

EVELYN C.P. SCHOOL - ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

Holiday absence during term-time interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Knowsley schools and the Local Authority aim to minimise the amount of time lost to term-time holidays through a policy which actively discourages parents from arranging holidays during term time and supports schools to authorise absence for such holidays only in exceptional circumstances.

The staff at Evelyn C.P. hold high attendance as an important element in the life of the school. Our aim is to ensure that the importance of good attendance is passed on to children and parents and that pupils realise they are valued, welcomed and wanted in school. Attendance and punctuality are vital as they impact on learning, as well as being important life skills.

Registration Times

Registration is at 8.55 for all Key Stage 1 & 2 children and 1.10pm. KS2 - 1.15pm. for KS1 children.

Children arriving up to 9.25 or 1.40/1.45pm. are marked "late".
After 9.25 pupils are marked absent (unauthorised absence).

If a child arrives after this they must be sent round to the administrator who will write their name in the late book (for safety purposes).

Parents are made aware of this in the School Prospectus and Code of Conduct and in our Attendance Guidelines.

Children are regularly made aware of the importance of punctuality for registration by all staff.

Lateness

Punctuality is rigorously monitored. Once the entrances are closed, parents should bring their children in through the main front door and sign them in, stating the reason for lateness. If children are constantly late i.e. more than once a week for 4 consecutive weeks, the class teachers of older children will re-iterate our belief in the importance of promptness.

If there is persistent lateness, parents will be contacted by letter from the headteacher and if this does not improve matters, parents will be invited into school to discuss the problem with the headteacher. The Learning Mentor will work closely with these families to improve punctuality.

Our school expects children to be prompt and children and parents are made aware of the importance of promptness in our Code of Conduct and our "Attendance Guidelines".

Parent's Letters/Absence Slip

A letter will not automatically guarantee authorisation and this is made clear in Attendance Guidelines to every parent. Parents are informed of the number of authorised and unauthorised absences in their child's report in July.

The School expects a parent to either ring in to school or send in a letter to explain why their child is absent. Telephone conversations are recorded on a standardised form. Registers will be updated and forms will be kept in the school office. Letters are dated by the class teacher and stored in the register then transferred to the "Authorised Absence" file by the administrator at the end of each week.

Our Attendance Guidelines explain to parents what is required in a letter. Our guidelines also make a clear statement that the school's expectation is that pupils attend regularly i.e. over 85% attendance in any one term.

The Guidelines further state that the school will take a firm line on absenteeism. It states that pupils are required by law to receive education and we "want" them in school. It also explains that parents are responsible in law and can be prosecuted if they fail to discharge this duty and that the legal sanctions are as follows: A fine of up to £2,500 per parent/carer.

Reporting Absence

The School's Attendance Guidelines make clear that parents should report absence on the first day by telephone or on the child's return by letter. More than 10 school days without any information being sent to the school about why the child is absent will be followed up by the Education Welfare Officer. If an absence has not been reported (by phone or letter) once the child returns the class teacher will ask the child and if need be the headteacher will write to the parent for a reason.

Once a child returns from an absence they are told they have been missed by the class teacher and how pleased the teacher is to see them back. It is stressed just how important it is to be in school on a regular basis. This is done through discussions, debates, assemblies, drama and Learning Mentor focus groups.

Medical Appointments

The School's Attendance Guidelines explain that medical appointments should be made outside school hours whenever possible. Further, that leave for appointments in school time may be given on production of an appointment card or notification by the parent i.e. by note, telephone call or in person by family member.

Absence for Trivial Reasons

The School's guidelines make it clear that absence for shopping, birthdays, looking after the house etc. will not normally be authorised. In exceptional circumstances e.g. bereavement, our school will exercise discretion. If this is the case a specific absence will be mutually agreed by the parents and headteacher but after this any continuing absence would be deemed unauthorised.

Holiday absence in Term Time (currently, this section is a DRAFT)

Holiday absence during term time interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Knowsley schools and the Local Authority aim to minimise the amount of time lost to term time holidays through a policy which actively discourages parents from arranging holidays during term time and supports schools to authorise absence for such holidays only in exceptional circumstances.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, head teachers are able to authorise absence – up to 10 days – for the purpose of family holidays during term time. But this is not an entitlement and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted as of right.

Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term-time holidays and schools are now expected to adopt a much more challenging response to requests for leave for such holidays. Schools are also legally required to set targets to reduce overall absence – term-time holiday absence is a particular category of absence on which schools are now expected to focus.

Within Knowsley, overall pupil attendance is significantly below the national average. And as such, improving pupil attendance is a key priority. In order to achieve the 2011 Children's Plan target for attendance, this school supports **Knowsley by adopting the practice of only authorising a maximum of 5 days leave for term time holidays and only in exceptional circumstances.**

Policy Guidance regarding holiday absence in term time

In authorising a maximum of 5 days leave for term time holidays and only in exceptional circumstances, the LA and therefore the school intends to:-

- encourage and support schools to make a clear statement regarding the issue of term time holidays,
- enable schools across Knowsley to manage the issue consistently,
- ensure that the amount of teaching and learning time lost to term time holidays is, as a result, minimised,
- ensure that parents develop a consistent understanding of the response which they may expect from Knowsley schools.

The school ensures the following:

- Parents/carers are reminded of the importance of ensuring their children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance,
- Actively discourages parents/carers from arranging holidays during term time,
- Informs parents/carers that time off school for **family holidays is not a right,**
- Informs parents that applications for holidays during term time must be made in writing to the headteacher at least 10 days prior to the start of the holiday,
- Communicates the school's policy to only authorise 5 day's absence in a school year for holidays during term time and only in exceptional circumstances,
- Advises parents of the school's ability to consider up to 5 days holiday/extended leave

of absence in special circumstances, such as:

- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education, and
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis (bereavement/serious illness?)

Requests for leave of absence during term time

The School makes it clear to parents that a request for leave will not automatically be authorised.

Knowsley Local Authority policy guidance recommends parental/carer application for holidays during term time, must be made in writing to the headteacher, at least 10 days prior to the start of the holiday. The school adheres to the recommendation.

A standard proforma is used, for any application for holidays during term time, which will be completed by the school on behalf of the parent/carer. The use of the proforma enables a consistent approach to be adopted and ability by the Local Authority and school to analyse the nature of requests being made. (Appendix 2)

Once an application has been made to the school, the following factors **are taken into consideration by the Headteacher** when considering whether to authorise the leave:-

- the age of the pupil – if the pupil is in Y6, Y10 or Y11, this will impact on student attainment
- the time of year
- the nature and purpose of the trip
- the impact on the pupil's education
- the pupil's ability to catch up work missed
- the pupil's educational needs
- the general welfare of the pupil
- the amount of time requested
- the overall attendance pattern of the pupil
- history of any previous trips taken

If any of these factors are deemed to affect the child's education and are not outweighed by the reason for taking leave or holiday, the school should not authorise the holiday application.

The school does not authorise any application for holidays during term time:-

- unless the pupil has achieved 95% attendance within the previous 12 month period.

If an application for **5 days** leave in term time is to be authorised by the school, parents will be invited to attend a meeting. A home/school agreement is completed immediately or as soon as possible after the initial request to ensure the pupil completes any work missed during the leave period. This is to be signed by parents and a record kept by the school.

If the application is **not** agreed, the school should make this clear to the parent and the pupil will be marked unauthorised throughout the period of absence. In some cases, this may lead to legal action.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The fact that only the headteacher can authorise absence is made clear to parents in the school's Attendance Guidelines.

The legal position on authorised absence is followed by the school and is as follows:

Illness is an authorised category if a telephone call or note is sent to school and the length of absence is reasonable. However, if the length of absence is unreasonable or if the "pattern" of absence is unacceptable (eg. a day every week) this would be pursued by the E.W.O.

Our Attendance Guidelines make it clear that parents will receive a letter if the school is concerned about their child's absence level i.e. less than 85%. The Learning Mentor will then provide focused support. A referral to the E.W.O. (Education Welfare Officer) will be made if this does not improve the level of attendance. In cases of an unsatisfactory level of unauthorised absences the headteacher will discuss this with the E.W.O. His/Her role will then involve an assessment visit to the home followed by close monitoring.

On a termly basis, school registers are monitored by the E.W.S. The school and E.W.O. work in partnership and try to support children and parents to improve attendance. It is very rare that our school has need of this procedure.

Attendance is high profile in Evelyn Community Primary School.

We have an Attendance shield presented to the winning class at the end of every week.

We also have Attendance Certificates presented at our Achievement Assembly at Easter to children with 100% attendance for two terms. Further prizes are awarded each October for children who achieved 100% attendance over the previous full year. They are also given an Easter egg. We also enter children for the Borough Mayor's Award which rewards a child who has achieved 100% attendance for the whole year or indeed more.

Children are constantly praised by staff for good attendance and punctuality with stickers and verbal praise. The headteacher monitors attendance by gathering the figures for monthly actual attendance, authorised and unauthorised absence for each class. To help raise the profile of the importance of attendance the percentages are then displayed on a chart in the school hall. The school's overall attendance target is displayed in the hall and entrance. Any class who achieve higher than the school target on a weekly basis, stands up for praise at a week Every Child Matters assembly.

Individual children, whose attendance is a cause for concern are targeted for monitoring support and "guidance" by the Learning Mentor, class teacher, headteacher and welfare officer. Frequent feedback to such pupils and parents will be given as their attendance improves. The Learning Mentor implements a range of programmes to encourage improved attendance and punctuality for families requiring such support.

Bullying is identified as soon as possible and tackled immediately. (See Behaviour Policy for the way our school deals with Bullying). Where there are underlying issues affecting punctuality or attendance, the Learning Mentor and Headteacher will support the child and their family to address these and thereby improve the child's attendance and punctuality.

Staff know the importance of completing registers fully, accurately and consistently. The administrator monitors them at the end of each week when she correlates the attendance figures.

Parents are always welcome in to school to discuss issues with either the class teacher, Learning Mentor or headteacher. An appointment can always be made either by phone call, letter or in person and the parent will be seen immediately if it is a matter of urgency.

Parental involvement at E.C.P. is a strength and their help is seen as invaluable in working in partnership with the school to improve attendance and punctuality. An attendance update written by the headteacher appears on every half termly information sheet sent home to parents. It includes targets, achievements and strategies being implemented to improve percentages.

A similar update appears on every headteacher's half termly report to Governors.

This policy was adopted in January 1998 after consultation with staff, governors and our E.W.O.

Updated: September 2001

January 2010