

Commonswood Primary & Nursery School Attendance Policy



Approved by Governors: Summer 2024

Next Review: Annual

Introduction

Promoting regular school attendance is a key component in the Government's strategy to raise educational standards. An effective School Attendance Policy promotes regular school attendance, punctuality and contributes to learning and achievement.

This policy has been written using **legal requirements of attendance** and the Local Authority policy on school attendance.

The Aims of Commonswood Primary & Nursery School Attendance Policy are to:

- Set out requirements and expectations for school attendance.
- Improve children's outcomes.
- Create a culture in which good attendance and punctuality is valued.
- Be consistent in implementation, both in terms of rewards and sanctions
- Value the individual and be socially and educationally inclusive.
- Support families in improving attendance.

Statement of Intent

At Commonswood Primary & Nursery School, we want the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance is vital in helping the children in this school community to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality, leading to even higher standards of attainment **and better life chances**.

Commonswood School aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Target Setting

This school sets targets in accordance with Statutory Guidance and department advice 2006 No. 58 – The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2006. The target absence from school is less than 3%. The annual target is the total absences expected in the school year, expressed as a percentage of the total possible attendance by pupils in years 1-6 at the school.

Expectations

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between school, parents and pupils. All these groups need to understand the expectations which the policy makes of them.

The expectations for school:

- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School provides a safe learning environment.
- The school ensures that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis.

- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School monitors attendance and punctuality and acts swiftly to address attendance concerns.
- The school works with parents to improve attendance for children from Nursery to Year 6.
- Because of their young carer responsibilities at home, being a young carer may have an adverse effect on their access to education and attainment which could potentially result in erratic or poor school attendance and/or punctuality. School acknowledges that young carers may need extra support to ensure they have equal access to education. The designated school lead will offer support to the young carer and their family.

Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

The expectations of parents include:

Parents should: -

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed with appropriate resources (eg PE kit, books and lunch box) and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This must be done on each day of absence by 9.15am. They should also provide an explanation for the absence.
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- avoid taking holidays during term time
- provide, in advance, a written request for absence making it clear why the absence is an exceptional, unrepeatable circumstance.
- ensure that the school are informed of any changes of contact details
- provide at least 2 contact numbers

Safeguarding procedures are followed when notification of absence is not received.

The expectations of pupils include:

- All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually
- All pupils are expected to follow school rules

Registration

- Registers are called at 8.40am and 1.00pm. Registers close when the last name is called.
- Children arriving after 8.40am are deemed to be late
- Electronic registers are marked consistently by staff according to LA/DfE'S expectations.
- Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.30am unless attending the school's Breakfast Club.
- Registers for Nursery Children are called at 8.30am and 12.30am.

Lateness

- Any pupil arriving after 8.40am should report to the school office. Parents must sign their children in stating the reason for lateness.
- A record of lateness is recorded.
- Lateness after 9.10am will be marked as unauthorised absence (as per the Local Authority guidance)
- Parent(s) whose children are regularly late for school (more than twice in a term), are contacted by a member of school staff who will work with the parent(s) to bring about a rapid improvement in punctuality.

Absences

- Notification must be provided for all absences from school
- Absences can only be authorised by the headteacher or deputy headteacher
- The Headteacher may decide not to authorise absence, even when a reason is provided, if this forms a pattern of non-attendance.

Leaving and returning to School during School Day

- Pupils must be signed in and out by Parents/Carers when pupils leave or return to school during the school day.
- Routine appointments should take place outside the school day.

Following up Absence

- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School monitors attendance and follows up all absences for children aged 3 to 11
- Safeguarding measures will be taken to establish the whereabouts of a child if no notification is received

Term Time Holidays

- In line with the law, Commonswood Primary & Nursery School does not authorise term time holidays unless there are genuinely exceptional unrepeatable reasons.

Penalty Notices

- At Commonswood Primary & Nursery School we expect parents to work with us to address attendance problems. Persistent failure to send children to school is a clear sign of neglect. If a pupil has more than 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in two consecutive terms (including unauthorised holidays) the headteacher may ask the LA to issue a Penalty Notice in accordance with current regulations following one warning letter. The penalty is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. Applications to issue a penalty notice must be received within 10 days of the final absence cited to ensure the penalty notice is issued quickly. If the penalty is not paid within 42 days, the LA may prosecute the parents for their child's irregular attendance.

Due consideration will be made to work with families in the event of emotionally based school avoidance. Intervention strategies will be put into place to support the child and family. In line with the guidance, monitoring of attendance will include those whose attendance is below 94%.

Authorising Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Rewards

Commonswood Primary & Nursery School rewards good attendance weekly for cohorts of children from Y1 – Y6 and annually for individuals.

Working with the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAO)

- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School works in partnership with the allocated LAO and Family Support Worker to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.
- Commonswood School works with individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance when it falls below 94%, and requests medical evidence when absences fall below 94% to avoid attendance dropping below the benchmark for persistent absenteeism. This follows the advice from the Local Authority.
- Failure to provide medical evidence results in absences being unauthorised.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Section 12 requires schools to inform the LA of any pupils who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive day's absence without the school's permission.

Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

Breach letters are sent to parents at the following the first 2 unauthorised absences wherever possible. This gives parents the best opportunity to improve their child's attendance and avoid fines.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example, it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It is particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action.

The Use of Legal Action

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist, then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the LAAO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored.
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted.
- the LAAO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school.

Publication of Information

- Parents, pupils, staff and governors are informed of whole school attendance issues and statistics on a regular basis.
- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School shares information on individual pupils' attendance with parents, pupils and staff and this data is included with the annual report.
- Attendance rates are reported to Governors termly.

This policy is included in the Information for New Parents.

Links to other policies/Guidance

- ISL Integrated Services for Learning Herts County Council Guidance document
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Behaviour and Antbullying Policy
- Access to Education for children and young people unable to attend school for medical reasons.
- Anti-bribery Policy
- Policy for Children Looked After

- Children Missing Education
- Child Protection Policy
- Young Carers policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Home/School Agreement
- Aims & Values.
- Practice Guidance Drop off and Collection of children successfully.
- Accessibility Plan
- Hertfordshire Code of Conduct – Penalty notices
- Local Authority Policy on School Attendance
- SEND policy.
- SEND Code of Practice
- ISL Guidance for Schools: Emotionally Based School Avoidance: executive Summary March 2021