

Clare Community Primary School

Attendance Policy

2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Clare Community Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Clare Community Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 Attendance Leader
The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Headteacher will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.3 Registration
 - i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for the completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved 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	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	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

- ii) The register will be called promptly at **8.50 am** and **1.00 pm** by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at **9.00 am** and **1.10 pm**. Any pupil who arrive **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher.
- ii) Clare Community Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.
- iv) Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see para. 5 for the school's policy on term-time holidays);
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return

their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);

- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
 - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
 - (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
 - (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised.

Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Staff training

The Headteacher will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 The Headteacher will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to staff, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.
- 3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.
- 3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the LA within the stipulated time frame.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Clare Community Primary School. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

4.2 First-day calling

Clare Community Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.

4.4 School Strategies to Tackle Absence

The Headteacher is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Clare Community Primary School intervenes in non attendance at an early stage.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence the school will send a letter to parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

4.5 Referral to the Educational Welfare Officers

If there continue to be unauthorised absences the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

From 1st September 2014, the Education Attendance Service on behalf of Suffolk County Council will be issuing fixed penalty notice fines when unauthorised absence occurs and where a pupil is stopped with parents / carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.

In response to the amendments to the Penalty Notices Code of Conduct, Clare Community Primary School has agreed, **as from 1 September 2014, an immediate fixed penalty notice fine will be issued** when eight or more unauthorised absence sessions have occurred (4 whole days in total). The school will give a reminder/warning

about attendance when 4 unauthorised sessions have been recorded (2 whole days in total) and then expect to see no further unauthorised absences.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days; this is £60 for each child, for each parent/carer (i.e 2 children, 2 parent/carers = £240 fine) increasing to £120 between 21 and 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days of the issue, the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failing to ensure a child attends school regularly. This may lead to a fine up to £1000. Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice fine. There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued; the penalty must be paid in full.

4.6 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other student with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

4.7 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes should enter the building via the main entrance. If a pattern of lateness develops a meeting will be arranged with parents and a member of staff to discuss reasons/ difficulties for lateness.

4.8 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office so that their presence can be recorded. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**

4.9 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day should report to the office prior to leaving and on return so that the event can be recorded.

4.10 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Clare Community Primary School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

5. **Term-time Holidays**

5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

5.2 Clare Community Primary School will consider every application individually, its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.

5.3 Clare Community Primary School will consider authorising holidays for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and **evidence is provided** to this effect.

5.4 Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

5.5 Clare Community Primary School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

5.6 Clare Community Primary School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, ie SATS.

6. **Extended leave of absence**

In considering absence for extended trips overseas Clare Community Primary School will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved.
- Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

7. **Parents' / carers' responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Clare Community Primary School.

Clare Community Primary School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;

- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify Clare Community Primary School on the first day of absence by phone, face to face or by letter;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations and taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. The School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

8. Pupils' responsibilities

- 8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their parent/carer or class teacher.
- 8.2 Pupils should attend school on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.
- 8.3 A Guide for Pupils is attached.

9. Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2)

- 9.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

10. Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring positive outcomes for all children. These include:

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

- Regular attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy
- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others
- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year, support is available from the local authority to undertake this if required.

Clare Community Primary School

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO ATTENDANCE

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration at **8.50 am**. All children should be in the classrooms at this time. The morning register will be called promptly at **8.50am** and the afternoon register at **1.00pm**.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at **9.05am** in the morning and **1.15pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between **8.50am** and **9.05am** he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives after **9.05am** he/she will be marked **absent**.

If your child arrives between **1.00pm** and **1.15pm** he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives after **1.15pm** he/she will be marked **absent**.

Pupils who arrive late should report to the school office so that their presence can be recorded. If a pupil arrives late, after registration has closed, on two or more occasions a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons / difficulties for lateness.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's termly attendance report and on their end of year report.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

6. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family. Contact your child's class teacher as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's SATs. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence and if the Headteacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

8. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he / she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

9. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise.

10. IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Re: Amendments to Penalty Notices Code of Conduct to tackle non-school attendance

From 1st September 2014, the Education Attendance Service on behalf of Suffolk County Council will be issuing fixed penalty notice fines when unauthorised absence occurs or where a pupil is stopped with parents / carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.

Clare Community Primary School Attendance Policy from 1st September 2014

In response to the amendments to the Penalty Notices Code of Conduct, Clare Community Primary School has agreed, as from 1 September 2014, an immediate fixed penalty notice fine will be issued by the Local Authority when eight or more unauthorised absence sessions have occurred (4 whole days in total). We will give a reminder/warning about attendance when 4 unauthorised sessions have been recorded (2 whole days in total) and then expect to see no further unauthorised absences.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days; please note this is £60 for each child, for each parent/carer (i.e. 2 children, 2 parent/carers = £240 fine) increasing to £120 between 21 and 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days of the issue, the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly. This may lead to a fine up to £1000. Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice fine. There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued; the penalty must be paid in full.

Please note that any children who arrive after the register closes are marked as an unauthorised absence unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late - this does NOT include "we're just late", refused to get ready, clothes in the washing machine, watching TV, lost shoes and so on.

Clare Community Primary School

ATTENDING SCHOOL REGULARLY

A GUIDE FOR PUPILS

1. Attending regularly and on time

Regular attendance will help you make the most of the opportunities here at Clare Community Primary School. It will help you:

- keep up with your school work and get the best results you can;
- get a job when you leave school – employers like people who are reliable.

Remember, your attendance at school is shown in your termly attendance report and Annual Report.

2. Absences

Acceptable reasons for absences include:

- illness
- emergency dental / medical appointments (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- day of religious observance
- family bereavement

Looking after your brothers and sisters, birthdays, general trips such as shopping and helping at those are NOT reasons to be absent from school.

You will also need a note or phone call from your parents to explain ALL absences from school. If there is no note or phone call or the explanation is unsatisfactory, the absence will count as unauthorised and will be shown on your termly attendance report and end of year report.

3. Need help?

Problems with your school work? Are you being bullied? Are your friends giving you a hard time? Are things difficult at school? Are things difficult at home?

You may feel that missing school is the answer. It is not – it may even make things worse.

TALK TO SOMEONE – your class teacher, another member of staff, your parents. We will do everything we can to help you get over the problem.

Clare Community Primary School

Staff Guide to Attendance.

Registration

Calling of the registers:

- Class teachers are responsible for attendance registers (a list of recommended register codes is attached).
- Registers will be called promptly at 8.50 and 1.00 by the class teacher.
- Registers will close at 9.00 and 1.10.
- If a pupil fails to arrive before the register closes, he/she will be marked absent.
- Pupils who arrive late, but before the close of registration, should enter by the main door and report to the office. The class teacher will amend the registers to indicate lateness and note the time of arrival at the bottom of the register.
- Pupils who arrive after the register has closed should also report to the school office. The Administration Assistant will amend the registers to indicate lateness and note the time of arrival. If an acceptable explanation is not received from the parents the register will show an **unauthorised absence**.

Monitoring Procedures

- Attendance registers will be monitored at least half termly by the Headteacher and EWO.

Authorised/Unauthorised

Providing an explanation is received, an absence may be **authorised** for:

- illness
- dental/medical appointments
- day of religious observance
- family bereavement
- exceptional special occasions, eg family wedding where prior approval has been obtained from the Headteacher
- family holiday, under exceptional circumstances, where prior approval has been obtained from the Headteacher
- the pupil is not within walking distance and no suitable travel arrangements have been made by the LEA
- attendance at a Pupil Referral Unit

- participation in an *approved* public performance
- the pupil's parents are Travellers and the pupil is engaged in his/her parents work
- exclusion

It will remain unauthorised:

- if no explanation is received from parents
- for looking after siblings
- for shopping trips
- for unexceptional special occasions, eg birthdays
- for family holidays longer than the duration originally authorised by the Headteacher
- for family holidays where prior permission was not sought or was refused.

If staff are unsure how to mark a particular absence they should consult with the Headteacher.

Keeping of Notes / Absence Slips

- Absence notes/slips should be kept in an attached folder in the class register.

Following up absences

- Rapid responses are essential if there is no contact from the parent
- In cases where there is doubt about an explanation received, contact should be made with the parent.

Strategies employed to support pupils and parents

- If a pupil is absent and the class teacher has not been given an explanation by close of registration the office should be informed and a phone call home will be made. If there is no response, a letter will be sent. A record of all calls should be made (see record form) and, together with any letters sent, must be kept on file.
- If a pattern of concern re attendance is developing, the class teacher will, after consultation with the Head teacher, contact the parents and invite them into school to discuss attendance.
- If there is no significant improvement, the Head teacher will contact parents and invite them to attend a further meeting. Once this point is reached the Education Welfare Officer should receive copies of all previous attempts made and may be involved in the meeting with parents.

Acknowledging good attendance

- Pupils will be acknowledged in assembly and a certificate given.

Support for pupils who have difficulties attending school

- Where pupils are absent with good reason (for example because of exclusion or long term illness) a member of staff will coordinate meaningful work to be sent home and will ensure it is marked on a regular basis.
- When pupils who have been absent for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised, return they will be welcomed back to school and a reintegration programme agreed.

