

# Cockton Hill Infants' School Attendance and Punctuality Policy



**Headteacher: Tom Cuthbertson**  
**Chair of Governors: Bob Woods**

*Date: Sept 2023*  
*Date for review: 2024*

### Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Tom Cuthbertson	Head Teacher and Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 604627
Tracy Bonarius	School Support Worker	01388 604627
Bob Woods	Chair of Governors	01388 604627
Helen Lyon	Attendance Improvement Officer	03000 265528
Mary Maskel	School Secretary	01388 604627
Andrew Graham	School Business Manager	01388 604627

**Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:**

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Tom Cuthbertson	Headteacher – Discuss specific attendance concerns and support that can be provided	01388 604627
Tracy Bonarius	School Support Worker – Discuss barriers to attendance and support that can be put in place. Tracy can also signpost parents to other services.	01388 604627
Joanne Harnaman	Deputy Headteacher - Discuss specific attendance concerns and support that can be provided	01388 604627
Jennifer Laycock	Nursery Manager - Discuss specific attendance concerns and support that can be provided	01388 604627
Class Teachers	Discuss any attendance concerns and a course of action	01388 604627

## **Introduction and Background**

Cockton Hill Infants' School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the *headteacher*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools' commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Children's attendance is likely to be better if children are happy at school and engaged in their learning. We therefore regularly review our curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of the children. As part of our curriculum, we ensure that children's mental health and wellbeing is taught explicitly and children have avenues to talk and discuss their worries. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance

**The school and all partners will work together to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **Attendance data**

Attendance data is analysed on a daily, weekly and termly basis by the Headteacher using a variety of tools such as CPOMS and SIMS rigorously scrutinise attendance data. The scrutiny will identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

## **Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

Where patterns of poor attendance have been identified Cockton Hill Infants' will:

- Discuss concerns with parents
- Listen to, and try to understand any barriers to attendance
- Work with other agencies to quickly address the barriers to attendance
- Develop a plan for improving attendance in partnership with parents, pupils and other agencies.

## **Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although parents may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**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 which may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine and/or up to 3 months in prison.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is recorded as an absence for the session.
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments

- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher- may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- Day trips
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

### **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

**There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.** In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time 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 a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, Local Authority Attendance Intervention Team or a Family Support Worker.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

## **Absence Procedure**

- If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:
  - Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.20 am. The school has an absence answer phone available to leave a message
  - Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.20am
  - Ensure that their child returns to school as soon as possible and they provide some medical evidence if requested to support the absence.
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- If a child is absent, we will:
  - Telephone or text parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them, however it is their responsibility to contact us

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school day starts between 8.45 am and 9.00 am. Registers close at 9.10 am. Children will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after 9.00 am are required to come in to school via the School Office accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carer will sign them in and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded.

At 9.10am the registers will be closed in school. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

## **Threshold for Actions to Address Poor Attendance or Punctuality**

If your child's attendance drops below 95% then we may:

- Communicate with you via letter/text/telephone that attendance is cause for concern
- Monitor attendance for a four-week period for signs of improvement

If your child's attendance drops below 90% then we may:



- Send further correspondence that attendance is cause for concern
- Monitor attendance for a four-week period for signs of improvement
- Arrange an attendance management meeting between parents and a member of the SLT
- Make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Intervention Team. We may recommend a formal warning, fine or further action.

If your child has 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 12 week or less period then we may:

- Make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Intervention Team. We may recommend a formal warning, fine or further action.

If you are consistently late in getting your child to school we may:

- Communicate with you via letter/text/telephone that punctuality is cause for concern
- Monitor punctuality for a 3-week period. After review of this we may send further correspondence or arrange a meeting between parents and a member of the SLT.
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### **Summary**

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

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.