

Copthorne C.E. Junior School

Attendance and Absence Policy

**Approved September 2024
To be reviewed September 2026**

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parents/carers to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

Being at school

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. It also encourages peer interaction and good social skills, and develops understanding of core values of co-operation and respect. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

Expectations

We expect that all children will:

- *attend school every day*
- *attend school punctually*
- *attend appropriately prepared for the day*

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- *ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities*
- *ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day*
- *ensure that they contact the school daily of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school*
- *contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school*
- *notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child*
- *notify school immediately of any changes to contact details*

We expect that the school will:

- *provide a welcoming atmosphere*
- *provide a safe learning environment*
- *provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's/carer's concerns*
- *keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality*
- *monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality*
- *contact parent/carers when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence*
- *follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parent/carers.*
- *inform parents of the % attendance of a pupil if it falls below school expectations*
- *make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly*

- *refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to outside agencies*
- *will notify the Local Authority (LA) after 15 days sickness*
- *will notify the Local Authority (LA) after 10 days unexplained or absence*

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. The gates are opened at 8:45am and close at 9am.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every child.

- *Lessons begin at 8.50am and after this it is classified as late and the time is placed on the register*
- *registers close at 9am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority*
- *afternoon registration is taken at 1.10pm*
- *a child's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary*

Children Leaving During the School Day

- *during school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the children are during the school day*
- *whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical, dental and other appointments outside of school time*
- *parents are requested to confirm in writing using the 'withdrawal for learning form for medical and dental requests only' (Appendix 1) the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time*
- *children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return*
- *where a child is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.*

Requesting Term Time Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances

Our school follows guidance from the Department for Education that states headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The headteacher makes the decision about whether to authorise term time leave requests. However, statutory regulations make it clear that headteachers are not allowed to class any term time holiday as exceptional. Therefore, headteachers can only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school holiday dates are published in advance so that any holidays and experiences can be booked during this time and not during term time. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

Leave of absence during end of Key Stage Two Assessment dates will not be authorised.

No request for leave of absence can be granted retrospectively so in such circumstances, leave would be unauthorised.

If a parent wishes to take a child away from school during term time, permission from the headteacher (or designated member of staff in their absence) must be obtained in **advance**. The school has a "Parental Request for withdrawal from Learning" form (Appendix 3), which is available from the school office. The form will be returned stating whether the request has been agreed or denied. Any request for absence from learning that is denied but is still taken will be recorded as unauthorised.

Procedures for Managing Attendance

It is the parents/carers responsibility to inform the school by 9.00am on the first day of the child's absence. Parents / carers may either leave a message on the school answerphone, e-mail the school office or speak to a member of staff.

If the child is ill then the school should be notified of the nature of the illness, and if possible, the expected date of return. Parents should contact the school on 01342 712372 or email office@copthornejunior.co.uk. This should happen by 9.00am on the first day of a child's absence and then on each morning for the duration of the absence.

In circumstances where a parent/carer fails to contact school by 9am, and a child's absence is therefore unexplained, a member of school staff will make attempts to contact one of the listed contacts on the pupil records: 1) By phone call initially 2) By email requesting parent/carer to call school 3) By text message requesting parent/carer .

If by 9.30am we have failed to contact a parent/carer by phone or email to establish a child's whereabouts or reason for absence, we may send a member of staff to the home address to establish these facts. If appropriate, the Pupil Entitlement team at the Local Authority will be contacted to arrange an emergency home call.

It is vital that school know where children are if they are not in school and the reason for absence to ensure that children are properly safeguarded.

If a child's unexplained absence continues for more than one day, then the Child Missing in Education team will be contacted for advice and a referral may be made.

If the absence of a child is found to be different to the reason given by the parent/carer (i.e. illness when the child is on holiday or on a day out) then the headteacher will change the absence to unauthorised. *Although the parent/carer may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.*

Strategies to reduce severe attendance issues or persistent absenteeism

The Department of Education (DfE) class children with an attendance rate below 90% as persistent absentees. We use a stepped approach to monitor and improve attendance, in line with DfE guidance (Appendix 2). We expect all children to have good attendance at school.

We regularly monitor the attendance of every child in school. We will notify parent/carers when we have concerns regarding a child's attendance or punctuality by letter and will work with families to ensure attendance improves. We will listen to parents' views to identify and understand any barriers to attendance. We will offer and facilitate support to overcome these.

Sometimes, the support may involve the completion of a supportive action plan or a referral to Early Help. In rare circumstances where this type of support fails to improve attendance, the school may consider formalising the support. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and

support is not working or not being engaged with, we will enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the children's right to an education.

A failure by the family to comply with the planned support may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice or parental prosecution

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some children face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include those who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other child and therefore the attendance ambition for these children should be the same as they are for any other child. At Copthorne C of E Junior School, we will be mindful of the barriers these children face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full time education

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised leave and may also be issued if a parent/carers fails to ensure regular school attendance.

If 10 sessions (a school day is two sessions – am and pm) or more are classified as unauthorised within a school ten-week period, then a referral may be made to the Pupil Entitlement Team, which could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Penalty notices will be issued when the threshold is met. The threshold is:

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. A session is a morning or afternoon- each school day consists of 2 sessions.

This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence:

e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks.

These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).

The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

*** NEW From September 2024 * Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences**

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

From the start of the autumn term 2024, **only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:**

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular child will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. (previously £60 if paid within 21 days)
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carers in respect of the same child is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first.

In a case where the national threshold is met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks) for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. **This will often include considering prosecution**, but may include other attendance legal interventions.

Once 3 years has elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases it would not be the most effective tool for changing what may have now become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

Click on the link below to the West Sussex website for further information on Fixed Penalty Notices.

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-and-behaviour/school-absences/#overview>

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Copthorne CofE Junior School as soon as possible and complete a 'Notice of withdrawal from school' form (Appendix 4). The school would want to work with the new school to ensure the transition runs as smoothly as possible. A child will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next school
- the address of the new school
- a new home address if appropriate
- the child's school records will then be sent to the new school.

In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Local Authority.

Withdrawal from Learning
For Medical/Dental requests only

Child/children's name/s:

..... Class:

..... Class:

Please tick box ☐ Medical ☐ Dental

For medical and dental requests, the request will be authorised and notification will not be sent to parent/carer.

Total number of school days' absence requested

From (first day)..... To (last day of absence).....

Time collecting Time returning to school.....

I wish to request permission to take my child/ren out of school for the following reason:

.....
.....

Parent/Carer's signature Date

Parent/Carer's name: (block capitals) Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

NB Please read notes overleaf

For office use only: Attendance % to date No of days absent to date..... Absence Code.....

☐ I regret to inform you that based on the information provided I am not able to authorise this absence.
Should you wish to discuss the decision I have made, please do not hesitate to contact me.

☐ Due to the absolutely exceptional circumstances I am able to authorise this absence.

Signed

Mrs H Denison, Headteacher

Date

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.



PARENTAL REQUEST for WITHDRAWAL FROM LEARNING
(except medical/dental requests - please use other form)

Child's Name	
Date of birth	
Year Group & Class	
Name of person making request& relationship to child	
Address	
Phone Number	
Dates your child will be absent from school	From: To:
Time collecting & returning	From: To:
Reason for withdrawal <i>(please provide further information overleaf)</i>	
Total number of school days requested	
Details of siblings at other schools where absence has been requested too	

I confirm that the information I have given on this form is true. I understand that if I do not fully complete this form, fully respond to requests for further information or that ultimately the absence is not authorised, my child's attendance will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I understand that I must ensure my child attends school regularly and that failing to do so is a criminal offence which may result in legal proceedings being taken against me, either through a penalty notice or by prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Signed: Date:
(Parent/Carer)

Full Name:

- ☐ I regret to inform you that based on the information provided I am not able to authorise this absence. Should you wish to discuss the decision I have made, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- ☐ I regret to inform you that based on the information provided I am only able to authorise part of the absence requested. Should you wish to discuss the decision I have made, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- ☐ Due to the absolutely exceptional circumstances I am able to authorise this absence.

Signed: Date:
Mrs H Denison, Headteacher

Why is this absence exceptional?

(continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Unless further information is required, a decision will be sent to you within 7 school days.

Absences will only be authorised if this request is made in advance of the dates your child will be absent from school AND if the circumstances of the absence are exceptional. Parents should be aware that they do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time.

The law states that parents must ensure their children regularly attend school to receive their education. The Headteacher can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional is likely to be rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

Whether the absence is exceptional is at the Headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation and can vary from school to school. A week's absence for holiday and a week's absence for illness would give an attendance figure below 95%. The government considers attendance unacceptable below 95%. The Headteacher will consider the reasons for your absence request.

You may be asked to provide evidence to support your request. Please note that having already booked a holiday will not be considered as a good reason for term time absence. In relation to 'unavoidable' absence, the Headteacher will consider whether the event could have reasonably been scheduled at another time. Issues of cost will not be considered as an exceptional reason.

If you wish for this absence to be authorised, you will need to fully explain (together with evidence) why the circumstances of this absence are exceptional.

Appendix 4

FORM OF NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

I being the parent / guardian / person having the actual custody of

_____ (name of child) Class _____

born on _____ hereby give notice that I desire to withdraw

him/her from Copthorne C.E. Junior School with effect from _____

for the following reason:

If reason given is moving of place of residence, please give the following information:-

New address: _____

Present address: _____

Name and address of new school (if known): _____

Signed _____

Name _____

(Please print name)

Date _____