



Overdale Junior School

Attendance Policy

April 2014

1. Introduction

The school has a major role in monitoring levels of attendance and punctuality and in creating the appropriate climate in the school to foster regular attendance and excellent timekeeping, all of which the school believes promotes a basis for each child to achieve their potential.

2. Attendance

We take our responsibilities seriously and carefully record all absences and lateness.

Parents are asked to notify the school on the first day of any absence, either by personal call, by email, by telephone message or by sending a note with another child. If the school has not been notified of an absence by 9.30am the school secretary will text or telephone to confirm that the child concerned is safe with a responsible adult.

Parents are requested to confirm absences **in writing**, giving details of reason and date(s). Regulations state that if the school is not informed by parents of visits to the doctor, dentist, illness, holidays *etc.* then these absences automatically become unauthorised. It is therefore essential that any reasons for absence (even short absences) be given **in writing**.

The school keeps records of all authorised and unauthorised absences; these are published annually in the Governors' reports, but may also be published in the school newsletter.

The Headteacher and all members of staff monitor attendance closely. Any irregular attendances, or children who are away from school for more than a week through illness or hospital attendance, are brought to the attention of the Headteacher and also are discussed with the LA Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who visits the school termly. The school's Education Welfare Officer is a key partner in supporting the school and the regular meetings with the Headteacher enable the school to seek further advice and guidance in this area.

Following these discussions, all children who are identified as a concern in terms of attendance are noted by the Headteacher; these are usually children with attendance levels less than 95%. The Headteacher, after further consultation with the relevant member of teaching staff or SMT (Senior Management Team), will make contact with the parents/carers of the child/children concerned to request an informal meeting to see how the school can support them in improving attendance.

The school is very aware that issues of attendance are sometimes due to factors beyond the control of parents/carers, such as long term illness or hospitalisation, and the school is committed to working with parents to limit the impact of these events on the development of individual children. However, where attendance is due to factors within the control of parents/carers the school will seek to establish an agreed plan of action to improve patterns of attendance. This plan of action will be shared with the school's EWO and the impact of the plan closely monitored.

Should this plan not have the desired impact or if, during discussions with parents/carers, the Headteacher identifies wider issues of concern, then the process will be formalised by either the Headteacher wanting to outline the concerns and the required action needed or by asking the Education Welfare Officer to contact or write to parents. Where it is deemed appropriate to refer a

problem to the Education Welfare Officer, a referral form is completed giving details of the nature of the problem, any difficulties and action already taken by the school.

At all times, the school and EWO will seek to work together with parents to respond to the issues identified. In certain circumstances, other agencies such as the school doctor/nurse may be called on to support the process.

The school is committed to ensuring that parents and carers are fully involved and informed about every stage of these processes. Organisations concerned with issues of attendance will not contact parents/carers before the school has raised the issue of concern itself, unless there are extreme circumstances and it is judged that this would be in the child's best interest. This approach has been very successful in helping the school and parents to work together to ensure that the welfare and development of all children in our care is supported.

3. Punctuality and Collection

Parents are requested to ensure their child arrives on time for school as poor attendance and lateness disrupt the education of the individual and other members of the class.

Children arriving late enter the school *via* the front entrance. The school receptionist notes down in the late book the names of any latecomers, date and time of arrival and any reason given for lateness. This also ensures an accurate record in case of fire or other emergencies on the premises. The book is kept in the school office and the office staff will make an entry should a parent bring their child into school outside the normal school times.

The class teacher records lateness in the class register.

On the occasions when the school has been informed in advance of late arrival due to a doctor, dental or hospital appointment for example, the reason is recorded by the office staff on a form in the class register, to inform the class teacher why a child is absent.

The Headteacher is made aware of any child who is persistently recorded as late in the late book within a half term/termly period. Parents are contacted in person, by telephone or letter to discuss the school's policy on this matter. Persistent lateness will result in parents being invited to discuss the reasons with the Headteacher and any further lateness may lead to a meeting with the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors, and may result in a referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

A record is also kept in the school office of any children who are collected late at the end of the school day at 3.20pm. After approximately 10 minutes a telephone call is made to parents/carers to determine if there is a problem or how quickly the child can be collected.

In the event that a child is regularly late in being collected from school at the end of the school day, the class teacher or Headteacher will contact parents to request a meeting to discuss the situation. Teaching staff have a wide range of commitments after the end of school teaching day and it is not their role to supervise children on a regular basis. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child is collected promptly from school, and the school will actively promote this.

A child who is still persistently collected late from school will be referred to the EWO who will advise the school of the appropriate action to take.

4. Family Holidays in School Time

The school does not permit the taking of holidays of any kind in school time.

Parents seeking permission to take a child out of school for other reasons should apply to the school in writing stating the reasons and dates for withdrawing their child from school.

The Headteacher will consider each case in light of the individual circumstances and may request a meeting with the parents/carers.

The Department for Education gives the Headteacher/Governors the power to grant leave of absence from school. **However, this is not a right and will only be granted for exceptional reasons.** This will **not** include **family holidays**, theatre visits, dance shows, outings with family members *etc.* Exceptional reasons will be considered at the discretion of the Headteacher once a letter has been received. If, however, you do take your child out of school when permission has not been granted you will be fined.

Children are at school for only 190 days out of the 365 days in the year. Please arrange holidays during the 175 days when they are not at school.

Parents will be notified *via* letter on the outcome of their leave of absence request.

A Penalty Notice (a £60 fine per parent per child) may, and usually will, be issued by the Education Welfare Service where a parent takes a child away for a period of 5 days or more during term time and has not requested permission, or permission has been refused by the school, or the child does not return on the agreed date.

Where a child has had 2 periods of unauthorised leave for which the parent(s) has/have been issued with a Penalty Notice (for each occasion), on the third such occasion no Penalty Notice will be issued and the parent(s) will be taken straight to Court by the Education Welfare Service under the higher level aggravated offence.

This means that the parent may be subject to a much more severe penalty, i.e. a maximum fine of up to £2,500, or 3 months in custody, or a community order which may involve them doing a number of hours of unpaid work.

In a very multi-cultural city like Leicester we recognise that occasionally some of the children may be involved in extended family visits to the Caribbean, Africa, India and parts of Asia. We request that such holidays are arranged around a normal school break, such as Christmas, Easter or a half term. It is possible in this way to arrange a holiday without taking a holiday in term time.

Unauthorised absence may result in a penalty notice (issued by the Education Welfare Officer) and a fine, or can in some circumstances lead to a child being taken off the school roll and require them to seek a new place.

It is a requirement in *The Educational School Attendance Targets (England) Regulations* that "...the Governing Body shall set an (attendance) target and submit it to the local education authority."

The school's current target for pupil attendance is 96.5%, which is very high and reflects the importance that the school and parents attach to regular attendance.

Date of issue: April 2014

Date of review: April 2015

Signed (Headteacher) Date

Signed (Chair of Governors) Date

APPENDIX 1: To be sent out to parents at the beginning of a new academic year to remind them of our Attendance Policy.

Dear Parents/Carers

As we start a new school year I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of important information regarding your child's attendance at school and the procedures for notifying us when your child is absent. These procedures enable us to carry out our duty of care in terms of ensuring that all children attend school regularly, as well as providing a framework for parents and carers so that you are clear what you need to do in each instance.

Regular and prompt attendance is essential if we are to enable all children to make the most of the educational opportunities provided by the school and we are committed to working in partnership with all parents and carers to ensure that this happens.

The following procedures are in place to support this process.

Absence and Lateness

If for any reason your child is unable to attend school on a given day please notify the school on the first day of any absence, either in person, by email, by telephone message. If there are any concerns about a child's absence from school, a text or phone call will be made to the home by us to confirm that the child is safe.

In all cases parents are requested to confirm absences in writing, giving details of the reason and date(s). Regulations state that if the school is not informed by parents of visits to the doctor, dentist, illness, holidays *etc.* then these absences automatically become unauthorised. It is therefore essential that any reasons for absence (even short absences) be given in writing.

Children arriving late enter the school *via* the front entrance. The school receptionist notes down in the late book the names of any latecomers, date and time of arrival and any reason given for lateness. The class teacher records lateness in the class register. The Headteacher is made aware of any child who is persistently recorded as late in the late book within a half term/termly period.

Family Holidays in School Time

The school does not permit the taking of holidays in school time. Parents seeking permission to take a child out of school for other reasons should apply in writing stating the reason and dates for their child's leave of absence. **All requests for leave of absence must be requested in writing and not through any other means.** The outcome of the application for leave of absence will be communicated in writing to the family.

The Headteacher will consider each case in light of the individual circumstances and may request a meeting with the parents/carers.

The Department for Education gives the Headteacher/Governors the power to grant leave of absence from school. **However, this is not a right and will only be granted for exceptional reasons.** This will **not** include family holidays, theatre visits, dance shows, outings with family members *etc.* Exceptional reasons will include examinations, visits to schools, funerals of close family members, religious observance, emergency family problems *etc.*

Children are at school for only 190 days out of the 365 days in the year. Please arrange holidays during the 175 days when they are not at school.

Please note a Penalty Notice (a £60 fine per parent per child) **may, and usually will,** be issued by the Education Welfare Service where a parent takes a child away for a period of 5 days or more

during term time and has not requested permission, or permission is refused by the school, or the child does not return on the agreed date.

Where a child has had 2 periods of unauthorised leave for which the parent(s) has/have been issued with a Penalty Notice for each occasion, on the third such occasion no Penalty Notice will be issued and the parent(s) will be taken straight to Court by the Education Welfare Service under the higher level aggravated offence. This means that the parent may be subject to a much more severe penalty, i.e. a maximum fine of up to £2,500 or 3 months in custody, or a community order which may involve them doing a number of hours of unpaid work.