

Stamfordham Primary School Attendance Policy

Staff and Governors expect full and punctual attendance from all pupils.

Principles

As parents of registered pupils, you have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

You are responsible, by law, for your child's full attendance at school. Full attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the only way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available; every lesson matters. There may be occasions when your child has to miss school – for example if he or she is unwell. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time.

Term-time holiday

The current regulations state that head teachers can grant requests from parents to take their child on family holiday during term time in "special" circumstances. The Government has accepted Charlie Taylor's recommendation that changes are made to the pupil registration regulations to strengthen the rules around term time holidays.

Amendments to the regulations now remove references to 'family holiday' and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that schools 'may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'.

Head teachers should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and
For which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school

unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) from the LA. She will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, this officer can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Parents or children may wish to contact the EWOs themselves to ask for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority at Morpeth County Hall 01670 533000.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Illness and Medical Appointments

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence by 10.00 am. When the pupil returns, he or she must bring a written note, signed by the parent for each period of absence. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested.

Compassionate Leave and Emergencies

In exceptional circumstances, the Head Teacher may authorise other brief absences on compassionate grounds. Each case will be considered on its merits, and whenever possible, permission should be requested in advance, in writing.

If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation for the absence by 10.00 am, the school will contact the parent by telephone in the first instance.

Extended leave of absence

It is not normally appropriate for the Head Teacher to authorise pupil absence for holidays in term time. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting, family tragedy), leave of absence may be requested by parents in writing to the Head Teacher, who will consider every application on its merits. Permission is not automatic, and if granted, pupils will be expected to catch up missed work at home on their return.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill for pupils to learn. Late arrival disrupts the whole class. You are expected to ensure that pupils are present in the school yard by 8.55am. Pupils arriving after 9.15 am will be recorded as late. Pupils arriving after 10.00am will be recorded as absent.

Reviewed: July 2023

Next Review :July 2025