

# Crofton Junior School



## Attendance Policy

October 2020

## **Policy Rationale**

Crofton Junior School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and expect all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the learning process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage.

### **Pupils need to attend school regularly and punctually to benefit from their education.**

Good attendance and punctuality are central to raising standards and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential. Missing out on lessons and learning leaves children vulnerable to falling behind (DfE – Oct 2014).

### **The government expects schools to:**

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence and lateness

**The government expects parents to** perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and are punctual.

### **Objectives**

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To record and monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies
- To acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- To ensure a consistent approach to the management of absenteeism
- To ensure that all of our school communities understand and commit to our expectations and approach to attendance and punctuality

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Crofton Junior School holds firm the belief that children who miss school miss out. Lost learning through absence equates to lost progress through school.

The 1996 Education Act states, *'If a child is registered at school, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly'*. We therefore ask that parents and carers work with us to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually.

While some absences are inevitable, the school is committed to reducing absence down to the lowest possible levels. This can be achieved through a balance of rewarding good attendance and supporting families where attendance and punctuality is problematic. The school will be proactive in addressing poor attendance and will work collaboratively with the Education Welfare Officer to sanction families where support systems have failed to make significant improvements.

**At Crofton Junior School, we aim to have an attendance figure that is above national primary figures for all groups and cohorts.**

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

We aim to achieve above average attendance through:

- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Rewarding good attendance regularly
- Celebrating 100% attendance
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared regularly with all stakeholders

We aim to reduce absence (including persistent absence) and lateness by:

- Carrying out regular monitoring of attendance and punctuality rates
- Working collaboratively with the Education Welfare Officer to support families where attendance falls to or below 90%
- Providing written warnings for persistent absence and lateness, followed through by legal sanctions if necessary

## **3 REWARDING GOOD ATTENDANCE**

Children at Crofton Junior School are reminded of the importance of good attendance through celebrations and the curriculum.

Good attendance is rewarded in a number of ways across our school.

- The class winning the highest attendance and the most improved each week being recognised
- Children with 100% attendance over each week being recognised
- Children with 100% attendance each year being recognised

Each half term individual attendance is reported to parents and carers. Information regarding class attendance as well as the whole school attendance is shared within newsletters.

#### **4 THE LEGAL POWERS AND DUTIES THAT GOVERN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ARE CONTAINED IN:**

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if **a child of compulsory school age** fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's school attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the Local Authority in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Penalty Notices. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 also allow the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices on behalf of schools and Academies for unauthorised pupil absence from school for **children of compulsory school age**.

##### **4.1 COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE**

Compulsory school age is set out in section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and The Education (Start of Compulsory School Age) Order 1998. A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following his/her fifth birthday (or on his/her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. The term 'summer born' is used to

refer to children born from 1 April to 31 August. These children are not required to start school until a full school year after the point at which they could first have been admitted.

School admission authorities are required to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday, but flexibilities exist for children whose parents do not feel they are ready to begin school before they reach compulsory school age.

## **5 THE SCHOOL DAY**

The Law states that **children should arrive at school on time, every day.**

**The Start of the School Day.** School under normal circumstances opens its doors to children at 8:45am and registration is at 9:00am. All external classroom and cloakroom doors are closed and lessons begin. A staggered start to the day as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has been implemented from September 2020 and will remain in place until government guidance deems it not to be necessary. As a result, morning registration times are:

- Year 6 – 8:30am
- Year 5 – 8:40am
- Year 4 – 8:50am
- Year 3 – 9:00am

**The Start of the Afternoon Period.** School under normal circumstances begins the afternoon period with registration for Year 5 & 6 pupils at 12:50pm and Year 3 & 4 pupils at 1:05pm. Staggered sessions throughout the day as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has been implemented from September 2020 and will remain in place until government guidance deems it not to be necessary. As a result, afternoon registration times are:

- Year 6 – 12:30pm
- Year 5 – 12:40pm
- Year 4 – 12:50pm
- Year 3 – 1:00pm

**Children arriving after the end of Registration Period** enter school through the main door and report to the school office. Parents are required to record the time of arrival and the reason for lateness. **Arrivals within the 15-minute period after Registration** will be marked in the register as being **Late (L)**. This is recorded on our system but does not qualify as unauthorised absence. It does impact on progress however because it disrupts learning and routine.

**Arrivals more than 15 minutes after the close of Registration** will be recorded as **unauthorised absence (U)**. At the point of 5 U coded sessions (within a half term) a warning letter will be issued. This is notification that a Penalty Notice may be issued if persistent lateness after close of registration continues. Persistence lateness is defined as 10 U coded sessions within a term.

**Thirty minutes after close of Registration – School Response**. Children’s non-attendance at school, when no reason has been reported by parents, is a safeguarding matter. School will follow up all unexplained absences by contacting parents (First Day Response). Parents will be asked to provide clarification for the absence. If concerns arise, then the Headteacher or other designated safeguarding professional in school may refer matters to the Education Welfare Officer, Social Care Direct or the Police.

The school register is a legal document and as such is checked regularly by the Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer. Checks ensure registers are being maintained accurately and assess the reasons and incidence of any absence.

## **6 ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child’s education; it disrupts learning, routines and progress and should be avoided wherever possible.

### **6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES**

When a child is not going to be attending school parents/carers are to:

- Inform school that their child will not be attending, stating the reason for the absence and when they are expected to return. The reasons for the absence are recorded on the school management information system.

The school will:

- Follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence after 9:30am.
- Discuss with the Education Welfare Officer at the point of 6 consecutive sessions of absence where no reasonable explanation is provided (ie 3 days' absence).
- After 20 days' absence without contact, report as Child Missing from Education (CME) to the Local Authority, which could result in the school place being withdrawn.

The school may also:

- Conduct home visits.
- Contact the Police and ask them to carry out a Welfare check on an absent pupil at any point during an absence if there are any Safeguarding concerns for the pupil.
- Ask for evidence to support any absence due to illness if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the pupil is off regularly with the same illness
- Write to parents/carers stating the concerns regarding attendance/punctuality.
- Ask parents/carers to meet with the Headteacher to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern.
- Refer the pupil to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) where there is a regular problem with regard to unauthorised absences.

## 6.2 AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or other circumstances and these can be classed as an Authorised Absence at the discretion of the Headteacher.

### 6.2.1 ILLNESS

Children who are reported as absent through illness are marked with an 'I' code.

### 6.2.2 MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Wherever possible we request that dental and medical appointments are made at the end of the school day or during the school holidays. Where this is not possible, parents are required to verify the appointments at the school office with an appointment card/letter. If verification is not provided the absence will not be authorised. Children should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time for the appointment. Children who are reported as absent because they are attending a medical appointment are marked with an 'M' code.

### 6.2.3 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Absence due to religious observance is authorised absence. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Children who are reported as absent due to religious observance are marked with an 'R' code.

## 6.3 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Unauthorised absence is that which is not permissible in Law, e.g. birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The School will monitor and discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Officer and further action may be agreed.

### 6.3.1 TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

In line with the Government's amendments to the Education Regulations 2006, the Headteacher will not grant leave of absence for family holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **This applies to all children of compulsory school age.** In order to enforce this decision in the school, in partnership with National Government guidelines and Local Governing Bodies, school has agreed to the issuing of Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school during term time for holidays without permission. Parents are required to write to the Headteacher giving a reason and requesting permission for leave of absence for their child. Parents/carers will be notified in writing of the Headteacher's decision and of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice should the unauthorised term time holiday go ahead. Children who are absent from school during term time because of a holiday will be marked with a 'G' code (family holiday not authorised) on the school registration system.

### 6.3.2 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

School recognises exceptional circumstances as those relating to:

- **Families in crisis; such as a terminal illness within the immediate family.**
- **Pre and post operational leave for armed forces families.**

Should parents/carers feel that exceptional circumstance apply, they should write to request this to the Headteacher. Decisions are at the Headteacher's discretion following guidelines.

## **7 Covid-19**

We recognise that parents or pupils may display anxieties about returning to school as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In such cases, the absence will be unauthorised; however, we will initially take a supportive approach in order to enable the pupil to attend school normally. If the absence continues over a longer period of time, school may instruct for a penalty notice to be issued.

## **8 PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

Persistent absence is when a pupil misses 10% or more of school **for any reason** and where attendance falls below 90%. Our school works with the Education Welfare Officer to ensure all pupil attendance data is monitored regularly and action taken to reduce persistent absence. Where a child's absence is due to known illness or exceptional circumstances it will be monitored closely.

If absence is not for one of these reasons a written warning will be issued. Parents/carers will be required to show improvement within the next four school weeks.

If there is no improvement then a second letter will be issued requesting the parent/carer make an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons for the persistent absence. At this stage support will be offered and targets for improvement set.

If there is still no improvement within the next two school weeks, parents/ carers will be notified that the matter has been referred to the Education Welfare Officer who will then follow up the case; this leaves parents/carers at risk of legal action and/or a Penalty Notice.

## **9 PENALTY NOTICE**

Penalty Notices can be issued to address unauthorised absence, which may include term time holidays and poor punctuality. ***On 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018, the Governing Body agreed to the issuing of penalty notices by the Local Authority from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018.*** A Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority/Education Welfare Officer at the point which 10 sessions (half days) are recorded as unauthorised absence within a school term. The cost of the penalty notice is £60 per

child, per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. This rises to £120 per child per parent between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty within 28 days will result in the matter being brought before the Magistrates court and could result in a criminal conviction.

## 10 KEEPING TRACK OF ATTENDANCE

To help parents/carers keep track of attendance the school issues an attendance summary for each pupil every half term. The summary is colour coded to indicate the following:

<b>Outstanding attendance</b> <b>Blue: 98%-100%</b>	<b>The best chance of success.</b>
<b>Good attendance</b> <b>Green: 95% – 97.9%</b>	
<b>Worrying attendance</b> <b>Amber: 90% - 94.9%</b>	<b>Less chance of success because of periods of lost learning time.</b> <b>Makes it harder to progress well.</b>
<b>Serious Concerns attendance Red: below 90% about</b>	<b>Significant lost learning time.</b>

## 11 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CROFTON JUNIOR SCHOOL:

- a. Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- b. Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- c. Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- d. Invite parents/carers into school to discuss where there is no improvement.
- e. Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWO particularly.

- f. Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- g. Provide attendance data for parents.
- h. Promote attendance at all levels – within our schools, our community, regionally and nationally.
- i. Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

#### PARENTS/CARERS

- j. Ensure pupils arrive at school on time every day and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- k. Contact the school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable.
- l. Provide appointment cards to support medical absence.
- m. Avoid term time holidays, and minimise school time appointments.

#### THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

- n. The EWO will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fast Track to Attendance Programme; and at whole school level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- o. The EWO will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- p. EWO will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education, Child Employment and Licensing.
- q. EWO will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- r. EWO will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- s. EWO will support the school with networking and training events and with School Audits and Action Plans.

#### EVALUATION AND REVIEW

School will review this policy annually and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice.

Produced by	Paul Birdsall	October 2020
Agreed by	Governing Body	October 2020
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