



St. Margaret's
C.E. Primary School, Heywood

ATTENDANCE POLICY

(Approved by Governors March 2011 - To be effective from September 2012)

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a *minimum* of 95%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school

We recognise good attendance and punctuality through our many rewards in school.

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ringing on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the child will return
- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks
- Sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness

We shall:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as soon as possible
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, the school brochure and the Home-School agreement
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance
- If we continue to have concerns make a referral to the School Education Welfare Officer, who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance matters,

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance.

We realise that there are *rare* occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

It is very important that **all** absences are reported to school. If a sickness absence is not reported then a doctors note will be required.

A doctors note or medical evidence will be asked for if a child's attendance dips below a certain threshold (90%). Previous attendance data will also be taken into consideration. This will be at the discretion of the Head teacher.

A prolonged sickness absence of more than 5 days after first reporting will require a doctors letter.

Children who have a lot of time off due to recurring illness maybe referred to the School Nurse or the School Medical Officer.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are *not* permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Going for a family day out
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Unapproved Holidays
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
- **Unauthorised Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority.** The Education Welfare Officer may contact you and consider taking legal action against you if your child has a high number of unauthorised absences. However parents will be contacted and supported before this is deemed necessary. The Education Welfare Officer meets regularly with the school and all children under 95% are monitored and discussed. If this dips below 90% medical evidence will be needed to back up illness.

Punctuality

- Morning registration is at 9.00am. This is the time your child must be in the classroom. The doors open at 8.50.

- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.
- If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.
- Arrival after the close of registration may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with the DCFS (Department for Children, Schools and Families) government guidance.
- We will let you know if we have concerns about your child's punctuality.
- Children who remain uncollected at the end of school time will be referred to a place of safety and parents/carers will be contacted.

Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of family holidays. There is no entitlement to time off in term time. Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the head teacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governors.

It is our policy:

- That only in **certain** circumstances will holidays be allowed and then **only up to a maximum of one week**. (The cheaper cost of holidays in term time is not an acceptable reason for an application).
- Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence for term-time holidays need to complete a leave of absence form **before booking**. The head teacher will then consider the request and will inform the parent of his/her decision, (further time than allowed will be unauthorised). When considering the request the head teacher will take account of previous attendance history (current and previous academic school year) before making a decision to authorise or not to authorise. 96% and above is the threshold we use to authorise unless there have been exceptional circumstances and the attendance is lower, this is at the discretion of the Head teacher.
- Parents/Carers need to minimise time out of school by timing holidays at either end of a school break.
- **However;** Parents need to avoid taking a holiday in September, as it is very unsettling for a child to miss the start of the school year. They need to avoid taking a holiday in SATS years (Y2 + Y6). No holidays will be authorised during May for children in Y6.
- If the school does not agree and the parent/carer takes their child on holiday, the absence will be **unauthorised**.
- Other term time absence will only be authorised in extreme and special circumstances.
- Please remember that the more time a child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A ***good*** understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.

Leavers

If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School, parents are asked to

- Give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving.
- Take our school's compliments slip so the new school can easily contact us and records be transferred
- Let us know when you move

Children Missing Education

When pupils leave and you have not given us the above information, and cannot contact you, then your child is considered to be a **Child Missing Education**. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services) the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

Legal Note

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.

We value your support in helping us to maintain high standards.

Approved by *Governors* May 2011