

CAMBRIDGE HOUSE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY 2017

1 Rationale

Cambridge House is committed to a positive policy of encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. The school will work with parents/guardians, pupils and outside agencies to secure this aim.

Parents/guardians and guardians of pupils of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education at school or otherwise.

The school is responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance.

The school believes that schools which adopt a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and encourage parents/guardians to take an active role in the schooling of their children can play a major role in improving levels of attendance and punctuality and in reducing absenteeism.

2 Definition

It is a legal requirement that schools will:

- Be open to all pupils for 190 days (380 sessions am/pm) each school year;
- Maintain attendance registers in accordance with the relevant regulations;
- Accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness;
- Clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the Department of Education. It is the decision of the Principal as to whether or not an absence will be authorised;
- Submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's prospectus and annual report;
- Set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

3 Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to ensure that there is an efficient system, known to all, for ensuring that pupils attending school have registered with their first period teachers or signed the Late Book and that reasons for non-attendance are made known to the school via the school office.

This policy will:

- Give a high priority and value to attendance and punctuality and ensure that specific strategies are in place in order to achieve this;
- Ensure compliance with all relevant statutory requirements (particularly with regard to the maintenance of attendance registers and the setting of targets);
- Ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents/guardians through e-mail, parents/guardians' meetings or other means;
- Ensure that parents/guardians are made aware of their legal responsibilities regarding their child's regular and punctual attendance;
- Collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, year groups and the whole school;
- Provide clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration;
- Recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies
- Make provision for first-day of absence notification to parents/guardians of pupils who are known to be poor attenders (85% or below) or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk;
- Identify a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism;
- Provide for the setting up of effective networks for liaising with other involved agencies and services;
- Establish procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees and pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been on a reduced timetable;
- Promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, addressing school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, etc.

4 Procedures

Pupils should only be absent from school in the event of sickness or an event which for good reason makes it impossible

to attend school. The events listed below do not automatically constitute grounds for being absent from school.

Holidays

Pupils should not be taken out of school for the purpose of going on holidays during term time. If a pupil goes on a holiday during term time the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Appointments/Absences in Advance

Dental and Medical appointments should be made outside school hours or during the school holidays. In the event of such an appointment having to be made during the school day it will constitute an authorised absence, if school is properly notified by means of an appointment card or a signed letter from a parent/guardian. Three days' notice must be given to the Head of Year, where possible, and an absence in advance slip completed and filed in the school office.

Other requests for absences such as driving lessons for post 16 pupils will be authorised at the discretion of the Head of Sixth Form and will only be considered if the pupil has no timetabled classes.

Carers

The school may, exceptionally, sanction limited absence for young carers until other arrangements can be made. The Principal will set a time limit for such absences in consultation with the Vice-Principal (Pastoral). The Principal may also seek advice from the EA(NER) or appropriate agency before coming to a decision.

Approved Educational Activities

The register must record whether the pupil is present, absent or attending an approved educational activity. Attendance and all forms of absence, i.e. education elsewhere etc should be recorded using the Absence and Attendance codes.

Study Leave

Study Leave should be applied only to **public examination** candidates during the examination period. Study leave **should not be used** for internal examinations, for extended periods or in advance of the commencement of the examination timetable. Study leave should only be granted, using this criterion, at the discretion of the School.

Decisions on study leave should be made by the Senior Leadership Team following the guidelines in Appendix F.

Clarification in the application and granting of study leave has been provided at Registration Code – S in Appendix E.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO) Referrals

Referrals to EWOs are usually made by schools. There are, however, occasions when other agencies/services or parents/guardians may make a referral.

Before accepting a referral from a school an EWO will expect the school to have first undertaken a number of steps to address the pupil's non-attendance.

The overwhelming majority of referrals to EWOs are made on the basis of non-attendance (referrals are occasionally taken in relation to child protection concerns, transport or school age employment issues).

Referrals will usually only be accepted in relation to absence which has not been authorised by the school. (Only in exceptional circumstances will referrals by the College be made in relation to authorised absence to the Education Welfare Service).

Referrals may be made when:

- A pattern of post-registration truancy is persisting despite the school's efforts to prevent it;
- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed;
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has begun, which has been noticed by the Form Teacher/Head of Year; checking individual attendance on (Schools Information Management System) (SIMS), or a Subject Teacher who has noticed a pattern of non-attendance over a two week period;
- Communication by the school to the parents/guardians has met with little or no response;
- There is evidence of a lack of parental co-operation in ensuring a child's regular attendance;
- A parent withdraws a pupil from school having expressed an intention to educate her otherwise than at school (Elective Home Education). A referral will always be made in this case;
- A pupil is withdrawn from school by the parents/guardians who are moving to another area and the school does not have a confirmed destination school/provider where the child will resume his or her education (such pupils will be treated as 'children missing education');
- A pattern of persistent lateness has developed;

- There are child protection concerns;
- There are specific and identifiable welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education.

All referrals to the Education Welfare Officer are recorded in SIMS.

Taking a Pupil off the Register

The Principal will authorise the taking of a pupil's name off the register in accordance with the current Department of Education regulations.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

Governors

The Board of Governors will:

- Approve the policy and any proposed changes;
- Receive reports on attendance from the Principal.

Senior Leadership Team

The Principal, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team and Pastoral Team leaders will:

- Set attendance targets (97%) in accordance with the School Development Plan and target-setting process
- Monitor progress;
- Ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the policy throughout the School;
- Determine whether to authorise any proposed absences requested by parents/guardians, or record as unauthorised any absences that have taken place for which no request has been made;
- Notify parents/guardians/guardians as appropriate that if a pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly his/her parents/guardians commit an offence;
- Initiate strategies to improve attendance;
- Liaise with EW service over persistent absentees;
- Liaise with EW service and PSNI when they wish to exercise their powers to enforce truants to return to school;
- Make an annual report with statistics to the Board of Governors.

Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will:

- Ensure that the Heads of Year implement the agreed procedures;
- Authorise referrals to the Education Welfare Officer when appropriate;
- Meet regularly with the Education Welfare Officer;
- Ensure targets are being monitored.

Heads of Key Stages will:

- Oversee the attendance arrangements;
- Work with Heads of Year to ensure the efficient running of the system;
- Liaise with the relevant KS5 Heads of Year to review the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) on an annual basis;
- Work with the Head of Year to identify pupils whose attendance is below 97% and inform parents/guardians;
- Make periodic checks of the registers to monitor pupil absence;
- Make regular checks on absence notes and the reasons for absence;
- Ensure that unaccounted for absences are followed up;
- Deal with issues of inadequate registering;
- Arrange appropriate training for staff;
- Keep the Principal informed of the progress of the policy;
- Advise the Principal on any strategies that could be initiated or improved to promote attendance.

Pastoral Team

Heads of Year will:

- In collaboration with Form Teachers identify monthly pupils whose attendance is between 97% and 95%;
- Monitor the recording of pupil absence notes by the Form Teacher;
- Ensure that all registers are completed and up-to-date at the end of each term;
- Make regular checks on the efficiency of the registering;
- Ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and dealt with;
- Contact parents/guardians over pupil absences where appropriate;
- Make reports to the appropriate Assistant Principal on the efficiency of the system;
- Identify ad hoc absences or unusual trends and inform the Vice-Principal. These absences may or may not be

unauthorised.

Form Teachers will:

- Ensure that pupils are registered accurately;
- Ensure that pupils bring absence notes;
- Follow up cases of unaccounted for absence or unacceptable notes;
- Keep the Head of Year informed of any signs of suspected truancy;
- Inform the Head of Year of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences.

Subject Teachers will:

- Check the attendance of pupils at every session;
- Inform the Form Teacher/Head of Year of the names of pupils who are absent without notification.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. Parents/Guardians are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay in school once they have registered.

Parents/Guardians can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. They should:

- Take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- Attend parents' evenings and other school events;
- Ensure that their child completes his/her homework;
- Ensure that their child gets an adequate amount of sleep;
- Ensure that their child arrives in school on time each day;
- Ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness;
- Always notify the school as soon as possible – preferably on the first morning – of any absence;
- Confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- Avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- Talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend;
- Inform the school of any planned absence for any reason including religious festivals.

Pupils are required to:

- Attend regularly unless they are ill or have an authorised absence (attending regularly means registering before the attendance register is closed for the session);
- Bring an explanatory note of absence on the day of return to school;
- Discuss with their Head of Year any planned absences well in advance.

6 Review and Evaluation:

The policy will be reviewed at least once every four years by the Board of Governors. The policy will be kept under review by senior members of staff who will keep Governors informed of any difficulties that may arise.

Signed: Chair of Board of Governors

Signed: Principal

Date