

# **Court De Wyck C of E Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy 2007/8**

Approved at Governing body meeting 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007  
Issue 2

RD - Clerk to Governing body

### **Rationale**

Court De Wyck C of E Primary School is committed to providing high quality inclusive learning opportunities for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to reach their full potential, then excellent attendance is crucial. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

Our vision is to develop happy children, successful learners and confident individuals. To achieve this, we need learners to be present for as much time as possible.

We also realise that children who enter a class late i.e. after the class have settled, often feel very self-conscious and uncomfortable. These feelings impact on their capacity to learn.

### **1 Aims and Targets**

We aim to have a fair and clear policy which is in line with other schools in the authority. Therefore, we have based this policy on the model LA policy.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Full attendance is a critical factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes for our pupils. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

We have a target to reach that is set annually with the EWS and The School Improvement Team.

Our school will give a high priority to emphasising to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home – school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents, pupils, Parent Support Advisors and Education Welfare Services to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

## **2 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Parents**

You have a duty to educate your children “*suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs which they may have*” either by regular attendance at school or otherwise under Section 7 of The Education Act 1996. Parents whose children are registered at school are then responsible for ensuring that they attend punctually, regularly and stay at school.

### **Schools**

- have to call the attendance register twice per day – at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session
- Have to ensure that attendance registers are kept, in accordance with legal requirements and the policy of the school;
- Have to inform the Local Authority about pupils who do not attend school regularly or who have been continuously absent for two weeks or more (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate);
- Have to include data on authorised and unauthorised absence in the school prospectus and the governors’ annual report to parents, in accordance with DfES requirements.

### **Local Authority**

LA are required to ensure parents carry out their responsibilities, with regard to their children’s education. In North Somerset the Local Authority fulfils this requirement through the Education Welfare Service, whose primary responsibility is to enforce the regular and punctual school attendance of all pupils. Each school in North Somerset is allocated a named Education Welfare Officer who will work in close partnership with them. The Education Welfare Service has provided Court De Wyck C of E Primary School with a Service Level Agreement.

## **3 Procedures**

Court De Wyck C of E Primary School will:

Ensure all staff are aware of the registration procedures.

Ensure that teachers will complete, accurate registration processes at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session within fifteen minutes of the start of the morning session and 5 minutes of the start of the afternoon session.

## First day Contact

Encourage parents/carers to contact the school office early on the first day of absence by 9.15am by telephone (01934) 833 070

- If the parent has not contacted the school by 9.15am, then the parents of identified pupils should expect to be contacted by a member of the administration team
- Parents will be challenged if they fail to inform the school of the reasons for absence, or if the reasons given for absence are unacceptable. This will be done by the administration team in the first instance.

It is the view of the school that first day contact works by:

- Alerting parents who may be unaware that their child is truanting or missing and therefore may be at risk
- Raising awareness of the importance of full attendance
- Addressing problems before they become serious
- Improving home-school liaison
- Sending a clear message to parents and pupils that if a child is absent they will be missed
- Requiring and promoting a high level of communication within the school: staff working as a team
- Reducing the number of pupils who have short-term absence, thereby reducing the overall absence rate
- Assisting parents and pupils to develop habits that reduce casual absence and encouraging early contact from parents
- If no contact is achieved with the parent/carer of an absent pupil on the first day of absence, a letter will be sent on the third day of absence. Any unexplained absences of one week or longer may be reported to the EWO, and further action decided upon.

## Lateness

Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Registers will close at 9.10am; children arriving after 9.10am but before 9.30am will be recorded as late. Children arriving after 9.30am will be recorded late after registration closes which is an unauthorised absence. (DfES good practice guidance states that registers should be closed within ½ hour of registration)

There are three main negative impacts caused by pupils who constantly arrive late:

- The loss of learning and damage to self-esteem suffered by the pupil themselves which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time in school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- Can raise levels of unauthorised absence

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- Informing parents when a pupil is late more than 5 times in a term. This will be done by the Headteacher
- Use of penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence. This decision will be taken by the head in consultation with the Education Welfare Officer for the school.
- Referral to a Parent Support Advisor
- Calling parents in to discuss lateness/inviting parents to attendance clinics

#### Communication within school

In Court De Wyck C of E Primary School it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school on the first day of absence. Also to sign any child arriving late into school at the administration office.

The Administration team will call home on the first day of absence if no contact has been made by the parents by 9.15am.

The Parent Support Advisor to act on referrals made in relation to lateness or absence.

The Class Teacher to take the register twice a day and report absences to the administration office.

The Deputy Head Teacher to follow up any child protection concerns raised regarding attendance.

The Head Teacher to report attendance below 85% to the Educational Welfare Officer. Also to regularly monitor attendance and report back to governors on a regular basis.

### Authorisation of Absence

In Court De Wyck C of E Primary School the Head Teacher will take the decision as to whether an absence will be authorised. The class teacher will consult with the Head when there are any causes for concern. This may be after a period of absence, a pattern of missed absences or continued lateness.

**Authorised Absence:** an absence agreed by the Headteacher with an explanation from parents

**Unauthorised Absence:** an absence not agreed or unexplained

**Medical:** an appointment such as hospital, doctor or dentist

**Illness:** illness as informed by the parent or on receipt of doctor's/hospital notes if required.

Full guidance on attendance codes is held in the school office.

### Holidays during term time

New guidance from the DfES and North Somerset encourages the school to take a much firmer stance on holidays authorised in term times.

**Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday.**

The school may choose to grant leave of absence of up to 10 days in any school year in exceptional circumstances.

Examples of these may be:

- Forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- Parents' employment restrictions (evidence may be requested)
- Significant family events which will be considered individually

Circumstances that would generally not meet the criteria include:

- Relatives coming to visit
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips
- Visiting family who have different half terms or holidays

Each holiday request will be considered on a case by case basis and in consideration of individual merits. We are particularly reluctant to authorise holidays in May, when annual assessments are completed, in September, when children are settling into their new classes or at the beginning of any term when new learning themes are being introduced.

It may be in an unusual circumstance a leave of longer than 10 days be required. All such cases should be discussed with the Headteacher, as a child who is absent longer than 10 days after an agreed return date, can legally be removed from the school roll.

Leave of absence forms can be obtained from the office, and all requests should be submitted to the School Office at least two weeks before the first day of intended absence. Any absence which is not requested in advance will be recorded as unauthorised.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which we, and you, must seek to avoid.

If absence is unauthorised a penalty notice could be issued by the Education Welfare Service which can lead to prosecution if it is not paid by parents/carers.

#### Parent Support Advisers and Contracts

If a child's attendance falls below 90% in any one term the school may refer the family to the Parent Support Adviser who may seek to raise attendance by drawing up a parenting contract with parents/carers. This will enable the school to support the family in improving the child's punctuality and/or attendance.

#### Penalty Notices

Accumulated unauthorised absences may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by North Somerset Council. These fines are £50 (per parent, per pupil) if paid within 28 days or £100 if paid between 29 and 42 days. If the penalty is not paid and the notice is not withdrawn the parent will be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at Court de Wyck C of E Primary School.

These procedures will be applied to every absence and give a clear message that absences are not allowed for reasons other than those determined by the law. The procedure and the need for it should be understood by all and the school will do this by regularly writing to parents.

#### **4 Reintegration Strategies**

We Will:

Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.

Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. Send a clear message that if a pupil is absent she/he will be missed.

Have procedures that allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members.

For any pupil returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks, the school will make provision to allow the pupil to ease back into the school system if necessary. In the event returning after a long-term absence, a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) will be implemented. The PSP will include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupil as possible. Implementation of the PSP will follow North Somerset guidance provided by the Education Welfare Service.

We will strive to raise the profile of attendance through:

Termly individual certificates.

Letters Home

Parents' assemblies

Attendance displays/notice boards

Newsletters

## **5 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Targets for improved attendance will be set annually. It is important to set realistic targets and these targets will be set in consultation with the Education Welfare Service. Each year the governors will check whether these targets were met and, if not, try to establish why not.

Part of the evaluation process will be to look at what interventions have been successful. We will consider:

- Attendance data for individual pupils, classes and the school as a whole.
- Has the school ethos improved?
- Has the behaviour of pupils improved?
- How successful have pupil re-inclusion plans been?
- Is the school a better place to be for staff and pupils?
- Has the school been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school and the community?
- How well informed are new pupils, parents and staff about the importance of attendance and the policy and procedures operating within the school?
- Have attendance issues been included as topics in school assemblies, new parents; evenings or any other events?
- Has attendance been discussed regularly by the governing body?

These issues will be reviewed termly at governors meeting, bitermly at meetings with EWO and frequently with the Parent Support Advisor

Court de Wyck C of E Primary School believes that it is essential to keep this policy "alive". Consultation and communication are key factors that will ensure that the Policy has impact in raising attendance. This school will keep

attendance as an item on the agenda of staff meetings and we will consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will ensure that we take a pro-active approach to supporting the needs of all pupils and are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to all.