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Tithe Barn Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction

This Policy sets out the policy of the school and all those associated with the school in respect of attendance and punctuality.

2. Rationale

‘... – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.’

(DfE, ‘School Attendance’, Nov 2016)

Tithe Barn School is committed to supporting the welfare of our pupils through regular attendance at school. The link between good attendance and high levels of achievement is unquestionable. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. Sustaining a culture in which full attendance and punctuality is the norm is a key priority, ensuring that our children gain the full benefit from their time at Tithe Barn.

Although parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school and is punctual, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education, as well as guidance from the Local Authority.

3. Aims and Objectives

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child’s education
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties

- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Communicating clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually
- Maintaining consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school
- Rewarding good attendance

4. Legal Duties

As well as a general legal duty to carry out their functions in a way which safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, schools have a number of specific legal duties relating to pupils who do not attend school regularly or who go missing from school. These are:

- a) a duty to report to the local authority pupils who don't attend regularly (Regulation 12 (1)(a) Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)*

Schools are able to refer poorly attending pupils to the Local Authority via three different routes – to The Team Around the School (TAS) if supportive/preventative work with the family is needed, to our allocated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for Parent Contract work, or to the Education Legal Officer for use of the Education Penalty Notice System.

In addition, to help us to comply with the regulations, we are asked to provide the Education Welfare Team with a list of all pupils with attendance below 85% on a termly basis.

- b) a duty to report to the local authority pupils who are continuously absent without authorisation for 10 days or more (Regulation 12 (1)(b) Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)*

When pupils don't attend school for a continuous period of 10 days (or less if there are additional concerns) without satisfactory explanation, the school follows Stockport Council's Policy and Procedures regarding Children Missing in Education (Appendix 1) and will inform the Contact Centre (0161 217 6028).

c) a duty to inform the local authority when removing a pupil from the school roll (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016)

All schools are required to make a return to the Local Authority whenever a pupil is removed from the roll. The grounds on which children can be removed are limited. Tithe Barn follows Stockport Council's Guide for Removing Pupils from a School Roll to ensure that any removals are undertaken lawfully and in a manner which safeguards the welfare of pupils (Appendix 2).

d) duties around the taking of registers (Regulations 6 and 13-15 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

Tithe Barn record the details of every pupil at the school in the admission register, following Stockport's comprehensive guide to the national register codes (Appendix 3). Any additional advice regarding the marking of registers is sought from our allocated Education Welfare Team Member. In addition, Stockport Family undertake an annual in-depth Register Quality Assurance and Compliance Review to ensure that high standards of registration are maintained (Appendix 4).

5. Managing Attendance in School

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance including attending a half-termly meeting to review low attendance/punctuality
- Considering requests for leave of absence
- Rewarding good punctuality and attendance (e.g. certificates in assemblies)
- Working with parents/carers to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Referring to the Education Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence
- To undertake 'Late at the Gates' events when appropriate

The School Office is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration/attendance information accurately on SIMS attendance software
- Taking and recording messages from parents/carers regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed by parents/carers
- Following up absences (and persistent lateness) if parents/carers have not communicated with the school
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Setting up and attending a half-termly meeting to review low attendance/punctuality
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance/punctuality
- Informing parents/carers of outcomes of requests for leave of absence

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment
- Contacting the School Office by 9.30am on each day of absence
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time
For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we may request evidence from the doctor or dentist (appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised (using 'Leave of Absence Request Form').

- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with

6. Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school before 9.30am on each day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised (Codes I, M, S, C, E, H, R and T) or unauthorised (Codes O, U and G).

When we have not received reasons for a child's absence we will try and contact the parents via telephone and/or email. If unsuccessful a letter will then be sent home (Sample letter requesting reason for absence, Appendix 5). If a reason is given and there are no other issues relating to attendance there will be no further action. However, if no reasons are given, or the reasons given are unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

7. Punctuality

Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance Code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (Attendance Code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance Code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter (Sample letter persistent lateness, Appendix 6) advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. This letter will normally be sent after 6 sessions of lateness (depending on reasons for lateness).

8. Longer Term / Repeated Illness

When a child is ill and will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription.

9. Leave of Absence

Tithe Barn's policy on Leave of Absence adheres to the guidance set out in Leave of Absence: A Guide for Schools in Stockport (Appendix 7) and aims to ensure fairness and consistency in the way absences are dealt with.

With effect from September 2013, the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers are only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

If parents wish to take their child out of school they must complete the standard Leave of Absence Request Form (Appendix 8) available from the School Office. The decision to authorise the absence is at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The headteacher will consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling. Authorising absence for a holiday will be extremely rare.

When requests are granted a copy of the Leave of Absence Form will be returned to the parent/carer marked authorised and signed by the Headteacher.

Where leave requests are refused parents will be informed by letter (Sample letter when refusing to grant leave of absence, Appendix 9). The letter advises the parent/carer of the possible consequences if the leave of absence takes place – such as the potential for Education Penalty Notices to be issued.

Where a parent/carer does not make a formal request, but simply notifies the school of the holiday, to avoid ambiguity we will still write to the parent/carer to inform them that permission has not been granted and to advise of the consequences (Sample letter where no request for permission to go on holiday, Appendix 10).

Where a holiday is suspected but the parent has not provided any information a letter will be sent to the parent/carer (Sample letter where unauthorised holiday is suspected, Appendix 11).

10. Addressing Attendance Concerns

Early intervention is the key to preventing poor attendance, both on the level of individual pupils and a 'whole school' level.

Tithe Barn undertake a half-termly meeting to review all children with attendance of under 90% or concerns regarding punctuality. The meetings will normally be attended by the administrator responsible for attendance and the Headteacher.

The actions from these meetings will vary, depending on the needs of the case. It could involve making contact with the parent/carer or making contact with other members of staff or outside agencies.

Letters Home Regarding Concerns about Attendance

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. The first letter (Sample Letter 1's attendance concerns, Appendix 12) informs the parents that there is an attendance problem and invites them to make contact to discuss how this can be addressed; a second letter (Sample Letter 2 attendance concerns, Appendix 13) is sent if there is still no improvement, and tells the parents that the school will require medical evidence before authorising further absences. There are two versions of Letter 1, one aimed at the situation where there are unexplained absences, the other at the situation where there are excessive amounts of absences attributed to illness.

Further Action

Where a child's attendance record does not improve – following guidelines set out in 'Improving School Attendance; the Guide for Schools in Stockport' (Appendix 14) - the school may look at actions such as home visits, setting up attendance panels, or – where the child may have multiple needs – completing an Early Help Assessment Form (EHA) or leading Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings. Where there is still no improvement in attendance, it may be appropriate to consider a Parent Contract referral to a member of the Education Welfare Team.

Education Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school (or EWO) as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns. Tithe Barn adhere to the Stockport's EPN Guidance when making these requests (EPN Notices – Guidance for 2016-17, Appendix 15). The requests are made using the standard Request for Formal/Education Penalty Notice (Appendix 16).