



Gedney Church End and Lutton St Nicholas Federated Primary Schools

Attendance Policy 2015-2016

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Introduction

Regular attendance at school is a pre-requisite of a good education. The curriculum is carefully planned assuming full attendance. Any child who does not attend school is placed at a disadvantage and their life chances are therefore impaired. The federation recognises that it is the parents' legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school and teachers will play their part in ensuring maximum attendance across both of our schools.

As a federation, we are committed to the idea that education is a life-long activity and the ethos of our schools is that pupils should be happy to attend because they recognise the importance of education and they enjoy participating in the learning experiences that have been created for them.

Aims

1. To enable maximum pupil attendance through valuing high attendance rates
2. To encourage pupils to develop routines that will ensure good punctuality and attendance beyond their school days
3. To encourage pupils to take advantage of educational opportunities by attending regularly
4. To recognise the external factors which influence pupil attendance and work in partnership with parents and the Educational Welfare Service (EWO)/other agencies to address any difficulties
5. To provide an effective and efficient system for the monitoring of attendance
6. To identify patterns of non-attendance at an early stage and work to resolve any personal/social/academic challenges

Federation Practice

1. Class teachers send registers to the school office by 9.15 at Gedney Church End and 9.25 at Lutton St. Nicholas at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. If an absence has been recorded and no contact has been received from parents, staff will operate 'First Day Call' procedures (see Appendix 4).
2. Parents and pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance. A weekly Attendance Trophy is awarded to the class with the best attendance and the results are published on both of the respective websites. Pupils with 100% attendance across the school year are awarded a certificate in the final celebration assembly of the school year.

3. Class teachers are expected to keep accurate records of attendance, and office staff follow up absences and refer concerns to Mr. Whitney. All absences will be reported to Mr. Whitney, who will decide whether or not to authorise the absence. This will depend on the circumstance in each case.
4. Mr. Whitney regularly analyses attendance across the federation and termly monitoring reports are published to all families. Where attendance is good, praise and thanks are forthcoming. Where attendance is a cause for concern, clear procedures are articulated that will help to address the causes of the poor attendance and the federation's wish to enter into a partnership with parents to support better attendance (see Appendix 2).
5. The federation has published new guidance to parents, including the use of fines, where pupils' attendance is classified as persistent. This is where aggregate attendance for the academic year drops below 90%. The federation retains the services of Mr. John McGarel, Educational Welfare Officer, who will intervene, at the request of Mr. Whitney, if this is felt to be beneficial.

Requests for Absence during the School Year

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow head Teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Head Teachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

For our federation, exceptional circumstances include all of the following:

- A one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the proposed holiday is likely to be the last such holiday
- A significant trauma in the family where I may consider the proposed holiday will enable the child to better deal with the situation
- A special occasion which can only take place at the time requested and will never be repeated e.g. special leave for members of the armed forces
- Other exceptional circumstances that will be considered on a case by case basis. Please note that additional documentary evidence may be required and I reserve the right to request this.

Parents are requested to arrange a formal meeting with Mr. Whitney to discuss the absence and the onus will be on the parent to prove that circumstances are exceptional. Mr. Whitney will formally record the meeting and write to the parents to notify them of the outcome (see Appendix 1).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Administrative Assistant will use INTEGRIS to monitor absence, unauthorised absence, patterns of absence, lateness, sibling absence and the timing of absences. The Administrative Assistant will ensure that all records are up-to-date and that correct codes have been used (see Appendix 3). In conjunction with the Bursar, the Administrative Assistant will operate First Day Call Procedures (see Appendix 4).

The federation's policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Head Teacher and is subject to review annually. The governor with responsibility for monitoring child protection will discuss attendance with the Head Teacher each time a monitoring visit is undertaken. Furthermore, the Head Teacher will report to the Governing Body aggregate attendance rates for both schools at least 3 times per year.

The Education Welfare Officer will conduct an annual audit of attendance at both schools. Audit outcomes will be used to continuously improve policy and practice that will subsequently ensure that attendance rates improve year-on-year.

Children Missing Education

The Education and Inspection Act (2006) places a statutory duty on the Local Authority to establish the identities of children missing education. If a child who is registered at either school fails to start at the beginning of the academic year, enquiries should be made with the Admissions Team in Lincoln. They can be contacted on 01522 782030.

The CME Team will attempt to contact the family and the federation's Education Welfare Officer will also be contacted. If a Common Transfer File (CTF) has been received, it should be uploaded to the S2S website.

When a family disappears or a child ceases to attend at either of our schools for ten consecutive days without explanation, every effort will be made to trace the child. Strategies will include all of the following:

- Telephone/e-mail/letter to all contacts listed within the pupils' file
- Contact with neighbors, friends and family (if known)
- Home visits (accompanied)

- Drive-by

Where the pupil's attendance is low, the absence unexplained or unusual, or if the child is deemed to be 'at risk', immediate contact will be made with the Educational Welfare Officer. Any unexplained, continuous absence of any child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan must automatically be treated as the highest priority and the Customer Service Centre (01522 782111) should be contacted immediately.

Children can only be removed from the roll at each respective school when contact has been made by the receiving school and the CTF has been transferred. Any other reason, including disappearance, moving abroad, returning to home country, will necessitate contact and advice from the Educational Welfare Officer.

Legislation

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the governing body is responsible for making sure that admissions and attendance registers are kept. Unless stipulated, each regulation applies to all schools in England.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 restrict leave of absence for family holidays to 10 school days a year in **special circumstances. The decision rests with schools, and families have no "right" to such leave. The application for leave must be made in advance by the parent the pupil normally resides with.**

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007 require governing bodies of all maintained schools to set overall absence targets, and for some governing bodies to set "focused absence targets" as required by the Secretary of State. Governors are bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Headteacher, not parents, authorises absence; our federation adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged. Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours

Date agreed: September 2013

Last updated: November 2015

Signed: _____

Appendix 1: Holiday Absence Letter



Telephone 01406 362383

Telephone 01406 363392

Head Teacher: Mr. Luke Whitney

Dear [insert name of parents here],

Date:

[Insert names and dates of birth of each pupil here]

Thank you for your application for holiday absence on behalf of [insert name of child/children here]. Unfortunately, since September 1st, new guidance has been issued by the Department for Education that prevents me from authorising any holiday absence.

In the June 2013 edition of the Federation Newsletter, I published the following:

‘Recently, the Government has published new guidance about holidays taken during term time. The following has been downloaded from the Department for Education website, and summarises the new duties that schools will be under from September 2013:

‘The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.’

As I am sure you are aware, we have always tried to work closely with our parents as we fully understand that for many families, given that the differentials in cost between holidays taken during term time and holidays taken during the statutory school holidays, are vast, there are compelling reasons to book at this time. I hope you can understand that we are now bound by the amendments detailed above but I would still urge you to see me if you feel your holiday falls within the remit of ‘Exceptional Circumstance.’ Please note that the Department for Education would not view cost as an ‘Exceptional Circumstance.’ Thank you.’

For us, exceptional circumstances may include any of the following:

- A one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the proposed holiday is likely to be the last such holiday
- A significant trauma in the family where I may consider the proposed holiday will enable the child to better deal with the situation
- A special occasion which can only take place at the time requested and will never be repeated e.g. special leave for members of the armed forces
- Other exceptional circumstances that will be considered on a case by case basis. Please note that additional documentary evidence may be required and I reserve the right to request this.

Having considered your request, I do feel that **[Insert name of child]** holiday is covered by the **[insert explanation of reason here]**.

[In the event that authorisation is not granted, use the following closing paragraph]:

As your request is not covered by any of the exceptions above, I am unable to authorise your request for holiday absence. I do understand that you will be disappointed at this outcome but I hope you can also accept that I have to operate under the guidance issued by the Department for Education. Please feel free to come back to me on this matter, if required.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. L. Whitney – Head Teacher
Gedney Church End and Lutton St. Nicholas Federated Primary Schools

Appendix 2: Absence Letter (Generic)



Telephone 01406 362383



Telephone 01406 363392

Head Teacher: Mr. Luke Whitney MBA, B.Ed (Hons), NPQH, ACEM

Dear Parents,

Interim Attendance Report

Each term, I conduct an audit of attendance. Good attendance is vital if children are to make the best progress. The guidance that we use is as follows:

- 100% Outstanding attendance
- 95-99%: This is what we are aiming for and is deemed to be 'good'
- 92-95%: An indicator of possible concern
- 90-92%: A cause for concern
- 85-90% A significant concern
- Below 85%: Parental contact to be established

I have attached a copy of your child's attendance report under the following headings:

- The autumn term 2013
- The first half of the spring term 2014
- Total attendance this year from the beginning of September 2013

I would be very grateful if you could look carefully at these reports. If attendance is above 95% on the final report, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for ensuring good to outstanding attendance.

If attendance is below 95%, it might be beneficial for you to discuss this matter either with myself or your child's class teacher. There are many things we can do to support you to ensure better rates of attendance.

If attendance overall is below 90%, I would like to contact you by letter to outline how we can support you to improve the rates of attendance for your child. It would then be helpful if we could follow this up at the spring term parents' evenings that will take place at the end of March.

Finally, if attendance remains below 90%, this is classified as 'Persistent Absenteeism.' The Governing Body reserves the right to fine parents who do not make every effort to ensure their child attends at school regularly. Prior to this, we would like to ensure that we work alongside you and this might involve the use of Mrs. McHarel, our Educational Welfare Officer.

As a federation of schools, we are always eager to work alongside families to ensure the best outcomes for children. If you wish to discuss the contents of this letter, please feel free to contact me at school any time.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. L. Whitney – Head Teacher

Gedney Church End and Lutton St. Nicholas Federated Primary Schools

Appendix 3: Marking Codes

A code for marking is displayed at the front of the register and is as follows:-

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Present | /\ (blue) |
| 2. Unexplained absence | O (red) |
| 3. Lateness
letter) | L inside the O (red O, blue |
| 4. Medical/dental appointment | M inside the O |
| 5. Illness | I inside the O |
| 6. Family Holiday (authorised) | H inside the O |
| 7. Other authorised circumstances | C inside O |
| 8. Educational visit | V inside O |
| 9. Educated off site (not dual registration) | B inside the O |
| 10. Family Holiday (not authorised) | G inside the O |
| 11. Absent late (arrived after register closed): | U inside the O |

Appendix 4: First Day Call Procedure

The Bursar and Administrative Assistant operate a first day call system whereby an unexplained absence will trigger telephone contact before 9.30 am. A hierarchy of contact has been established where the families of children who walk to school are contacted first as their unexplained absence is more likely to be a cause for concern. Records of all contact are made and registers updated accordingly.

Appendix 5: Absence 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 guardian. If a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence, the absence will be authorised. Only the Head Teacher can code an absence as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the federation does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that have never been properly explained
- Holidays not agreed

Appendix 6: Fixed Penalty Notices

As a federation, we recognise that the use of Fixed Penalty Notices can serve as an ultimate sanction where attendance remains a concern. The Governing Body have agreed that the use of an FPN will only be applied to families where children are classified as Persistent Absentees across the duration of a full academic year. This means that their aggregate attendance from the beginning of the year to a specified future date remains below 90%. This strategy will only be considered if the parents have either refused to engage with the support offered by the schools or have only done so on a minimal basis.

Lincolnshire County Council have published a Code of Conduct in respect of the application of FPN's and this can be downloaded via the websites at both schools.