



## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

**September 2021**

## Copperfield Academy Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly. Where the words *regular* and *regularly* are used in this policy, it refers to a minimum expected attendance of 96% or better. Therefore, your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. [Please see Appendix 1 regarding COVID-19\\*](#)

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
98-100%	Excellent	0-4	Less than 1
96-98%	Good	5-9	1-2
95-96%	Satisfactory	10-13	2-3
90-95%	Unsatisfactory	14-18	3-4
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19 Equivalent to 38 sessions	More than 4

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### The Law relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that ‘the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.’

### The Law relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### Why regular attendance is so important

**Learning:** Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

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

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 you details on attendance in our regular Newsletter;
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

**Safeguarding:** Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone’s responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don’t then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on updating telephone numbers carried out throughout the year.

### **Absence Procedures**

**If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, and then each day that your child is absent;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

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

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Send you a letter requesting you to fill in our child absence slip, where you will need to explain your child’s absence on the days they were not at school;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Kent Education Attendance Officer (EWO) if attendance moves below 90%.

## **Early Years Expectations**

As attendance for children under 5 years of age is not statutory, there is not the same recourse to legal sanctions. However, the early years are a critical time to establish the good habits and routines needed throughout life and to get the key messages about the importance of attendance and punctuality at nursery and school across to parents and carers.

Regular attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development. A regular routine supports the young child to feel settled and secure. Unsettled children have higher stress levels which, in turn, prevent them from being able to benefit fully from the learning opportunities available.

Families should know that good attendance and being punctual are expected when their child takes up a place. As attendance is an issue that affects all age groups, there needs to be as much consistency as possible between early years and school settings. This includes expectations around holidays, which for school-aged children are not permissible in term time.

If a child has more than 20 sessions (10 days) unauthorised absences over one school year while in nursery or reception, they may be at risk of losing their place at the school.

## **The School Attendance Officer**

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. Our Attendance Office will also try 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 Attendance Officer will contact the EWO 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 Kent Education Department.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Governing Body**

As part of the whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that attendance is given a high priority and will annually review the school's Attendance Policy.
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date information is provided to families.
- Agree with the school, the appropriate and accurate attendance figures and also agree the targets that will be submitted to the borough.
- Once a term, at governor's meetings allow the time to discuss attendance issues and ways that they can support the school as necessary.

### **School Leadership Team**

As part of our whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the School Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that attendance is given the highest priority and ensure that each Year Leadership Team will be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with their students and parents/carers.
- Build links with each year group which will ensure that school policy is administered, and that the school's systems to promote good attendance are adhered to and are consistently done.

- Ensure that the data is analysed to identify whole school year group and student issues as soon as possible and implement the appropriate interventions and support.
- Provide the data for the governing body once a term.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.
- Develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their pupil to attend.
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their pupil's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.

### **Teachers and Support staff**

As part of our whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families.
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement.
- Ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue.
- Ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily.
- Contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed.
- Work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

### **Parents**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- Notify the school by telephone on the first day that their child is unavailable to attend school.
- Confirm this in writing when the child returns to school.
- Avoid making medical/dental appointments during the school day.
- Do not take their child on holiday in term time and in the case of exceptional circumstances permission must be granted by the Head teacher. The Leave of Absence in Term Time application form is on the school website and applications must be made four weeks before the intended date of absence.
- Promote the value of excellent attendance at home and follow the procedures set by the school.
- Advise the school of any difficulties the child may be having so that the school can support as appropriate.
- Are aware that Section 444 of the Education Act states, *'If a pupil of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.'*

### **Pupils**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- Ensure they are punctual, and regular attendance is maintained at the highest level.
- Attend all their lessons on time and be ready to learn.

- On those occasions that they return to school from an absence they must bring a written explanation to their form tutor.
- Inform their form tutor if they are experiencing difficulties with their attendance in the first instance, who will inform their Head of Year, who will decide on the appropriate support.

### **The Education Welfare Officer**

- 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 school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer.
- The school can implement the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice with a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. Leaflets are available from school but reminders in respect of Fixed Penalty Notices are frequently posted in our newsletter and weekly emails to parents.
- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The telephone number is available from the school office.

### **Alternative Provision**

- Alternative provision can be defined as education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.
- Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for permanently excluded pupils, and for other pupils who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such arrangements being made.
- Governing bodies of schools are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education from the sixth day of a fixed period exclusion.
- Schools may also direct pupils off-site for education, to help improve their behaviour.
- **If the school deems alternative provision to be suitable for your child the school Inclusion Leader (Mr Kiff) will contact you directly.**

## Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise any child's absence from school. Therefore, absences will be treated as unauthorised until the school is satisfied that it should be authorised. ***Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.***

### Authorised absences

These 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 causes, if we have proof of these appointments.

#### Illness (I)

Please contact the school office (01474 352488) each morning your child is off ill informing us of the type of illness he/she has, and once your child has returned to school we may ask to see proof of a GP letter, prescription or prescribed medicine.

If we don't hear from you, we will try and make contact with you on the first day of absence. If after a few days we have had no message as to why your child is absent from school, we will record it as an unauthorised absence.

#### Medical Appointments (M)

We will need to see proof of appointments before they are authorised, such as a copy of the appointment card/letter. Please bring these to the school office. Whenever possible, please make GP, dentist, optician or any other medical appointments after school or in school holidays.

#### Religious observance (R)

Copperfield Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will consider authorising absence for these times. Parents will be aware of these dates and should request the absence in the normal way by completing a term time leave request in advance (collected from school office).

### Unauthorised absences

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

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily. This may include looking after brothers or sisters or ill relatives, attending appointments with parents or family members or caring for a disabled parent.
- 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.

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 your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

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

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence 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 you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support from the Attendance Officer or a member of the Welfare Team use of circle time, individual incentive programmes, sanctions, and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Kent County Council Education Welfare Officer.

### **Term Time Leave of Absence**

Taking holidays in term time is no longer accepted. Only the Headteacher can give permission for term time leave in 'exceptional circumstances' and this must be applied for in advance. The request form is available from the school office.

Although the following list is not exhaustive, permission for term time leave will not be given for:

- family holidays
- day trips
- weddings
- trips to visit relatives abroad
- trips abroad that involve medical surgery for parents when other arrangements for child care can be found

Please note that where a request is made and is authorised, it will only be on the understanding that the following evidence may be requested and is provided:

- Any required trip abroad – proof of flight details, including a proposed date of return. If flights have to be changed by an airline which directly affect the return date, then proof of this will also be required.
- Funeral – a copy of an order of service.
- Attendance at an event – proof of this, either a ticket or programme that includes a list of attendees.

**Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are at the expense of the cost to your child's education.** Since 1st September 2013, new Government Legislation states that Parent/Carers are not entitled to take their children on holiday during 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, but please note the following:

- If you take your child out of school for an **authorised** or **unauthorised** holiday during term time, it is possible that a Penalty Notice might be issued to each parent of each child taken out of school as stipulated in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (Amendment 2013). For example, **£60 per parent, £60 per child** (e.g. a family of 4, with 2 parents and 2 children would be fined a total of £240). Failure to pay the fine can result in legal action.
- Standard information provided with each Penalty Notice states that £60 is payable within 21 days of the Notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 21th and 28th day. If neither of these sums is paid within these periods, liability to prosecution may arise

### Penalty Warnings and Fines

A school day is made up of two sessions. If a child is late after the register closes at 9.25am, this is recorded as an unauthorised absence and counts as one session. If your child has more than 10 unauthorised absences you may receive a Penalty Warning Notice. You may also be invited to attend a panel meeting with the school attendance team. If your child's attendance does not improve the Local Authority may send a penalty fine. If these fines are not paid or the attendance does not improve then this could result in a court case.

### Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss learning and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Learning will not be stopped when late children arrive in the class as this is unfair on the children who are punctual to school. It is the responsibility of all parents and carers to ensure that their child/ren are in school on time.

**8.30am:** School gates open and pupils can go into classrooms.

**8.45am:** School gates are closed.

**8.45-9.00am:** Children are registered as 'late' and must enter school by the main office.

**9.00am** onwards: children are registered as 'very late' parents/carers must provide the exact reason as to why they are late.

If your child arrives after 9:00am (except for absences that have been approved by the school), it will be recorded as absent (code U) from school on our registration system only (Arbor) for that morning session.

If your child has a persistent late record you may be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and/or the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 19 days a year.

19 days lost a year through being late = 90% attendance = Persistent Absence.

## Some strategies to support improving punctuality

### Night time routines



- Encourage children to pack their school bag before going to bed, ready for the next day.
- Getting to bed earlier.
- Setting a time for a television, iPad, computer, mobile phone and other devices to be turned off.

### Morning routines



- Setting the alarm for a time that allows all morning routines to be carried out without making them late for school.
- Having breakfast before leaving home, so there is no need to call in at the shop on the way to school.
- Encourage them to leave home at least five minutes earlier than they think they need to.
- Meeting a reliable friend to walk to school with.
- Coming to school for breakfast club if available.

## School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance which is the same for all schools nationally and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area. Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Newsletters and on our website and we ask for your full support.

## 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 and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Date of Policy Review: Sep 22**

## Appendix 1 - COVID-19

### Attendance Expectations

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, it was made clear no parent/carer would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.

This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- Parents'/Carers' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly at Copperfield
- Copperfield Academy's responsibility to record attendance and follow-up every absence
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

#### Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating:

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so, in future, there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). **We will require proof of this from a GP or hospital.**

Where children are not able to attend school as parents/carers are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

#### All other pupils must attend school

We at Copperfield bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This has and may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents/carers of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we will be able to discuss your concerns and provide reassurance of the measures we are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. However, we are clear with parents/carers that **pupils must be in school** unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.)

**Actions from all schools and local authorities**

We as a school and local authority will:

- Communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (this letter continues this process)
- Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them
- Work closely with other professionals, as appropriate, to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance