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Attendance Policy

The Topsham School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance need to be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

Objectives

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

Principles

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed. We will consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.

Regular information will be sent to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues. Positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence will ensure regular evaluation of attendance policy and procedures by Senior Managers and the school governors.

Attendance will be an important feature of the School Improvement Plan should attendance figures show a significant decline.

Consistent and vigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures will be in place.

Parents' Responsibilities.

- Parents should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness they should contact the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, by letter or in person.
- Parents should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (8:55 a.m.). If a child arrives after 9:00 a.m. his/her parent should report directly to the school office.
- Parents should avoid absences during term-time. If this is absolutely unavoidable they should complete an Absence Request available from the school office and the school website.
- As from September 2013 the law changed which means that absence during term time can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The school interprets exceptional to mean, once in a life time and never to be repeated. This does not include holidays.
- The law does not grant parents/ carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/ carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authoring of the absence will be condition on the child attending satisfactory up to the date covered by this request.

- Warning – if the school refuses your request and the child is taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable for a Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/ carer or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine up to £2,500, and or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

School Responsibilities

- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.
- Registers will be called twice daily (at 9:00 a.m. and 1:15 p.m.). Registers will close at 9:05 a.m. and 1:20 p.m. Any child arriving after the closing of the register will be recorded as 'late' for that session.
- All absences should be approved by the school at least 24 hours in advance and submitted on the appropriate form.
- The head teacher will regularly collect attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the school's Education Welfare Officer [EWO]. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and EWO.
- The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:
 - the head teacher will communicate regularly with parents on attendance matters;
 - appropriate personal encouragement or congratulation will be offered to individual children;
 - clear attendance information will be entered in the school prospectus.
 - a weekly class attendance certificate will be awarded during achievers assembly.
 - Certificates will be given at the end of year/ term for pupils with good attendance.

Procedures

These procedures are in place to ensure maximum engagement in promoting attendance:

- Registration times in the morning are 8.55am until 09.05am. The afternoon registration time is 13.15pm until 13.20pm
- Any child arriving between 09.05 and 09.15 should report to the school's front office where they will be signed in and the time recorded. They will be registered with a late mark (L). Any child arriving after register closes at 09.15 will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U).
- Punctuality will be monitored by the Attendance Monitor through the registers. Children with continuous late marks will be reported to the Head teacher who will take action in the first instance in a letter to the parents. If lateness persists the head teacher will initiate a meeting with the parents.

- The school will undertake a first day absence procedure. Parents are expected to phone the school office to inform the school of their child's absence. If parents do not phone the school with any reason for absence, the office staff will endeavour to phone the home telephone contact number by 10am to ascertain a reason for absence.
- Guidance on authorised and unauthorised absence will be reported in the schools prospectus and in regular newsletter updates.
- Children with attendance problems will be monitored by the Attendance Monitor and reported to the Head teacher, concerns will be flagged up and discussed with the EWO.
- 100% attendance will be rewarded with a certificate at the end of the academic year.
- When a parent rings the office reporting absence e.g. illness the office record this in the day attendance and monitoring file including the 'active symptoms the child presents with.
- Parents are reminded that unless sickness or diarrhoea or other contagious illness children who feel better may come in for the afternoon session.
- The parents of those children with non obvious active symptoms may receive a follow up phone call at 11:30am to check on the child and offer their attendance at the afternoon session.

The target setting process.

- Targets are reported to the DFES when requested by the LA.
- The Education Welfare Officer makes regular visits to discuss attendance with the Head teacher and the Attendance monitor.
- Inclusion of attendance information can be found in the procedure manuals in the school office. Individual attendance information is reported to parents with the end of term report.
- It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Responsibility to promote attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

Appendix: Procedures

Registration

8:55 – 9:05

9:05 – 9:15 Late

9:15 or later Unauthorised absence

1:15 – 1:25 Late

1:25 or later Unauthorised absence

Unexplained absence

If on the first day of absence no note or telephone call has been received the Office will try to contact the parent/carer by 10:00a.m.
(See First Day Absence Procedures)

Absence of 5 days or more (not holiday)

On the fifth day of absence the parent/carer must provide the school with evidence that medical advice was sort e.g. copy of prescription, appointment card from doctor/dentist.

Attendance which drops **below 95%**

Monthly monitoring meeting between head teacher and attendance administrator to monitor both late and absence data.

Parents of children identified with falling attendance may be sent Letter One from the escalation procedure in the first instance.