

# Sawston Village College

## Attendance Policy



### Introduction

Absence during term-time as a result of term-time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Research shows that pupil attendance of less than 95% can impact on pupil attainment by as much as a grade or level. Sawston Village College aims to minimise the amount of time lost to term-time holidays through a policy that discourages parents from arranging family holidays during term time and allows authorisation of absence for such holidays only in exceptional circumstances.

### Legal and National Context

Parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance and punctuality of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Schools have the power to grant leave, for the purpose of an annual holiday during term time under exceptional circumstances. This is not an entitlement, however, and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted as of right.

Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term-time holidays; schools are now expected to adopt a much more challenging response to requests for leave. Schools are also legally required to set targets to reduce overall absence. Term-time holiday absence is a particular category of absence on which schools are now expected to focus.

### Implementation

The college will:

- ensure that school policy with regard to term-time holidays is clearly stated in the school brochure and is regularly communicated to parents;
- remind parents of the importance of ensuring their children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance;
- actively discourage parents from arranging holidays during term-time;
- unequivocally remind parents that they do not have any right or entitlement to expect term-time leave to be granted and that all leave is granted at the discretion of the Principal (or those authorised to exercise discretion);
- advise parents that if leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence, and that the matter may be referred to the school's Education Welfare Officer;
- provide attendance data on the termly report.

## **Guidance relating to approval of holiday requests in 'exceptional circumstances'**

Whilst the College will be required to make individual judgements as to what constitute "exceptional circumstances", such circumstances might include the following:

- a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously/terminally ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday;
- there has recently been a death or significant other trauma in the family and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation;

The financial factor should not be taken as a factor if a parent claims that he/she is unable to afford to book a holiday during the school holidays when prices may be significantly higher than in term-time.

Authorised leave will **not** be granted:

- if a child's attendance record over the previous 20 week period is less than 95% - even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable causes such as illness; or
- if the period of leave coincides with the start of term, or is near to, or coincides with, tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

If leave is granted it should be for only one holiday in any one school year.

If a child's parents are separated and it is envisaged that each parent may make a separate request for term-time leave the school may wish to decline both requests in order to counter any potential suggestion of unequal/unfair treatment.

## **Promoting Attendance**

The school uses opportunities as they arise to remind parents and pupils of the importance of attendance for instance through parent information evenings, the pupil planner and home/school agreement. Attendance is also celebrated through assemblies, certificates and attendance awards. A pupil who achieves 100% attendance throughout their school career will receive 'transport of their choice' to the Year 11 Ball, funded by the school. One pupil has achieved this in 2010.

## **The Education Welfare Officer**

Our Education Welfare Officer is Mrs Heather Bridgeman. The school and EWO always endeavor to work with pupils and parents at an early stage to resolve problems. This is nearly always successful. However, the EWO also has a legal role and if other ways of resolving attendance has failed, these officers can use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates court. There are times when parents want to contact the EWO directly for help and advice. Contact details for Mrs Bridgeman are:

Locality office                      01223 475926

Via school office                    01223 712777

**The attendance team includes:**

Mrs Debbie Chapman	Attendance Officer
Mr Jonathan Russell	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs Fiona Fletcher	Year 11 Manager
Mr David Hunt	Year 10 Manager
Mrs Joanna Vivash	Year 9 Manager
Mrs Sam Macehiter	Year 8 Manger
Mrs Jan Bucklow	Year 7 Manager
Mrs Heather Bridgeman	Education Welfare Officer
Mrs Jo Shickell	Locality Manager
Mrs Corinne Hammond	Parent Support Adviser
Mrs Julia Grubb	Parent Support Adviser

**Additional appendices related to absence:**

Appendices A:	Procedure for reporting absence at school;
Appendices B:	Punctuality;
Appendices C:	Understanding types of absence.

Date of Policy: 10 June 2010

Review date: June 2012

*FST/JCA 10/06/2010*

## **Appendices A: Procedure for Reporting Absence at School**

**If a child is absent from school the following procedures are required to ensure the school is fully informed.**

### First day absence

- The school Attendance Officer, Mrs D Chapman is contacted by the parent on 01223 712623 or email [dchapman@sawstonvc.org](mailto:dchapman@sawstonvc.org).
- Information is provided, including the reason for absence, pupil name and form group.
- On return to school, the parent provides a note with a explanation for absence, unless the reason has already been provided via school email.

### Third day absence

- If the pupil is absent for three days, further contact with Mrs Chapman is required by the parent to provide details about the due date for a return to school by the pupil.

### Continued absence

- In the case of longer term absence, Mrs Chapman is informed so that appropriate work or support can be provided.

### Ten day's absence

A pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Team. This is a legal requirement.

**If a child needs to be absent during the school day the following procedures are required:**

- the school Attendance Officer, Mrs D Chapman is contacted by the parent on 01223 712623 or email [dchapman@sawstonvc.org](mailto:dchapman@sawstonvc.org) to inform of reason for absence during the day for example, dental appointment;
- the pupil must sign out before they leave the school premises and sign in on their return.

### **School action in the case of pupil absence:**

- on the first day of absence, the Attendance Officer will use telephone contact or the text alert service will be used to confirm absence with the parent if contact has not already been made;
- the Year Manager, accompanied by the Education Welfare Officer is likely to make a home visit in cases that are deemed 'at risk' of poor attendance;
- in the case of pupil attendance that is deemed 'at risk', the parent will be invited to school to discuss absence and actions for improving attendance;
- in the case of a pupil absence moving towards the 80% Persistent Absence (PA) level, the pupil will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.

## **Appendices B: Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable at Sawston Village College. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital work and information. Lateness is also disruptive for lessons.

### **The school day:**

The school starts at **8.30 am**, pupils are expected to be in their form room at this time.

Registers are marked by **8.45 am**. A pupil who is late after this time will receive a late mark.

Registers are closed at **9.15 am**. In accordance with regulations, a pupil who arrives at school after this time will receive a mark to show they are on site, however, this will be counted as an authorized absence.

Afternoon register starts at **2.05 pm**. Afternoon registers close at **2.10 pm**

If a child arrives late to school, for example due to a dental appointment, a note must accompany the child on their return which they will give to the Attendance Officer, Mrs Chapman when they sign in. In this case the absence will be recorded as authorised.

### **Lesson monitor**

Every lesson is registered through the school internal system. Teachers are expected to ensure that the register is taken as promptly as possible. The reason for this is to track punctuality and in school truancy. It is essential that registers are recorded accurately, using the internal system. In the rare occasion that the register is not accessible on the system, a paper copy of the register should be used. In this case the teacher is expected to complete the register, not the pupils, and return to Debbie Chapman, Attendance Officer promptly.

If a pupil is late in arriving to lesson, the teacher will record lateness on the system to show the number of minutes late. In this case, an N should be changed to an L.

The Year Manager has the overview of punctuality and will follow up lateness with individual pupils, who will be expected to make up the time lost. In cases of persistent lateness, Year Managers will place pupils on monitoring report.

## **Appendices C: Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, either as authorised or unauthorised absence.

**Authorised absences** are approved by the Year Manager or Attendance Officer on behalf of the Principal. An example of an authorised absence that may be approved would be a morning or afternoon away from school for a reason such as illness or medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall within the school day.

All absence must always be accompanied with a note to explain absence, or by direct communication with the Attendance Officer, Mrs D Chapman on 01223 712623 or email [dchapman@sawstonvc.org](mailto:dchapman@sawstonvc.org)

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which permission has not been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- unexplained absence;
- pupils who regularly arrive late, after registration has closed;
- holidays/days off school that have not been authorised;
- pupils staying off school for invalid reasons such as shopping, caring for siblings etc.

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 20% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to a child's educational prospects. The school monitors all absence thoroughly. If a child's absence is deemed to 'be at risk' of PA, the parent will be informed of this by the Year Manager. PA pupils are tracked through the pastoral system, combined with academic monitoring. All PA cases are made known to the Educational Welfare Officer. All PA pupils are made subject to an action plan which is discussed between the pupil, parent, Year Manager and EWO if appropriate. Pupils at risk may also be referred to the Parent Support Adviser, who works with families to provide support and strategies to encourage attendance.