



Colmers Farm Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Autumn 2016

To be reviewed Autumn 2017

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction and background

Colmers Farm Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance at Parents' Evenings and with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance of 95%.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Support and follow Government legislation and guidance documentation as and when it is issued.

3. Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after 9:30am)
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or Big Community.

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Once a child's attendance falls below 95% they will be monitored by the school attendance team. Parents of children whose attendance falls below 95% will be contacted and the situation discussed so that we can work to prevent children moving towards PA.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

5. Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.
- Or they can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Class Teacher, our Attendance Leader and/or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Begin Legal Action if the absence drops below an acceptable level.

6. Legal Action

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out and if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as Penalty Notices or

prosecutions in the Magistrates Court are the next step. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are shared with parents at the beginning of each school year in a letter entitled "Spotlight on Attendance". Parents are asked to sign receipt of this letter. This information is available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Birmingham Education Welfare Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or via the internet.

7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they miss intervention time and time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt learning, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect our children to be in the playground at 8:55am ready to line up when the bell rings. The playground door will close at 9:00am. After this time children will need to enter via the front entrance. Parents of children arriving after 9:05am will need to complete a late slip at the front desk. Registers are marked by 9:05am and your child will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site (U), but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will receive a letter from the Attendance Leader and be invited in to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children. If lateness continues legal action will be taken.

8. Holidays in Term Time:

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. We will not agree leave during term time unless under exceptional circumstances. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. We make decisions based on Government advice and legislation. In June 2013, Birmingham Education Welfare Service issued the following;

"Changes to the authorisation of term time holidays and extended leave for pupils.

You may be aware that the Government has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in relation to the authorisation of term time leave for pupils. These amendments will come into force on 1 September 2013.

In the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, all references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days have been removed. The amendments make clear that **Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted."

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Targets for the school and for classes will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these.

9. Targets

The target level of attendance at Colmers Farm Primary School is 95%. We will keep parents updated regularly on their child's progress. Our aim is to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

10. People responsible for this policy and its implementation

Headteacher and the Governing Body.

The Attendance Team: Mrs Emma Wheale, Mrs Judy Robertson and Mrs Colleen Chatwin.

11. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Attendance Policy Appendices.

- APPENDIX I – 2014-15 School Year attendance descriptor
- APPENDIX II - Spotlight Letter
- APPENDIX III – Leave in Term Time Letter

Adopted by FGB:

Signed **Chair of Governors**

Date

To be reviewed Autumn 2017

2016-2017 School Year.

Descriptor	Attendance %	Actual School Days Possible	Days Lost
Excellent	100%	187	0
	99%	185	2
Good	98%	183	4
	96%	180	7
Satisfactory	95%	178	9
	94%	176	11
Cause For Concern	90%	168	19
	89%	166	21
	88%	165	22
	87%	163	24
	86%	161	26
	85%	159	28
Persistent Absentees	84%	157	30
	83%	155	32
	82%	153	34
	81%	152	35
	80%	150	37

Spotlight on Attendance

A very important message for all parents

8th September, 2014.

Dear Parent,

Colmers Farm Primary School is working in partnership with parents to improve school attendance. **We would like to congratulate the many parents who make sure their children attend school regularly.**

It is parent's legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send your child to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence.

Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Are you aware that children who do not attend regularly:

- do not achieve well in exams
- find it difficult to maintain friendships
- are more likely to become involved in crime
- miss out on opportunities in further education and the world of work

Absence can only be authorised by the Head Teacher, within the boundaries set by the Education (Pupil Registrations) (England) Regulations 2006.

Please remember that parental illness, going shopping, visiting family, truancy, not wanting to go to school, alleged bullying (speak to school immediately to resolve the issue) are not acceptable reasons to be absent. All of these will be recorded as unauthorised absence, including if your child arrives at school after the close of registration. Leave in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Legal action that may be taken include:

- **Issuing penalty notices:** Each parent receives a penalty notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. So, if there are two parents and two children the total penalties could be up to £480. Failure to pay may result in prosecution.

- **Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) - magistrates can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, add costs and impose Parenting Orders.
- **Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - magistrates can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders and/or impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Being taken to court could result in you having a criminal record.

How does your child compare?

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks	290 lessons

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life.

If your child's level of absence is of serious concern you will receive another letter advising you about improving attendance. After this, any further unauthorised absence may result in the School and the Local Authority taking legal action.

We will improve attendance by making it clear within the school and local community that unauthorised absence is not acceptable. You will be informed of the number of penalty notices issued, prosecutions and the level of fines.

Again, we would like to thank those parents who make sure their child is attending school regularly and are therefore benefiting fully from their educational opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Victoria Kelly

Head Teacher

Leave in Term Time
A very important message for all parents

8th September, 2014.

Dear Parent,

We are writing to inform you that a 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, means that Head Teachers may no longer authorise leave during term time except where the circumstances are exceptional. This is also in accordance with Birmingham Local Authority's 'Leave in Term Time Guidance'. If your child takes leave that has not been authorised by the Head Teacher, it will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Please understand that this may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken or your child losing their school place.

If you are issued with a penalty notice, each parent will be fined a minimum of £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. If that fine is not paid, you may be required to attend Court and this could result in a fine for each parent of up to £1000 per child.

Being taken to Court could result in you having a criminal record.

If a pupil takes unauthorised leave in term time without the Head Teacher's permission, and does not return to school within 20 school days, the pupil may be deleted from the school register on the 21st day i.e. they will no longer have a place at this school.

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the child to miss school for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendship with peers and support from staff can provide children with stability. The routine of school offers a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

If you believe there is an exceptional and urgent reason for your child to take leave during term time, please complete the required form which you can obtain from the School. It is the Head Teacher who will then make a decision on whether or not the leave can be authorised. For example:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

We are grateful for the support we receive from parents and good attendance will ensure that your child can reach his/her full potential. To achieve this, your child needs to attend school every day.

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Yours sincerely

Mrs Victoria Kelly.
Head Teacher

Policy adopted by FGB:

Signed *Valerie Smith* Chair of Governors

Date *5/10/16*

To be reviewed autumn 2017