



## Attendance Policy

### Policy Data Sheet

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## 1. Introduction

Unity Community Primary recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- 1.1 promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- 1.2 ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- 1.3 ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- 1.4 ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## 2. Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

*To help us all to focus on this we will:*

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on how their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

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### 3. Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any half or full day absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We will use our Parental Support Adviser to support families in improving their child's attendance to school.

### 4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through our Parent Engagement Worker. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising

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attendance. Any absences due to medical illness will only be authorised following medical evidence being produced. Five days of unauthorised absence may lead to a penalty notice.

## **5. Absence Procedures:**

**If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- Or they can call into school and report to reception.

**If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and then the Principal if absences persist and attendance moves below 85%.

## **6. The Parent Engagement Worker (PEW)**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the PEW will continue to monitor attendance to resolve attendance issues with parents and attempt to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the school will refer to matter to the local authority who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

## **7. Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

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### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect our children to be in the playground before this time ready to line up when the whistle is blown.

Registers are marked by **8.55am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.45am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Principal to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality through visual displays and assembly notices.

### **8. Holidays in Term Time:**

No holidays will be sanctioned in term time. We strongly urge all parents to take holidays within the fixed school holidays. The local authority will issue a penalty notice to all parents who take unsanctioned holidays during term time.

All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance and will only be sanctioned at the discretion of the Principal. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Targets for the school and for classes will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these.

The minimum level of attendance for any child at Unity Community Primary is **95%** attendance. We will keep parents updated regularly on their child's progress. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

### **9. Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

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