

Attendance Policy

Cockfield Primary School



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Care, believe, achieve together!

Academic Year

2023/24

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Author of document:	Mrs Nicky Wright	Job role:	Headteacher
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Attendance key contact list

Please contact us **as soon as possible** if you feel that you need support with your child's attendance. We are here to help.

Name	Role	Contact details
Mrs Nicky Wright	Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	cockfield@durhamlearning.net 01388718263
Mrs Steph Harrison	Office Manager/Senior Mental Health Lead	cockfield@durhamlearning.net 01388718263
Mrs Sharon Lowrie	Governor with responsibility for Attendance	Via cockfield@durhamlearning.net

Our school attendance vision and ethos

Cockfield Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which **maximises opportunities** for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a **calm, orderly, safe, and supportive** environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. We also seek to make our pupil's **school days as fun-filled, engaging and stimulating** as possible so that our pupils are motivated to attend school in a regular and timely manner.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's **wellbeing** and their **education**, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn and the **resilience and commitment** which they need to function as successful members of society.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. Improving attendance is **everyone's business**. A concerted effort by all parties including; teaching and non-teaching staff, the Governing Body, the local authority, other local partners and our parents and/or carers) is needed on a **daily basis** to ensure that good attendance remains **a priority for all pupils**.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents/carers **to remove any barriers** to attendance by building **strong and trusting relationships** and working together to put the right support in place.

Please see details in this Government policy in relation to the expectations of all stakeholders in relation to children's school attendance:

[Attendance areas of responsibility](#)

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Child Protection, Anti-bullying, Behaviour

Alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school. Justifications for the policy and rewards for success are clear.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked. Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- We aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Attendance data

The school target for attendance is at least 96%. We use data (from the Government dashboards and FFT Aspire) on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to improve efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.

We will ensure that:

- We identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible.
- We will work with all parties to use this data, alongside our wider knowledge, to work together to plan actions of support.
- We will use our positive relationships and detailed knowledge of our families' context to help us to unpick attendance data with purpose and meaning.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

Our strength as a school is our close-knit community and the fact that we work together in times of success to build positive relationships which form the basis of our communication in times of challenge.

We will ensure that:

- Our staff know our children and their families well.
- The school will discuss attendance with pupils and parents/carers to identify successes and explore and understand barriers to good attendance.
- We will work together to build a plan which involves actions for children, their families, school staff and external agencies to address identified needs.
- Lines of communication between school and home will be open, honest and accessible.

4. Facilitate support

The school will strive to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers.

We will ensure that:

- The plans which are put in place are achievable and purposeful.
- School staff will support parents/carers and children in actioning the plan.
- Successes will be identified and celebrated.
- Support will be sought from the Attendance services in the LA if the need arises.
- Each case of poor attendance is different and will be dealt with on the individual circumstances.
- Situations where there are unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education will be considered in the context of a safeguarding risk alongside wider information known about the family/child
- We will support in whatever way is feasibly possible (including home visits and rewards in school) to help with understanding and removing barriers to attending.

5. Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond.

We will ensure that:

- Attendance needs and successes are analysed on a daily basis and fed back to parents/carers.
- Advice will be sought from the LA if needed.
- Support may be formalised through a parent contract, half termly meetings, enforcement by the Local Authority.
- The needs of children will be kept at the forefront of all decision making.
- Further review of needs and planned intervention may be needed.

6. Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

We will ensure that:

- Guidance from the LA will be followed.
- Guidance from the [Government](#) will be followed
- All other lines of enquiry and support will be offered before we reach this stage.
- The needs of children will be kept at the forefront of all decisions taken.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school:

- Announces the attendance of each house group during Celebration assembly.
- Rewards children in the house with the best attendance over each term with a Forest School special treat.
- Celebrates children who achieve 98%+ over a school year with access to a special 'Golden Ticket' Forest School session in July.
- Celebrates children who achieve 97-100% attendance over each half term with award of a badge.
- Shares individual attendance for the year each half termly via Dojo. Annual reports to parents/carers also contain a record of individual pupils' attendance.

Communication

It is vital that all parents/carers report absence to the office as soon as possible giving details about what the cause of this is in order to support our safeguarding procedures. **If pupils are absent then we need to account for their location and this takes staff time away from the pupils in school.**

If the absence is due to illness, this information can be communicate by speaking to a member of staff on the door in the morning, calling the office or sending a message via Class Dojo. **We need this information before 9.10am so that we know that all children's safety is accounted for.**

If a message is not shared with school staff before 9.10 then the following sequence of steps will be taken until contact with a parent/carers (or other family member from an emergency contact list) is reached:

1. Message sent to parents/carers via Class Dojo.
2. Phone call to parents/carers
3. Repeat phone call to parents/carers.
4. Home visit (when staffing levels allow).
5. If we cannot make contact then it may be necessary to request a welfare check to be completed by the Police.

Parents/carers must keep school staff updated regarding the child's illness and planned return to school.

If the absence is planned, then please inform the office in advance or fill in a holiday form if the absence is for this reason. Where possible medical appointments need to be made outside of school time. If this is not possible then the time missed from school needs to be minimised.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence. For this reason

we must hold at least 2 contact phone numbers for each pupil on our files and it is parents/carers' responsibility that these are kept up to date.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will be invited into school to discuss their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved. The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences. There are firm guidelines in place around the approval of absence from school. These are details in the Government's [Working Together to Support School Attendance](#).

Punctuality:

School gates open at 8.45 and children begin their learning from this time. The doors close at **8.55 am** and registers close at 9.15am.

Pupils who arrive late miss a key part of their school day and also disturb the learning of others.

Pupils who arrive after the doors have closed but before the registers close are marked as late (L) on the register.

If a child arrives after the registers close at 9.15am then their late mark is recorded as (U) **and this is classed as an unauthorised absence** (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

All children arriving late at school are asked the reason for their lateness and this is recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions a phone call/conversation is had with parents/carers about their child's punctuality. Support is offered to address any needs or barriers and the situation will continue to be monitored. If lateness continues then the details in this attendance policy will be followed.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such

as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

The school will account for the specific needs of pupils/pupil cohorts, be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/families who have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of the policy, consider obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school will work with Attendance colleagues from the LA to seek to make contact with you before reporting your child as 'Missing From Education' if you cannot be located as attending a school. At that point your child would be removed from our roll. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Frequently Asked Questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day. This guidance will help you to decide if your child is too ill to attend school

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school>

- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent. Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.