to serious attendance problems. Registers are kept open for a maximum of thirty minutes after the beginning of registration. Arrival after the closure of the register will be recorded as an unauthorized absence.

We will actively discourage late arrival, by being alert to patterns of lateness and seeking an explanation from the parent.

Systems are in place to ensure that there is a clear indication about who is on and not on the school premises should there be an emergency.

### **Absence**

#### **Illness**

We ask parents to notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, we can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. We can record the absence as unauthorised if we are not satisfied of the seriousness of the illness but will advise parents if this is our intention.

#### **Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. We do however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment

#### **Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant leave of absence. The school will consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as:

- ❖ the nature of the event for which leave is sought;
- ❖ the frequency of the request;
- ❖ whether the parent gave advance notice;
- and
- ❖ the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the leave. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion and is not a parental right.

Regulations from September 2013 state that a Head Teacher '*may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances*'.

It is the decision of the head teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances. Each request for any term-time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

Examples of exceptional circumstance would be:

- ❖ Forces Personnel on leave from a foreign posting.
- ❖ Evidence provided by an employer that states leave cannot be accommodated during school holidays without significant consequence.

### **Unauthorised Absence from School**

An unauthorised absence is recorded when school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

#### **Family holiday**

If we do not authorise a leave of absence and parents still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

#### **Issues parents need to be aware of**

Should we not agree to grant leave and the parents take their child out of school regardless, then this will be counted as unauthorised absence. This will be considered by the school as 'truancy'.

Schools are now legally required to record absences which accrue as a consequence of leave of absence which has been taken without authorisation.

#### **Reason for absence not provided**

We will follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort will be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register will be amended.

If a pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the County Council can issue a penalty notice or prosecute the parent unless the parent can show that:

- ❖ The pupil was absent with leave granted by school staff
- ❖ The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable course
- ❖ The absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs
- ❖ The pupil's parents are travellers

- ❖ The school is not within walking distance of the child's home and the County Council has made no suitable arrangements for the child's transport to and from school.

## **Penalty Notice**

The Local Authority is empowered to issue notices to the parents of pupils who do not attend school regularly. This provides parents with an opportunity to pay a penalty fine instead of being prosecuted for the offence. The amount of the penalty is £60.00 if paid within 21 days rising to £120.00 if paid within 22 to 28 days.

Parents who fail to pay the penalty fine are prosecuted for the original offence. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the local authority can prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies.

The local authority administers the scheme for all schools in Northumberland.

## **Prosecution**

On conviction, the offence carries a fine up to a maximum of £1,000 per parent for each child absent and in "aggravated" offences the fine rises to a maximum of £2,500 and a prison term not exceeding three months.

The same penalty applies to convictions for parents who fail to comply with the School Attendance Order. In addition, magistrates may impose a custodial sentence on the parents and / or a parenting order.

Authorised absence may only be granted by the Headteacher or his / her representative and cannot be authorised by parents. Where absence is authorised, the County Council has no power to enforce attendance through the courts.

## **The Application Process**

- ❖ A parent/carer requesting leave of absence during term time should make the application in writing at least two weeks in advance using the school application form, Appendix A.
- ❖ The Head teacher may invite the parent/carer into school to discuss the reasons for the application and the impact the absence may have on the child's education.
- ❖ The school will reply to all applications within two weeks. All replies will be signed and dated by the Headteacher or Acting Headteacher.
- ❖ If leave is not granted, the reason for not authorising a request will be clearly stated, explaining why exceptional circumstances have not been met, in addition to the possible consequences of disregarding the refusal to grant absence. i.e. a request to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty notice. All replies will be signed and dated by the Headteacher or Acting Headteacher.
- ❖ If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated including the date the child is expected to return to school including possible consequences if the

child fails to return on that date. All replies will be signed and dated by the Headteacher or Acting Headteacher.

- ❖ If a parent /carer removes their child from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the Headteacher, AND the Headteacher wishes the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice then the parent will be informed in writing that a request to the Local authority to issue a Penalty Notice is being made.

**Please note:** If unauthorised absences which amount to ten sessions (five school days) or more within a 6-12 week period are recorded against a pupils name, then the Local Authority will issue a penalty notice. This guidance is in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices which was reviewed and revised in September 2013.

### **Agreed Actions**

The school will ensure:

- ❖ All parents/carers are informed annually via the home school agreement, of the need to familiarise themselves with the Attendance Policy.
- ❖ The Attendance Policy will be available outside the school office and on the school website
- ❖ Parents/carers are contacted if attendance drops below the thresholds set out in 'Promoting good Attendance'.
- ❖ If a child has an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will send material home so that they can keep up with their school work if this is appropriate.
- ❖ If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Parents/Carers are asked to ensure:

### **If a child is absent**

- ❖ They inform the school by telephoning the school office and explaining the reason for the absence.
- ❖ If a child is absent unexpectedly and a telephone call has not been received, the school office will contact a parent or guardian for an explanation.

### **If a child has a hospital/dentist appointment**

- ❖ School should be informed prior to the absence. Please show the appointment card/letter to a member of staff.



## **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the school governing body to monitor overall attendance. They will do this by:

- ❖ Ensuring that parents/carers are made aware of the schools attendance policy (website and hard copy outside school office).
- ❖ Ensuring staff are familiar with the schools expectations and implement the attendance policy and procedures consistently.
- ❖ Receiving a termly report from the headteacher.
- ❖ Governors will examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- ❖ Rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus and on the school website.

## **Attendance Statistics**

Attendance data is collected from schools on a regular basis by both the Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority via the school census. This is an important piece of work and there is a genuine need for this data:

- ❖ For the DfE to gain a strategic overview of school attendance on a national basis, examine regional and individual local authority trends in order that national strategies can be informed;
- ❖ For the Local Authority to have up-to-date information on school attendance by individual school and phase group;
- ❖ To provide sufficient data for targeting resources towards those schools with attendance difficulties;
- ❖ To provide schools with accurate comparative data to inform their own strategies;
- ❖ To assist individual schools in their own targets.

The DfE guidance Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, local authorities and the police. DfE November 2013 provides further information

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