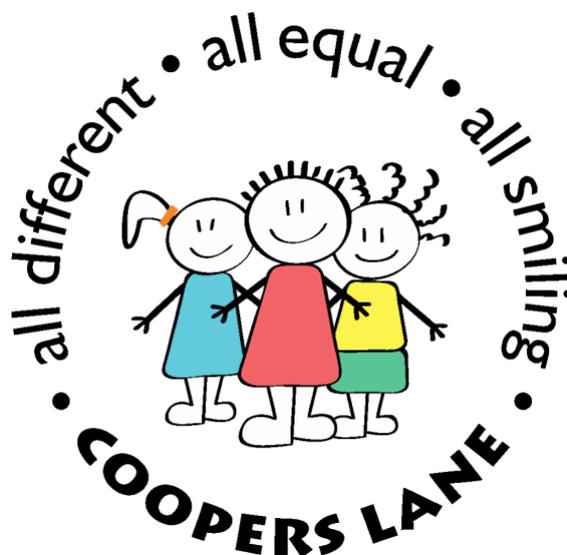


# Coopers Lane Primary School



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## Attendance Policy

# A Coopers Lane Learner...



## Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Coopers Lane Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head Teacher and governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning - children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age-related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance Welfare Officer so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents, carers and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, carers, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## Definitions

### Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give details of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Attendance Welfare Officer any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns with the Senior Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted in the register
- Discussing attendance issues at Academic Review evenings where necessary

## Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance and reporting to the governing body
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the Attendance Welfare Officer
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Attendance Welfare Officer
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

## Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents/carers regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head Teacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

## Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## Registration

All the school doors open at 8.30am, the whistle is blown at 8.40am. School starts promptly at 8.45am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am and by 1.30pm or 1.40pm for Year 4 & 6. These registers are then sent electronically to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using Scholarpack software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 8.45am the Learning Mentors will be at the gate from 8.45am until 9.00am issuing late slips. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8.50am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late. This is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Pupils who arrive at 9.00am will need to report to the school office. Any child who arrives for school later than 9.15am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **Absence**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. If your child is unwell, we need to know the nature of the illness, so please give further explanation. Any medical absence exceeding three days would need medical evidence supplied to the school. This could include a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents /carers with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

In order to minimise the disruption to a child's education, whenever possible all medical and dental appointments should be made outside school hours.

## **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff will check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. Any vulnerable children or children in Year 5 or 6 who have permission to walk to school on their own will be prioritised and their parents will be contacted first.

## **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## Parental Request for Absence from School for Term Time Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government **abolished** the right of Head Teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to five days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Head Teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

## Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least **95%**.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Attendance Welfare Officer.

The Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO) will issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents where there has been a referral to AWO from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Attendance Welfare Officer visits once a month to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%). They work with the school to improve attendance and may issue Fixed Penalty Notices if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

## School Attendance and the Law - Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application has been made in advance and the Head Teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers **no longer** have the discretion to authorise up to five days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the Head Teacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused. Requests must be made on the School's official 'Absence Request Form', which is available from school, or can be downloaded from the School Website: [www.cooperslane.lewisham.sch.uk](http://www.cooperslane.lewisham.sch.uk)

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to **each** parent per child.

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice, (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions (a session is counted as either a morning or an afternoon attendance mark) or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

A Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or when an excluded pupil is found in a public place without good reason.

Fixed Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444, Education Act 1996 or Section 36, the Children's Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

Under Sec 105(1) Education and Inspections Act 2006, an FPN can be issued for an offence under Section 103(3) in the case of an excluded pupil being present in a public place during school hours on a school day. The Attendance and Welfare Service delivers this responsibility.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued as a result of a pupil being stopped by Truancy patrol officers or as the result of a referral having been made to the Education Welfare Officer as part of the school's process to address poor attendance patterns when procedures implemented are not met by the parent/carer and attendance remains poor. Fixed Penalty Notices may also be issued for unauthorised leave (holidays) taken during term time.

### Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the Scholarpack attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Head Teacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

### Rewards for Good Attendance

Children with **97%+** attendance, receive a special attendance certificate, signed by the Head Teacher to take home and keep. Certificates are presented each term, to reward those who achieve excellent attendance. **Pupils achieving 100% attendance and 6 or fewer lates for the whole school year are eligible for the end of year reward.**

### Weekly School Newsletter

Each week, the school newsletter is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It regularly includes sections reminding parents of our school attendance target and what that means in terms of number of days absent. It also includes information about any initiatives, which the school is using, to promote attendance and punctuality.

### Evaluation and Review

The school has a legal duty to publish its attendance figures to parents and to promote good attendance.

Equally, parents have a legal duty to make sure their children attend school.

Coopers Lane School is committed to working with parents to ensure that the highest level of attendance and punctuality is achieved for all its pupils.

This Policy will be reviewed annually, and will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies as required.

## Appendix 1 - ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

(exceptional circumstances only)

To: Head Teacher of Coopers Lane Primary School

I wish to apply to have an 'unavoidable' absence authorised for:

Child's name ..... Class/Year .....

Date from ..... date to .....(inclusive)

Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.

| Office             |                                     |              |   |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Date term received | No of school days absence requested | % Attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> Absence unauthorised |
|                    |                                     |              | Signed<br><br>_____<br>Head Teacher           |

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This portion to be returned to parents/carers

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Local Authority if your child's attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable,

Pupil(s) name(s) & Class .....

- Absence authorised from .....to ..... (Inclusive)
- Absence unauthorised current attendance ..... % as of ...../...../20.....

Signed ..... (Head Teacher) Date .....

**NOTES TO PARENTS/CARERS:** The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on satisfactory attendance up to the date covered by this request.

Warning: If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable to a Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.