



## ALWYN INFANT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY (June 2016)

### Information for Parents

#### *"Attendance matters..."*

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. When children are not in school they are deprived of the educational opportunities which school has to offer them and they are at much greater risk of subsequently becoming socially excluded and disadvantaged. High attendance is certainly possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that you inform the school of the reasons for absence.

Levels of attendance are a key indicator of a school's overall performance and all schools are now required to set annual attendance targets. (The Ofsted benchmark for a primary school's attendance is 95%.) Schools are also required not just to improve levels of overall attendance, but to reduce the numbers of persistent absentees (a persistent absentee being defined as a child whose attendance rate is below 85%).

#### **As a school we aim to:**

- Maintain an attendance rate of a *minimum* of 95%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance

#### **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular school attendees make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular school attendees find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular school attendees find learning more satisfying
- Regular school attendees have an easier transfer to their next school

#### **As a parent you can help us by:**

- Ringing on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the child will return
- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks
- Sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness

#### **We shall:**

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls as soon as possible
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, the school Prospectus and the Home-School agreement
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance
- If we continue to have concerns, we will make a referral to the School Education Welfare Officer (EWO), who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance matters

#### **Definitions:**

## **Authorised Absence/Term Time Leave of Absence**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states: *Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.*

*Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.*

Due to these recent changes to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 from the Department for Education our Governing Body has been compelled to implement the following changes to our Attendance Policy to help improve the attendance of all of our children and to give them the best chance of achieving well and enjoying their Education:

In-term time, family holiday and extended holiday as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days have **had** to be removed. Therefore holidays in term time may no longer be considered as exceptional and if taken would be recorded as unauthorised.

These amendments make it clear that headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The headteacher has the discretion to allow leave in **exceptional circumstances** and the headteacher's decision is final.

For leave of absence to be considered as exceptional the parents/carers will need to complete and return a 'Request for Exceptional Leave' form. All such requests will be considered in conjunction with current achievement in class and current and previous year's attendance percentage levels which would need to be at **95%** or better.

## **Holidays**

Under new DFE legislation as from 1 September 2013, headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Family holidays are not regarded as exceptional circumstances.

Only schools can authorise absence. Should school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine; the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a 'Request for Exceptional Leave' form or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer.
- explanation offered is not in accordance with exceptional reasons for authorised absence (e.g. holiday, shopping, waiting on a delivery, going shopping or for a haircut, going for a family day out, because it is your child's birthday, sleeping in after a late night etc.).
- lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and the explanation offered is not in accordance with exceptional reasons for authorised absence.

*Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.*

### **Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence is absence of 15% or more. An individual child is, therefore, deemed to be a persistent absentee if his/her attendance is less than 85% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

### **Informing Parents of their child's absence rate and Persistent Absence**

Attendance rates will be reviewed at the end of a child's first ½ term in school and every half term thereafter.

Attendance rates will be recorded.

Action will be taken after the third half-term (February time) or earlier if appropriate/necessary.

90% – 100% attendance – no action taken by the school.

89% and below attendance – letter to be sent and information about what further action could be taken if the rate doesn't increase (Letter 1).

85% and below attendance – letter sent from the school with information of this percentage. It may be necessary for the parents to meet with the school EWO to discuss concerns (Letter 2).

Exceptional circumstances will be treated appropriately and sensitively

### **Registers**

Schools are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and at some stage during the afternoon session. The class register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents of a persistent non-attendeer be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

### **Lateness**

- Morning registration is at 8.50am. This is the time the classroom doors are opened and you see your child into their classroom
- It is important to be on time. If your child misses this short but vital session, their work may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and can be embarrassing for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents
- Arrival after the register has been taken but before registration closure time (9.20am) will be marked as late (L) and the child will be recorded as present
- Arrival after the close of registration (9.20am) will be marked as an absence and will be recorded as an Unauthorised Absence (U) unless the reason for lateness is as a result of medical/dental appointments and the absence will be recorded as authorised (M). Exceptional circumstances e.g. severe weather conditions, will result in an extension of this time
- We will let you know if we have concerns about your child's punctuality

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils' miss as a result of family holidays. There is no entitlement to time off in term time. Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Please remember that the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.

***“Every day counts...”***

### **GOVERNORS**

It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

### **Legal Note**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.



**Request for Exceptional Leave Form**

Name of pupil:

Class:

Date of leave of absence from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Number of school days absent:

Exceptional Reason for Absence:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

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**SCHOOL OFFICE TO COMPLETE :**

Current Attendance%

Last Year's Attendance %

Exceptional able to be reason accepted YES / NO

The absence has been authorised / unauthorised

Completed by: