



# Attendance

Status: Statutory	Drafted by: C Whysall	Date Approved:	Approved by:
Date to be reviewed: Autumn 2026	To be reviewed by: Headteacher	Date shared with staff:	Publish on school website:

### Why we have this policy.

High attendance at school is important for children to do well in their learning. Children need to be on time and here every day. We need you to work with us to help make that happen. We expect children to be at school unless there is an unavoidable or exceptional reason, or unless there is a health problem that happens for a long time and means they cannot come. Children from Reception to Year 14 are all part of this policy.

This is the Government's information about how children must attend school: [Working Together to Improve School Attendance. August 2024.](#)

We have this policy so we can try to:

- Support children and their parents/carers to be at school every day and on time.
- Make sure all children can access school.
- Make sure that parents/carers know about the laws to do with attendance.

At school, we know that attendance is important and we will do all we can to support parents/carers to get children into school every day. Making sure children attend school is part of the work we do to make sure children are safe – called **safeguarding**. Absence from school can place pupils at risk of exploitation and may make it easier for children to slip into antisocial behaviour in the community.

## What Everyone Must Do

### Parents/carers:

- Make sure your child comes to school and know that you have a legal responsibility to make this happen.
- Make sure your child is on time for school with all the things they need in time for the register. If your child is late, it might be marked as an 'unauthorised' absence.
- Tell school if your child has a medical appointment during the school day. We would like appointments to be after school, if possible, please. We might ask to see the text message, email or appointment card just to check that the appointment is happening.
- Make sure you contact school before 9am if your child cannot attend school, telling school the reason.
- Tell school if your child is unhappy coming to school, so that we can help you and your child solve the problem that is making them unhappy.
- Fill out the form if you need to take your child out of school during term time. We won't authorise the absence unless it is for an exceptional reason. This means it has to be unavoidable and important. If you take your child out of school even when school have said it will be unauthorised, you might be given either a penalty notice (which is a fine you must pay) or a prosecution.
- Tell school if your phone number, email address or home address changes. Make sure we have more than one person's details in case we need to ring someone for your child in an emergency.
- If we suggest some things to help your child with attendance or problems, try and work with us to let them happen.
- Talk to us about any problems with attendance. This could be face to face or on the phone or email. It's better face to face if you can.

A child registered with a school must attend school in the term after they are 5 years old. They must attend until the last Friday in June when the pupil is in Year 11. This is called 'statutory school age'. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to make sure their child comes to school.

## School:

- Be a safe place to learn.
- Keep regular and accurate records of when your child is in school and if they are on time.
- Check children's attendance and do something if they are not in school regularly.
- Contact parents/carers when a child is not in school if we have not had a message to say why from a parent/carer.
- Find out why a child is not in school if you have not given us a reason. Your reason may not mean we authorise the absence. If your child is off school for a long time or lots of times because of a medical condition, we might ask you for some information from a doctor to help us support your child.
- Meet with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer at Cambridgeshire County Council (AIO) to help us check attendance and see what else we need to do.
- Tell Cambridgeshire County Council if a child is not attending school enough.
- Decide what we think will help a child who is not attending school and put that help and support in place.
- Work with other services to help a child's attendance. E.g. other schools, Cambridgeshire County Council, Social Care, Early Help, Youth Offending Service, Senior Transition Advisers, and the local community.
- Share the information about how much your child is coming to school with you and explain what good attendance is.
- Have the same rules for everyone about coming to school every day and on time.
- Have special support and follow the Local Authority Medical Needs Policy for children who cannot come to school because of medical, or behaviour needs. This follows Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.
- Think about having an Individual Healthcare Plan if a child has medical needs.
- Work with the SAT Caseworkers at Cambridgeshire County Council to support children with medical needs who cannot come to school every day.

The Attendance Champion for our school is Ellys Cutmore. She is a member of the Leadership Team. She can be contacted via the office@castle.cambs.sch.uk email address.

All staff at school have to work hard to make sure attendance is good. The Headteacher is in charge of it. If we are worried about your child, we will tell you on the phone or by letter and you will be invited into school to talk to us about it.

#### **Children:**

- Come to school every day.
- Be here on time every morning.
- Have what they need for a day in school.
- Talk to their teacher about any problems they have that make them want to stay at home.

#### **Governors:**

- Look at the information about attendance every term.
- Make sure the Headteacher does everything in this policy.

#### **The Local Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council):**

- Support school and give us information and guidance by having meetings with us about attendance.
- Work with us when a child misses a lot of school.
- Work with schools to decide what legal sanctions (penalty notice or prosecution) would be appropriate.
- Work out what support a child needs to be able to access education if they have medical needs.

## What School Does for Attendance

The school's Attendance Team includes our Family Support Workers, Learning Mentors, Positive Support Hub Staff, Attendance Champion and the Headteacher.

Ellys Cutmore is our Attendance Champion, but for day-to-day attendance issues, please contact our school office, on 01223 442 400 who will direct you to the right point of contact for your enquiry.

We make sure all children can come to school every day, and other services help us to offer support. Some children, e.g. Young Carers, might need more help to be able to come to school. We show families where they can get extra help if they struggle with coming to school. Sometimes Social Care help us to decide if a child needs support. We will work with families in many different ways to help them come to school every day. We have a special person for safeguarding called a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Anyone can talk to that person at school if they need help.

School has to look at all pupils' information and see who is coming to school every day. We use this information to see what we need to do to help groups of children. We share this information with different staff to make sure everyone knows how to support the children.

We have to share our attendance information with the Department for Education (DfE) so that we can see whether our children's attendance is as good as other schools, both nearby and in the whole UK.

We look at the information and if a child is not coming to school regularly, we will work with them to help it get better and we will contact you directly. Children who miss 10% of time at school might get a fine or penalty notice and we call them '**persistently absent**' (absent a lot of the time). Children who miss half their time at school (50%) are called '**severely persistently absent**' and if this happens, we will ask parents/carers to do lots of work with us to help and support the child.

We train every staff member to understand attendance so that everyone knows how to support children to come to school, and everyone knows who can help. We train, remind and support all staff to follow this policy. Good attendance is celebrated with children and families and reported to parents via Arbor.

Part of our work means we decide how to spend school money and how we use our staff to support attendance. We check how this is going by looking at our data to make sure the money we spend has a good effect and is helping to improve attendance.

### Supporting Attendance



As a school, we try to work together with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will **listen to you and support you**. However, if this doesn't work, we may think about using the legal options below:

When we need to, we will put support in place to help improve a child's attendance or lateness. If this doesn't work, and your child doesn't meet a target for attendance set by school, we will send your details to the Local Authority Attendance Team. This might mean you get a Penalty Notice/fine, or may be prosecuted by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This could be a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Lateness and attendance are checked every day by the school who will:

- Look at pupil attendance for certain groups in school.
- Look at pupil attendance for children with medical needs.
- Check for pupils who are 'Children Missing in Education' and tell the Local Authority about them.
- Follow certain actions for parents who have requested to home educate their child.

- Follow certain actions to take children off the school roll if they need to.
- Look at the registers every day, checking authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons parents/carers have given for pupils who are not in school.
- Send a 'Late Letter' to parents/carers when their child is late a number of times.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to find out why a pupil is not in school.
- Tell parents/carers if their child's attendance is too low.
- Offer support or tell you where you can find support in the community.
- Work with parents and carers to improve attendance
- Step One. Phone parents/carers and tell them that we are worried about a child's attendance/lateness.
- Step Two. Send a letter to offer support and explain the effect the absence/lateness is having on the child.
- Step Three. Send an invitation to attend a meeting to make an **Attendance Contract**. This is a supportive meeting, that you choose to agree to. We discuss the needs of a pupil and family and find ways to support you so your child can attend school.
- Step Four. If the Attendance Contract does not improve attendance, or if the parents/carers do not work with the support even when the school asks them to, then we will ask the Local Authority to decide if a penalty notice/fine or prosecution can be used.
- At Step Three or Four, school might choose to use a **Notice To Improve** letter. This is sent by the school and the Local Authority. It is a final try to improve attendance before using fines and prosecutions. It is used when parents/carers do not engage with us to support the child.
- After using an Attendance Contract or a Notice To Improve, if attendance does not get better, school will refer to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine or prosecution.
- Inform a pupil's Youth Offending Team worker/the SAFE Team if appropriate, that the pupil's attendance is a concern.
- Report pupils to the Local Authority when they have 10 'O' coded (unauthorised absence) sessions in school in a row. 10 *sessions* in a row = 5 days.
- Report pupils who have been off for 10 *sessions* of 'G' codes (meaning they asked for leave but the Headteacher did not agree to it) in a row to the Local Authority. We will

ask them to use a penalty notice/fine or prosecution (it depends on how many times your child has had unauthorised term time leave – we explain this later on).

- Report pupils with 15 *days* of 'I' (illness) codes in a row to the Local Authority.

## Registers

Reception to Year 11:

- Registers are open at 9am and close at 9.30am. Pupils who arrive at school after the register has been taken, but before it is closed, will be marked as 'L' - late on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after registers close at 9.30 am, without an unavoidable reason, will be marked as 'U' - unauthorised late. This affects their attendance level.

It is the law that we do the register every morning and afternoon at school. If we don't know why a child is late, we have to mark it as unauthorised until a parent/carer gives us a reason. This must be no later than 5 days after the mark is made. Only the Headteacher may authorise or unauthorise an absence. The register can only be changed when we don't know the reason but then a parent/carer gives us the reason. If we make a change, the register has to show the original mark, the changed mark, the reason for the change, the date the change was made, and the name of the person who made the change. Registers are kept for six years as a record.

## Lateness

When children arrive late at school, it means the child, the teacher and other children are disturbed and miss learning. Where pupils start to be late a lot, we will phone, email or write a letter to you to explain what is happening and offer you support. If the lateness continues, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

If the lateness still does not get better, even with the school's support, we may ask the Local Authority to use one of the legal options.

Many of our pupils are transported to school often by local authority transport. Where this is the case pupils should be ready in plenty of time for the vehicle to arrive at their home. Alternative transport cannot be arranged if it is missed.

### **Reporting a Pupil Absence**

Parents/carers must contact school on the first day their child is not in school by 9am. You must ring again every day that the child is not in school.

For any pupil not in school when the register closes at 9.30am, and school does not know the reason, a member of staff will try and get hold of the parent/carer.

The member of staff will ring every person on your child's record, starting with the first one, until we find out why the child is not in school. We will leave a message on voicemail if you do not answer. We will make a note of any conversations. Staff will mark the registers using one of the codes (see appendix 1 at the end of this policy).

If a parent/carer does not tell us why a child is absent, we will mark it as unauthorised. If we do not know where a child is, we might come to your house and knock on the door to see if your child is safe.

### **Illness**

If your child has had sickness or diarrhoea, they can return after they have not been sick or had diarrhoea for 48 hours.

Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezes and runny noses can come to school. However, if they have a temperature over 37.5 degrees, they should stay at home until their temperature has come down and they are well enough. This is a good website that the NHS and Government has made which tells you if your child is well enough to go to school or not: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).

Children should come to school unless they are too unwell to do basic things. We will ring you if they need to go home.

### **Medical Needs and SEND**

The nature of our school means that our pupils often have complex medical needs, social, emotional or mental health needs, special educational needs and disabilities. Where these needs impact on attendance, we will work with families, the pupil's SEN Caseworker and the SEND professionals at the Local Authority to identify and overcome the barriers to attendance.

When children are prevented from accessing school due to physical or mental ill health, school will use a tiered approach to supporting medical needs. This starts with the universal offer of support for all children and leads to higher tiers of need where increasingly specialist support is required. We will consider reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements. We will liaise with appropriate services (SAT Caseworkers) to ascertain support, in the rare instances that a pupil is unable to access any education inside the school setting. We will work with the Local Authority to ascertain next steps. Where a pupil's health needs mean they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, we may seek medical information to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision. This may take a variety of forms, which we will discuss with parents/carers on an individual basis.

All our children have an EHCP, we liaise closely with the child's SEN Caseworker to work towards the best attendance outcomes for the child.

We are able to make adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments must be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with, the pupil and their parents/carers.

### **General Non-Attendance**

This is different to being absent due to illness or other authorised reasons, or for unauthorised term-time leave. General non-attendance is when a pupil is absent from school, without it

being exceptional circumstances and without it being authorised by school. If your child does not attend school regularly, the school will work with you to find out why it is happening, and how school can help. If your child continues to be absent without authorisation from the school, then we may send your details to the Local Authority to consider a penalty notice or a prosecution. A pupil would need to be absent for 10 sessions (a morning or afternoon mark in the register is one session) over a period of 10 or more school weeks. Before school refer to the Local Authority for non-attendance, we will work with you and offer support. We may offer you an Attendance Contract Meeting where we discuss the barriers to attendance and try to break them down. If you do not join in with the support from school, we may choose to set targets for your child's attendance instead. We do this together with the Local Authority. This is called a Notice to Improve and is a last try at improving attendance before fines or a prosecution is asked for.

### The Different Types of Leave

#### Authorised leave

This is if a child has been off school for a reason that we agree with. For example:

- Illness or a medical appointment. If they are well enough, children should be at school for the rest of the day if they go to an appointment.
- Religious Observance – official religious days which are decided by the religion. E.g. Eid.
- The absence has been authorised by the Headteacher because it is short, exceptional and unavoidable.

#### Unauthorised leave:

This is when a child is away from school when school would say no. E.g.

- Shopping, hair appointments, visiting family, taking part in a protest or birthdays.
- A parent/carer has not given a reason for the child not being in school.
- A parent/carer has not completed an Absence Request Form.
- Being off school for something that the Headteacher does not think is exceptional.

**The code given to a child in the register is the Headteacher's decision. They will use guidance from the Government (DfE) to make their decision.**

## Term-Time Leave

Parents may not take their child out of school for a term-time holiday. If you want to ask for time off school, you must fill in a Term-Time Leave Request Form (Appendix 2). This has to be filled in **before** you take your child out of school and no later than 7 days before.

If school think you have taken your child out for term time leave, we will write to you and ask you to explain why your child was not in school. If you can't give school a reason, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised, and we may send your details to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine.

**Exceptional circumstances** (*this means rare, unavoidable, short*) will be looked at by the Headteacher.

If you request term time leave for any of these, they will **not** be allowed. We would send details to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.
- Trip of a lifetime.
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Extending the time off if a pupil has not come back to school after an agreed absence.
- Leave taken because some transport might be affected by things and might not run.
- Leave taken to try and relieve travel distress for family members with additional needs.

## Absence Due to Sporting Activities

Attendance at sporting events as a spectator or supporter will not be authorised. Training camps should be organised for during the school holidays. Absence to attend competitions will be assessed on an individual basis and information from the sport's national governing body will be requested to assist with the school's decision-making process.

## Lost Learning

### It all adds up – absence and learning hours lost

Attendance of student	Actual attendance over a school year	Equivalent whole days absent	Equivalent learning hours lost	
100%	190	0	0	Excellent
99%	188	2	10	Good
98%	186	4	20	
97%	184	6	30	
96%	182.5	7.5	37.5	
95%	180.5	9.5	47.5	
94%	177	13	65	Cause for concern
92%	175	15	75	
90%	171	19	95	Risk of penalty notice and/or legal proceedings
89%	169	21	105	

## Penalty Notices

If a pupil takes unauthorised term-time leave for 10 sessions in a row or more (normally 5 days or more) they will likely receive a penalty notice.

The fine for a penalty notice is £80 per child, per parent/carer. If you haven't paid after 21 days, it goes up to £160. If you haven't paid after 28 days, you may be prosecuted in court. This could mean a fine of up to £2,500 and/or prison for up to 3 months per parent.

If you take another term time leave of 10 sessions (5 days) or more with the same child, in a three-year rolling period, the fine is £160 per parent, per child and you will have 28 days to pay it. If you do it a third time, in a three-year rolling period for the same child, your details

will be sent to the Local Authority for a prosecution under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

← Three-Year Period →		
<p><b>First</b> Term Time Leave 10 sessions (5 days) or more.</p> <p><b>£80</b> for each child per</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>E.g. if two parents take 3 children away, the fine would be £80 x 3 = £240 per parent.</p> <p><b>The total would be £480.</b></p> <p>If you pay after 21 days it rises to <b>£960.</b></p> </div> <p>parent. If you don't pay after 28 days = a prosecution.</p>	<p><b>Second</b> Term Time Leave 10 sessions (5 days) or more.</p> <p><b>£160</b> for each child per</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>E.g. if two parents take 3 children away, the fine would be £160 x 3 = £480 per parent.</p> <p><b>The total would be £960.</b></p> </div> <p>parent. If you don't pay after 28 days = a prosecution.</p>	<p><b>Third</b> Term Time Leave 10 sessions (5 days) or more.</p> <p>Prosecution.</p>

### Children Missing in Education

If a pupil fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days, without explanation, and the school does not know where the pupil is, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us. During this 20-day period, school will continue to try and contact you, and will liaise with any other services that your child is open to. The Local Authority will conduct investigations into the location and educational provision of the child.

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
FOR ANNUAL HOLIDAY OR EXTENDED VISIT OVERSEAS

As a parent or guardian you are strongly urged to avoid booking holidays or visits overseas during term-time. Should this be absolutely unavoidable then you should fill in this form and return it to the Headteacher of your child's school.

The conditions under which leave of absence for term-time holidays or visits overseas may be granted are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. The Department of Education has made amendments to the 2006 regulations. These make it clear that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. In the light of these changes parents and guardians need to be aware that it will no longer be possible to authorise leave of absence unless the 'exceptional circumstances' have been explained. Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' are given on the reverse of this sheet. (The reduced cost of a holiday taken during term-time will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance.) Permission will not be given if the leave of absence is applied for after the holiday/visit has taken place.

Should leave be taken after permission has been withheld then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child's report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and possible legal proceedings.

For more information please see: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

I request that \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Child)

be granted leave of absence from \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of School)

from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ in order to take part in an annual holiday/extended visit overseas.

It is necessary to take my child out of school because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian..... Date .....

Name of Parent/Guardian (*please print*) .....  
(For Office Use Only Y / N)

Leave request response

I confirm that \_\_\_\_\_ is granted / is not granted leave of absence  
from Castle School

from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed ..... Date .....