



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Principles:

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

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 on the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason: illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason
- Truancy before the register has been marked
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to the pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Education Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's' attendance have failed these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the LA.

Procedures:

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This adds up to missing almost half a term. These are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Illness and other legitimate reasons:

If a child is unfit for school, parent should contact the school on the first day, before 9.15 a.m. by telephone, note, e-mail or by calling in. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. Where a pupil is absent without information given to school by 9.15am, and it is not possible to contact a parent, the school may well contact the police. This is to secure the safety of the child. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness may be required to support the absence. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may, however be granted in an emergency (eg. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Exceptional Circumstances Leave of Absence:

NEW GOVERNMENT ATTENDANCE LEGISLATION

New Government legislation comes into force from September 2013 for the new academic year.

School can no longer receive, or agree, applications for holidays during term time.

Headteachers can only grant leave of absence from school during term time for "exceptional circumstances". The granting of leave of absence in school term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the school. **There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.** The Department for Education (DfE) and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) policy is that family holidays should not be taken in school term time. Where such requests are made, for the leave to be granted, the school panel should decide if there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Parents who wish to apply for exceptional circumstance leave, should apply well in advance wherever possible. The application must be in writing, and with the school form completed. It will be assessed by a panel of three, appointed by school directors, consisting of Mr Williams, Mrs Brimmell and a school director. Where an exceptional circumstance is a short notice emergency, application can be made to Mr Williams through Mrs Brimmell. In considering a request, the school will take account of:-

- The **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
- The age of the child
- The stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
- The overall attendance pattern of the child
- The nature of the trip
- Students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.

Where requests for grant of leave of absence are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where

they live at the same address, or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all 'parents' are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parents will receive a penalty notice.

Should Somers Park decide to grant leave of absence but, the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place at the school could be lost.**

Should Somers Park decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** which may be subject to a Holiday Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child. From 1st September 2013 this fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings. There is no right of appeal of the decision made by the school panel.

Somers Park is highly committed to pupils receiving their full, human right access to education, which we believe delivers the learning skills for a successful life. For this reason "unacceptable attendance" and "unauthorised absence" will not be tolerated, and school will apply all available legal sanctions available to them which will include fines and possible prosecution.

Medical Appointments:

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible.

Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, these appointments will need to be confirmed with school before the date of the appointment. This must be done with a letter or appointment card handed to the school office for photocopying for school attendance records. School will not authorise the absence without this consultation.

Lateness:

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present by for when the bell is rung for commencement of school. Late arrival after doors are closed should only enter school by the main office and be counted as "late". Persistent lateness will be followed up with parent contacted and interviewed.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents to promote attendance and does so annually in the Somers Star. Various initiatives may be taken from time to time as required. If a child is not in regular attendance he/she is being deprived of their right to a full time education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Please work with us.