



Trust Attendance policy

October 2021

Rationale

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as this is the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible. Through good attendance, we ensure every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted to the best of their ability.

Introduction

At Celtic Cross Education, we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend school regularly and your child should be at school, on time every day, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

(DFE School Attendance July 2019)

It is very important, therefore, that parents ensure their child attends regularly and punctually, this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

Attendance Ladder

How close are you to reaching the top?



Why regular attendance is important?

Learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines, and so, may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2021):

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children have the best life chances.

Failing to attend School on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you regular updates on attendance in our newsletters;
- Track every child's attendance and notify you if your child's attendance is below 96% in that academic year or if in the Autumn term then based on previous years data
- Notify you if your child/children have had 10 or more late arrivals per term and we may inform the Education Welfare Officer.
- Celebrate good attendance using incentives; both for individuals and classes with exceptional attendance
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and incentives

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and pupils under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like when your child is genuinely too ill to attend, medical/dental appointments which, unavoidably, fall in

school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your 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 usually make things worse.

Any student in Celtic Cross Education identified as having attendance below 96% in that academic year or if in the Autumn term then based on previous years data, will have a letter sent to their parents.

If this does not improve and drops below 96%:

96% to 93% - Level 1 letter to be sent

93% to 90% - Level 2 letter to be sent

Less than 90% - Level 3 to be sent

However, should parent(s) provide evidence from a medical practitioner advising that the period of absence was necessary, the absence for the evidenced period will be authorised.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	School Approved off site Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity

W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Persistent Absentee (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to our Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 92% over a rolling year or if a decision is made by the Senior Leaders.
- At our discretion, make home visits to check on the child's welfare if we have not been informed of the reason for their absence.
- We are legally obliged to refer a child as missing education if we believe that to be the case.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence. We need to have your contact numbers at all times. To help us to help you and your child we ask that we are provided with an up to date number and an emergency contact. (we ask for at least two emergency contact numbers where possible). You have a duty to notify school as soon as possible of any changes to contact details.

Informing Schools

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Education Welfare Service

If your child's attendance falls below 94% over a rolling year, the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will ask us directly for information relating to your child's absences. As we are held to account for such cases, we work closely with the Education Welfare Officer, acting on their advice. In some instances, it may be necessary for the officer to meet with you and/or your child to discuss the reason for absence, so please advise us if you would prefer contact before such action. Please be aware if your child's absences persist, an EWO can use sanctions such as a Penalty Notice fine or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court to address irregular school attendance.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital information and could regularly miss the same lesson. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, and this can be embarrassing for the child.

The register will be closed 15 minutes after the school's start time. This means that children arriving after this time will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. You could, therefore, face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists in the with the Cornwall Council Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with a member of school staff and/or Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless –

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

All applications must be made in writing to the Head of School at least 20 school days prior to the requested leave date and should be made on the school's exceptional leave form. Leave requests made by letter will not be accepted. Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parent/carers in writing. Please do not book a holiday before being given permission for absence from the school.

A general guide for parents is, leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13 week holiday time would not be authorised.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should a parent/carer proceed with the leave it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on school's register. Where a leave of absence has been unauthorised, penalty noticed will be considered if a pupil's attendance is below 96% in that academic year or if in the Autumn term then based on previous years data at the point at which the holiday request is made.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5-day notice will result in all absence being recorded as (O) (unauthorised absence not covered by any other description).

A holiday refusal letter informs parents/carers that the leave will be unauthorised and, as such

if you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to Cornwall Council who as the issuing officer may decide to take legal action against you.

Penalty Notices

Whilst we would hope that the supportive strategies outlined above would be successful in improving attendance and punctuality, Celtic Cross Education would consider using Penalty Notices if they felt it appropriate in collaboration with the EWO.

When considering issuing a penalty notice, reference will be made to the Cornwall Council document, "Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices." (July 2021)

Penalty Notices can be requested for unauthorised absence, unauthorised lateness or unauthorised holiday during term time.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of compulsory school age pupils under any of the following circumstances:

i) In the case of unauthorised leave of absence from school during term-time, recorded as Code G on the school attendance register, when both the following criteria are met:

A minimum of 12 school sessions of unauthorised absence can be evidenced within a period of not more than 100 school sessions;

The school are able to evidence that the parent(s) in question received a legal warning prior to the start of the requested leave of absence, which was issued no earlier than the term prior to that in which the absence was taken.

ii) In the case of persistent unauthorised absence and/or unauthorised lateness of a pupil arriving at school after the registers have closed (recorded as Code O or U on the school attendance register), when both the following criteria are met:

A minimum of 12 sessions of unauthorised lateness and/or unauthorised absence must be evidenced within a period of not more than 100 school sessions.

The school are able to evidence that before requesting a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence and/or unauthorised lateness, they have thoroughly explored the reasons for said unauthorised absence and are able to evidence at least three points of attempted contact with the parent. At a minimum, this should consist of an initial letter, including a legal warning; details of the outcome of at least one home visit and the offer and outcome of at least one school meeting. Where appropriate, this should include details of practical offers of support made to the pupil and their family where the pupil may have, or currently be, struggling to settle back into school following the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

iii) In the case of an excluded pupil, when both of the following criteria have been met:

An excluded pupil is witnessed in a public place, without a justifiable reason for being there, during school hours, on a school day, during the first five days of a fixed exclusion period, or a permanent exclusion;

The parents have been notified in writing by the school, prior to the offence being committed, of their duty to ensure the child is not found in a public place during school hours and the days on which it applies.

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school and for classes are displayed and shared with pupils in school and communicated to parents weekly via the school newsletter.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to children fulfilling their potential.

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