Cumberland Council

Cumberland Council School Attendance Policy

November 2024

Cumberland Council

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024, and Cumberland Council's School Attendance Strategy* through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* and school attendance *Parental Responsibility Measures 2023*. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Further information can be found on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook page 4, and the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*

3.1 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'Attendance Lead) is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Consulting with pupils, parents/carers, and external agencies, where needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is **Susan Starkie** and can be contacted via head@kells-stmarys.cumbria.sch.uk

3.2 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with colleagues to tackle persistent absence.

The attendance officer is **Carla Scott** and can be contacted the carlas@kells-stmarys.cumbria.sch.uk

3.3 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions and lesson attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. This must be completed immediately and within the first 5 minutes of registration.

3.4 School Admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- Ensure all parents addresses/contact details are up to date.
- Consider referral to support services and or an Early help assessment.

3.5 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

1. All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
2. All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person.
3. Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child and ensure they are up to date.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Keep to any attendance action plans that they make with the school and/or local authority.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting their child's Attendance Officer

3.6 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time.
- Attend every timetabled session, on time.

3.7 Attendance Staff Team

Attendance Lead (Headteacher)	**Susan Starkie**
Deputy Headteacher	**Carley Miller**
Attendance Officer	**Carla Scott**
Designated Safeguarding Lead	**Susan Starkie**
SENCO	**Jane Chidlow**
Mental Health Lead	**Susan O'Neill**
Attendance Administrator	**Anne Hillon**

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See DfE *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* 2024 for the full list of attendance codes or refer to pages 27-31 on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made. The school day starts at **8.40 a.m.** and ends at 3.10 p.m.. Pupils must arrive in school by **8.40 a.m.** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **8.40 a.m.** and will be kept open until **9.00 a.m.**. The register for the second session will be taken at **1.00 p.m.** and will be kept open until **1.15 p.m.**

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via **01946 66356** or recording it on **Arbor**.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a medical prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

GP fit for work notes for children are not acceptable.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

For any planned absences, parents must complete an absence request form. These can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website. This should be completed and submitted at least 2 weeks before the absence is due to take place.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Persistent lateness will trigger further intervention, including letters home and meetings with teachers/attendance officer.
Those who are late after registration closes and therefore absent will follow the same path as any other unauthorised absence and contributes to the 10-sessions of absence over 10 weeks national threshold.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a home visit and contact any outside agencies who may be involved with the family.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent.
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer, or social worker.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance.
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school will refer to the Local Authority.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at least once a half term. This will be through messages, emails and termly data reports.

Every parent can see their child's attendance on a day-to-day basis using **Arbor**. Their child will be given the instructions for accessing this for this during the first week of starting at St. Mary's C.P. School.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave.
- A temporary, time-limited transition timetable (part time timetable).
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unexpected or unavoidable events.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or central office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Romani people, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school,

but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
- Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):
- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school.
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority.
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

For further information on specific codes refer to pages 26-31 of Cumberland Councils Attendance Handbook.

5.2 Enforcement

Our school will make use of the full range of potential enforcements. Refer to page 18-25 of Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook. ***Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.*

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Good attendance and improved attendance are rewarded at **SCHOOL**. We do this by:

- Celebrating year group and form tutor attendance every week during Form Time
- Displaying weekly attendance updates on the school boards in the hall
- Celebrating good attendance in assembly a least once a half term
- Attendance contributes to rewards trips and activities at the end of every half term. This must be at least 95% for students to be eligible (considerations are made for exceptional circumstances)
- The 100% Attendance Competition runs throughout the academic year. Pupils who have 100% attendance in a week will receive a token. This token can then be placed into a draw for one of five prizes worth £100, which the pupils vote on. The winners are drawn at the end of the academic year.

The school will work collaboratively with the Access and Inclusion Team at Cumberland Council to help to support pupils and parents in achieving good attendance.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We work particularly closely with pupils and parents where there are more complex barriers to attendance. If a child is struggling or refusing to attend school, parents should inform us immediately.

To support more complex barriers to attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting.
- If the pupil cannot/will not attend a meeting at school, we will visit the family home.
- Depending on the barriers identified, the child's tutor/teacher will be informed and be part of any reintegration plans.
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that this can support a phased return into school.
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our pastoral leads.

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority. Reasonable adjustments can be made to support students in school.

Where there is a prolonged physical or mental illness, the Access and Inclusion Team at the Local Authority will be requested to support with education.

7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

To support a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting or attend the family home.
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that a pupil may need a phased return into school. This will be in communication with Form Tutor and Head of Year/Manager who will also support with the return to school.
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our pastoral leads.

8. Attendance monitoring

The school analyses attendance data at least once a week. This includes punctuality. The attendance team meet weekly to discuss attendance and consider next steps for those pupils where attendance is decreasing.

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.
Refer to page 8 in Cumberland Council Attendance handbook.

8.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.
The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with *DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school.
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance.
    - Explain the help that is available.
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence.
    - Review any existing actions or interventions.
- Communicate with parents via Arbor, email, phone call or letters to inform them of attendance updates.
- Visit the family home to communicate and meet with parents.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re- engage pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively

consider some of the reasons for absence.
- Implement enforcements, where necessary

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by Carla Scott and the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Additional Links

Supporting attendance | EEF

https://thehub.naht.org.uk/management/guidance-on-authorised-term-time-pupil-absence/