



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**What happens if a child is absent?** Lessons start at 9am and the register is closed at 9.10am. Any child arriving after this time will be recorded as being late. For a child to be ready to learn at 9am they will need to arrive in plenty of time, typically no later than 8.50am.

Parents should inform the school by telephone or e-mail before 9.30am on the first day of absence of the reason for non-attendance. If a reason has not been received by 9.30 am on the first day of absence school staff will contact parents by phone to ensure that they are aware of their child's absence and to request a reason for their non-attendance. Parents must provide a written or verbal explanation for all lateness or absence. Absence of explanations should be recorded using statutory DFES codes. Verbal reasons given by the pupil or a sibling in the same school will not be accepted. All notes from home explaining absence should be dated.

The class teacher will make initial enquiries regarding unexplained absences. Where no explanation is forthcoming, the admin staff will contact parents and the Head Teacher. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if deemed necessary will be contacted by the Head Teacher. Information on pupils at risk or where there are concerns should be shared with admin staff to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to maximise attendance where necessary.

**How is attendance monitored and improved?** The school's annual attendance target is set according to requirements and in consultation with the Education Welfare Officer.

The School Business Manager (SBM) and Head Teacher regularly monitor attendance of pupils and any emerging trends. If attendance for any individual pupils falls below an acceptable level of attendance the Head Teacher and SBM investigate and the Head Teacher decides which action is required. Action could include:

1. Continue to regularly monitor for signs of change
2. Headteacher writes to the parents informing them of attendance concerns the school has and warning of the possibility of an EWO referral
3. Referral letter is sent to parents informing them of a referral being made to the EWO following insufficient improvement following step 2

Action will be taken by the Devon LA against parents on behalf of the school where there is persistent poor attendance.

**When is absence authorised?** All planned absence should be agreed in advance and the application for absence should be made in all cases using a Request for Absence form. The Head Teacher will not authorise absences for the purpose of a holiday unless there are the most exceptional of circumstances. Where pupils are found to have taken an unauthorised holiday, the Head Teacher reserves the right to request that the Education Welfare Service issue a Penalty Notice.

**How are parents informed?** Each year all parents are informed of Appledore School's stance regarding unauthorised absence by letter (see Appendix 1) and a copy of this letter is stored on the school website.

This policy is reviewed annually.

## Appendix 1

Dear parents and guardians

Re: Holidays and Avoidable Absences in Term Time

As of September 2013, an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 came in to force and greater clarity was introduced to the issue of schools authorising absence requests. These changes reinforced the Government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absences by the school in 'exceptional circumstances'. A family holiday is not normally considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore will not be authorised by this school.

I must take this opportunity to remind you that should you choose to take your child out of school without the authorisation of the school Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated. This could mean receiving any of the following:

- A Penalty Notice (i.e. a fine)
- A summons to the Magistrate Court which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.

Schools are required to notify the Local Authority if a pupil has ten unauthorised absences (equivalent to five days and not necessarily consecutive) within a two year period upon issuance of this letter. It is then up to the Local Authority to decide if a penalty notice is issued.

An unauthorised absence can be acquired when:

- Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the school is unable to authorise the leave and it is taken anyway.
- Leave is not requested and/or the school has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of school for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday). Only the Head teacher can authorise an absence. This year there have been occasions when schools have been notified that the pupil is sick, but the school later discovers and reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.
- A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed.

This school will be notifying the Local Authority in all of the circumstances listed above and other instances.

Should a Penalty Notice be issued as a result of unauthorised absence then one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently, each Penalty Notice is for £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within the first 21 days. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then court proceedings will be initiated.

We understand the disappointment that the refusal of a leave request may cause and we apologise, but as you can appreciate this policy represents the schools responsibility and commitment towards providing your child's education. We hope you will support us by ensuring that your son/daughter obtains the maximum benefit from their time at school by attending punctually for the 190 days each year that the law requires (unless prevented from doing so by unavoidable circumstances).

Thank you for your anticipated support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

*Jeremy Cooper*

Headteacher