Manea Community Primary School



Attendance Policy



Part 1.

School attendance is an important focus for all schools to ensure that children fulfil their potential and are given every opportunity to receive their entitlement of an education.

If a child is registered at a school they must, by law, attend regularly and punctually. Children should only miss school if they are ill or for some other unavoidable reason.

If a child is absent and school does not receive an explanation for their absence, or considers the explanation unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised', that is, as truancy.

Concerns about school attendance will be discussed with parents and carers at every opportunity.

There are 190 days in a school year. This means there are 175 days in the year available to use for holidays. Every school day counts! Children of school-age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. When a child is absent from school, attainment is affected. He or she misses the lessons provided and is also less prepared for the lessons after his or her return to school. Absence does have a negative effect on social relationships and friendships.

Attendance Matters: Wisbech School's Partnership

The national expectation for school attendance is 100%. The government regards this as the expected attendance for pupils; unless there are exceptional circumstances or unavoidable reasons for absence.

(The Supreme Court judgement Isle of White v Platt 06/04/2017).

Key Information

A child becomes of compulsory school age when they reach the age of five. Where a parent has elected to register their child at school, they must start school in the term following their 5th birthday; parents of many children choose to send them earlier. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday in June in the school year that they reach the age of 16.

The Education department of Cambridgeshire County Council carries out a structured system for managing school absence. It means that if a child has too much **unauthorised** absence there will be a system of letters, meetings, fines and even prison organised by the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

There are two types of absence **Authorised and Unauthorised.**

Authorised Absences

An **authorised** absence is one that the school agree is a legitimate reason for a child to be absent from school such as a contagious disease, is attending an unavoidable emergency specialist medical appointment e.g. the orthodontist where alternative times and dates cannot be accommodated or has sickness and diarrhoea. In some exceptional cases an absence may be authorised to attend an event such as an older sibling's university graduation or a family member's funeral.

Parents and carers are expected to let the school office know when their child is going to be away or is ill so that the school can mark the register as an **authorised** absence.

Unauthorised Absences

An **unauthorised** absence is one where the school does not know or understand why a child is not at

school. It may include lengthy periods of illness when the school may not understand why a child has been off for so long.

Examples of unauthorised absence:

- shopping
- day trips
- birthdays
- looking after sick relatives
- family holiday
- transport problems, with the exception of Cambs County Council transport i.e. taxi or bus
- using pupils to translate during meetings and/or appointments

All holidays in term time (unless the headteacher agrees there are exceptional circumstances) will be **unauthorised**. The Local Authority Attendance Officer will issue fines to parents and carers who take their children out of school for term time holidays. These fines are per parent per student. A term time leave of 8 consecutive sessions (ie session = am or pm), or over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may result in prosecution proceedings or a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices may be issued if attendance has been below 90% over the previous 8 week period and where absence is unauthorised. Fines are £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 for the next 7 days. The fines are retained by the Local Authority, and are not returned to schools. If the penalty notices remain unpaid the case will progress to court.

If a child has attendance below 95% in a continuous 12 month period or there is a significant drop in a child's attendance in a shorter period of time parents and carers will be sent a letter about their child's attendance. An amended version of this will be sent to children in Year R who are not yet five. A second letter will be sent if a child's attendance falls below 94.1% to explain what will happen if the child's attendance continues to fall. If a child has an unauthorised attendance level of 90 – 92% the Education Welfare Officer will then become involved. If things do not improve he/she will meet with parents and carers. If there is no change then he/she will start the process of fines. She/he can also start legal action against parents and carers if the child's attendance does not improve.

Here is a breakdown of what attendance looks like in terms of days.

- There are 190 days in the school year.
- 190 days at school means 100% attendance and is excellent.
- 186 days at school means 98% attendance and is good. This is 4 days off school in a year.
- 180.5 days at school means 95% attendance and is becoming unsatisfactory. This is 9.5 days off in a year and could trigger a letter of concern.
- 171 days at school means 90% attendance and is a real cause for concern. This is 19 days off school in a year. Action will be taken.
- If a child has 2 weeks of unauthorised school holiday they are getting very close to triggering action from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Part of the Family Worker's job is to support families in any way to avoid meeting the Local Authority Attendance Officer. Parents are encouraged to speak with the school if concerns arise.



Home Visits
Home visits may be carried out by schools if they have concerns or have not had contact from families regarding a child's absence. If there is no answer and the school is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child the school may contact the police with their concerns.

Local Authority Attendance Officers (Previously Education Welfare Officers (EWOs)) / Legal Process
If a child's attendance is unsatisfactory and not improving despite support, the Local Authority Attendance Officer will make a referral to a legal panel for either a penalty notice or legal intervention. Before a referral is made, the school will follow a step by step system to identify the cause for concern and offer support to improve attendance and punctuality, see Appendix A.

The Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) may contact the parents to carry out a PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) interview. (see Part 2 prosecution process below)

Rights and Responsibilities
Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child receives an appropriate education.

If a child is registered at a school, parents must ensure they attend.

What can parents do to ensure good attendance?
Make sure your child arrives at school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. If your child arrives after the register has closed without a good reason, this will be recorded as an 'unauthorised' absence for that session.

If your child has to miss school, it is vital that you let the school know why … on the first morning of the absence from 8.30 am to 9am.

If you know, or think, that your child is having difficulties attending school, you should contact the school. It is better to do this sooner rather than later, as most problems can be dealt with very quickly.

Education, Your Rights and Responsibilities: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

If a child is late, they will be marked as L for up to 30 minutes after the start of day. If they are more than 30 minutes late (arrive after 9.20 am) and there is no acceptable reason, they will be marked as U for the session. More than 3 'Lates' within a four week period may generate a Late Letter; if lateness continues, parents will be invited to a meeting.

Rewards

- We have an attendance race each week which is announced in assembly each Friday. The winning class for the half term receive a popcorn and DVD afternoon.
- We have 100% attendance badges for children who attend school for 100% each term.

Other Communication:
Parents/carers evenings and end of year reports will be used to review and discuss attendance of all children.

Non-collection of children
If a child is not collected at the end of the day and no valid reason has been received after 45 minutes, the Cambridgeshire document Protocol for Dealing with Children Not Collected from School at the End of the School Day/Activity (March 2015) will be referred to.

Persistent Absence
A pupil is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more of possible sessions.

Part 2.
Non-attendance and the Law
All parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs. Most parents fulfil their legal obligation by registering their child at school.

Children must legally be in education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16. The Education and Skills Act 2008 increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning. Raising the participation age means young people must stay in some form of Education. Training or Employment until they finish the academic year when they turn 18.

School Attendance Order
Should parents fail to register their child at a school and do not make suitable alternative education arrangements, CCC may issue a School Attendance Order requiring them to register their child at a named school.

The Prosecution Process
In the first instance, early intervention will be carried out by the school but, if attendance does not improve a Penalty Notice may be issued. If a penalty notice has previously been issued and there is still no improvement parents may be invited to a formal PACE (**Police and Criminal Evidence)** interview held under caution at the local Police Station.

- Parents may arrange to have a legal representative at this interview
- Before the interview begins, they will be formally cautioned under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984; the aim of this will be to establish if an offence has been committed under the Education Act 1996
- A record of the PACE interview will be available and shared with the Legal Panel who will make a final decision on which legal intervention is appropriate to the case
- The decision made will be communicated in writing

Should CCC decide to take legal action, parents will be served with a summons to appear before a Magistrates' Court. They will receive a copy of the relevant paperwork. Or their case may be laid before the courts using a Single Justice Prosecution (SJP).

The case, if not SJP will be heard by the magistrates; a court usher will be available to help.
The court clerk will read the charge; parents will be asked to plead 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. Should they plead not guilty, the case will be adjourned for a trial at a future date. Should they plead guilty, the case will be heard immediately.

The court will first hear the evidence from the prosecution.

Parents, or their legal representative, will then be able to make either the case for the defence (if they have pleaded not guilty), or (if they have pleaded guilty) explain any reasons why their child has not attended school regularly.

The magistrates will then decide how they intend to deal with the case.

Should parents fail to attend, the court may decide to hear the case in their absence or consider issuing a warrant for their arrest.

Possible Outcomes
Should parents have pleaded guilty or be found guilty, the sentencing/disposal options available to the magistrates are:

- A fine of up to £2,500
- Conditional discharge; parents will be given a set amount of time in which to improve their child's attendance. Should they fail, CCC may bring a further prosecution against them and, if found guilty, they will be sentenced for both offences
- Absolute discharge; the case is proved but will not be subject to a penalty, although parents will receive a conviction
- Deferred sentence; a new court date will be arranged, during which time parents will be expected to have taken steps to improve their child's school attendance. Sentence will be passed at this new hearing
- Imprisonment; only for the more serious (aggravated) offence, can be for up to three months
- Parenting Order; the magistrates may order parents to attend parenting classes/engage with professionals allocated to the family or any order to support the family to improve the child's attendance and wellbeing.
- The court may also direct that CCC considers making an application for an Education Supervision Order. The LAAO may also decide on this option as an alternative to prosecution. Applications for ESOs are heard in the Family Court and, if granted, parents will be directed by the court to co-operate with CCC to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

What happens next:
Regardless of the outcome in court, parents will continue to receive support from the school.
Should the child return to school and attend regularly, no further legal action will be taken. If attendance fails to improve, the process will be repeated with the prospect of further court action and more serious consequences.

How we can help:
Parents should contact their child's school if they would like support.

Children missing in education: Please see the below for what to do if you are worried about a child missing in education.

- If you have concerns for a **child's welfare,** please call the Cambridgeshire County Council Contact Centre on 0345 045 5203.

- If you believe a child is **missing from education,** please email cme@cambridgeshire.gov.uk with details of the child. Please include date of birth if possible, their address and any background information. This referral will remain anonymous to the family. Please note that the Local Authority cannot respond with any outcome of the investigations.