COALWAY COMMUNITY INFANT SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all those concerned understand the schools' attendance procedures, their roles and responsibilities and the importance of all pupils' regular attendance at school.

Good attendance is a key part of ensuring improved attainment and future life outcomes. Attendance is central to social inclusion and has a major impact on a child's future life opportunities. Attendance, attainment and attitude are key to raising standards and improving the aspirations and life chances for all children and young people. Therefore the Coalway Schools place great importance on the promotion of good attendance.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that children attend school rests with their parents/carers. Promoting attendance and tackling non-attendance is the responsibility of schools and the Local Authority. All school staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents in helping them to meet their legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. The school will also work with the Local Authority and multi-agency partners to this end and to ensure that non-attendance is tackled robustly.

All pupils on roll should receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each child to realise his/her true potential. At Coalway, we strive to promote this good attendance by developing positive attitudes towards school. Therefore, we aim to make our schools a happy and rewarding experience for all children and provide a welcoming, caring, safe environment whereby each member of the school community feels fully included. Learning is personalised to create an environment where pupils want to and can engage.

The Coalway Schools have established effective procedures and systems of communication and support with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to promote good attendance for all pupils. Incentives and rewards are used to recognize those children whose attendance is very good as well as the efforts of pupils/families striving to improve their attendance or timekeeping. Those parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality will be challenged as good attendance is key to good attainment.

Attendance Procedures

The Coalway Schools' Attendance Procedures are as follows:

Recording Attendance

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing Board is responsible for making sure that the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. Attendance records are therefore taken twice a day, at the beginning of the morning and the afternoon sessions.

Each pupil's attendance is monitored by the school. Parents will receive regular updates about their child's attendance throughout each academic year via printouts taken from these registers. All registers are recorded according to Government guidelines following the

appropriate legal coding system provided by the Local Authority and Government. Registers indicate whether a pupil's absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Categorizing Absence – Authorised or Unauthorised

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. The following reasons for absence are regarded as authorised:-

    - Sickness/illness (where a parent has notified the school via telephone or in writing, or provided a medical note to explain the absence.)
    - Medical/dental appointments that cannot take place out of school hours (evidence may be requested by the school).
    - Day of religious observance.
    - Family bereavement or attendance at a family funeral.
    - Exclusion
    - Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause, agreed beforehand.

Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences notified by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are absences that the school considers do not meet the above criteria and for which no 'leave' has been given. These may include:-

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g. to go shopping during school hours/a child's or family member's birthday/looking after brother or sister).
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Family holiday taken without authorisation from the Head Teacher.
- Absences with no reason given (see above criteria).
- Late arrival at school i.e. after registration has closed.

Punctuality

It is important that every child arrives promptly, every day. Pupils should enter the school with their teachers at 8.50 am, the register will then be taken and all pupils should be ready to start lessons at 9.00 am.

Any parent (or in the case of Juniors, any child) who is later than the 9.00 am start will be required to use the main entrance door and register their lateness, with a reason, at the School Office.

All lateness is carefully monitored by the school, parents will be contacted if punctuality becomes a concern and referrals will be made to the Local Authority for persistent lateness.

Term Time Holidays

From 1 September 2013 legislation prohibits any school from authorising leave of absence for holidays except in exceptional circumstances. Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013.

The Amendments state that **Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence for holiday during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. There will be no entitlement to any leave of absence for a holiday during term time.

Parents are notified of term dates and Inset days well in advance of the start of each academic year to ensure that holidays are booked outside of school term time (dates available on the schools' websites). The Schools are in session for 38 weeks per year, leaving opportunities to take pupils on holiday during the remaining 14 weeks.

'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria

It is not possible to define all 'exceptional circumstances' therefore the circumstances of each holiday application will be taken into account on an individual basis.

However, at Coalway examples of what might be considered 'exceptional circumstances' are:

- Service personnel returning from or scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays i.e. in some cases a parent's employer might restrict holidays to a certain time period. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the employer.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided by qualified professionals such as a Doctor.
- 'Exceptional Occasions' may also be considered e.g. attending the wedding of an immediate family member or the birth of a sibling, however, a family member's birthday would not.

The fact that a holiday is cheaper during term time is not recognised as an 'exceptional circumstance'.

The Head Teacher will also look very carefully at a child's previous attendance record when making a decision regarding term time absence. If there are any concerns, for example should the child's attendance rate be below 90%, it is highly unlikely that the Head Teacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

No holiday requests will be granted during any period of external examinations (during May for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, during June for Year 1 pupils – please check with the schools) even where there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

An application for leave of absence for a holiday should always be made in writing to the Head Teacher well in advance. The 'exceptional circumstances' to explain why the holiday must be taken should be clearly stated and supporting evidence included. The Head Teacher will decide whether the leave of absence will be authorised and will contact the parent to inform them of the outcome.

Parents should understand that the school may decide to ask the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty fine if an unauthorised holiday is taken, particularly if this results in a child's attendance falling below 90% or where a previously unauthorised holiday has been taken. The fixed penalty fine will be issued, collected and kept by the Local Authority not the school.

Informing the School of Absence

Any absence from school during term time should be reported to the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence by telephone or letter, preferably by 10.00 am. Alternatively, a letter may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence if a child has a medical appointment.

If there is a concern about a child's absence, Class Teachers will contact the School Office immediately for further investigation and clarification.

As part of our daily attendance procedures, School Office Staff may telephone or text parents to ascertain a reason for absence during the morning of the first day of absence.

Long Term Absence - When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home to enable the child to keep up with school work if well enough to do so.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school. Upon their return to school, staff will provide additional support as necessary to help a pupil's reintegration.

Monitoring of Attendance

The School regularly monitors all pupils' attendance, absence and punctuality on an individual basis to ensure good attendance. If there is a concern about a child's attendance, this will be communicated to parents and guidance and support offered. The school may seek external support from other agencies as part of this process including the Local Authority. The school will do all it can to support parents in achieving good attendance for their children, however, if a pupil's attendance or punctuality rate remains a concern, the school may refer to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice. The Department for Education 'persistent absence rate' is 90% and all parents of pupils whose attendance falls below this level without valid medical reasons, will be closely monitored/referred to the Local Authority. (Parents may find further information on Penalty Notices on the Local Authority/Department for Education website.)

Parents will receive regular updates on their child's attendance and punctuality via Attendance Printouts sent out during the year and in their child's annual report at the end of the academic year.

The Governing Board monitors overall attendance rates, patterns and procedures through regular updates from the Head Teacher at Governing Board meetings. The Governing Board reviews the school's procedures and support in the light of attendance figures and outcomes of its attendance reviews.

The school is legally required to send details of individual pupils' attendance to the Local Authority and Department for Education each academic year, as they also routinely monitor all schools' attendance figures nationally. Ofsted will also review pupils' attendance as part of the School Inspection Process.

Repeated Unauthorised Absences

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, this will be discussed with the parents or guardians. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact or meet with parents/carers and seek to ensure that they understand the seriousness of the situation and how to improve their child's attendance.

The Governors, supported by the Local Authority, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis and on time.

Rewards for Good Attendance

Each school rewards excellent attendance termly. This is done in different ways across both schools. Pupils' good attendance is celebrated regularly at special assemblies throughout the year and through stickers, rewards, letters to parents and special incentives (according to age). Rewards specific to each school include:-

- Each month the class with the best attendance record receives the Coalway Attendance Cup at a whole school assembly (Junior).
- The monthly winning class is shown on the school's attendance board (Junior).
- At the end of each term, children with a 100% attendance record receive a 100% certificate (Infant and Junior).
- The list of 100% attendees for each term is displayed on the school's' attendance board (Infant and Junior).
- At the end of each school year there is a raffle, with a special prize, for those children who have received 100% attendance in any term (one ticket for 100% attendance in one term, two tickets for 100% attendance in two terms, etc)(Junior).
- All children with 97%+ for the academic year receive a special certificate and a badge (Infant).
- All children who achieve 100% attendance for the academic year receive a special certificate, book token and badge (Infant and Junior).

Monitoring and review

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring this policy and overall attendance rates. The Class Teachers, Office Staff and the Head Teacher are responsible for the day-to-day operation of attendance procedures, monitoring and feeding back to the Senior Leadership Team any issues that arise or suggested further developments. Any alterations to the policy or procedures will be reviewed by the staff and Governing Board annually or earlier if considered necessary in the light of changes to legislation.

Review

This policy statement was written in conjunction with Coalway Junior School. It will be reviewed annually.

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