

COGNITA

Children Absent from Education and Attendance Policy

(Including Attendance Guidance for
Parents)



MEONCROSS SCHOOL

September 2023

Policy Statement

The school maintains its Attendance Registers in accordance with Statutory Regulations, as amended from time to time. The school adheres to Statutory Guidance when dealing with Children Absent from Education. The school will work in a collaborative way with external agencies, in accordance with the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach taken to:

- Recording attendance information on a daily basis;
- Recording information at the point a pupil leaves the school; and
- Managing a situation when a pupil is deemed absent from education.

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1. Attendance

Introduction

It is important that staff, parents and pupils are familiar with this policy. Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally.

Missing learning time through having persistent/prolonged absence or erratic attendance, leaves children vulnerable to falling behind in their learning and it is well known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. Furthermore, poor attendance can also impact on a child's social and emotional development. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the Early Years.

The legal framework

Legislation specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs; either by regular school attendance or home education.

The same law requires the school to have an Admissions Register (see Applications and Admissions Policy) and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers. Failure to do so is an offence. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2023) requires a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance.

Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels achievement, as well as a strong link between truancy and antisocial behaviour.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities

- Encourage regular and sustained attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning.
- Provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately.
- Contact the school on the first day of the child's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the school day.
- Avoid making arrangements to remove children from school during term time.
- Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter.

School responsibilities

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including addressing persistent or prolonged absence (deemed as attendance below 90%).
- Work to ensure every pupil has good attendance so they can access the education they are entitled to.
- Act early to address patterns of absence to prevent persistent and prolonged absence.
- Encourage parents to ensure their child attends all learning opportunities regularly and punctually.
- Keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities.

Children Absent from Education and Attendance Policy

We achieve this in the following ways:

- Teachers must take a register at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon;
- Those taking the register must mark all children not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes;
- Follow up un-notified first day absence with a telephone call to the parent/carer(s) by 9:30 am;
- Monitor attendance and lateness and implement strategies for promoting improved awareness of attendance such as year groups or vulnerable children, as required, including the use of formal letters home;
- Report on patterns of attendance at Governance Meetings to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils;
- Specifically monitor any persistent or prolonged absence (individual attendance below 90%) and address any concerns at an early stage with the parents/carers;
- Proper use of the DfE national codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations, including preservation of the entries on both the Admissions and Attendance Registers for a period of three years after it was made;
- Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence;
- Close liaison and discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to identify children whose attendance is causing concern, including talking to children and parents regarding any unsatisfactory attendance to find out the reason and offer support;
- Close liaison and discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where there are concerns about children having prolonged absence without parental response, especially where there have been safeguarding concerns – see Section 2 of this document;
- Implementing any agreed improvement strategies, such as referral to the local authority attendance services and/or children's social care in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures; and
- Provide parent/carer(s) with the timings of the school day and the calendar via the school website and any other usual method such as the school newsletter, in advance.

Good attendance

Our school considers good attendance to be that above 96%.

Persistent absentees

Persistent absentees are pupils with attendance below 90%. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) if their child's attendance approaches this threshold. If attendance does not improve, the school will contact the local authority in accordance with local authority procedures.

Late arrival

It is essential that, if a pupil arrives late, they should sign in at the school office so our systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the school is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times.

Leaving school early during the day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a known parent/carer for a specified reason. If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, they are required to sign out at the School Office. Where there are known medical appointments, parents should notify the school in advance.
- Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by staff members (agreed by the Headteacher) to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled

lesson, or a sporting fixture. (Insert here if there are known legitimate exceptions to this and if off-site for example at break or lunch times, give details of signing out system in school, and how this is monitored by staff, include specific arrangement for sixth form).

Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)

- Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the Head. The Head is only able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.
- We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and, importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.
- An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head in advance.

Maintaining records and reporting to the authorities

The school's Attendance Register, kept by means of a computer, is backed up in the form of an electronic copy at least once a month.

Monitoring and review arrangements

Attendance rates are reported regularly to the Cognita Board. Proprietorial Governors report on pupil attendance, as well as any patterns or trends of persistent absence from school. Representatives of the Proprietor scrutinise Admissions and Attendance Registers for compliance and safeguarding purposes.

2. Children Absent/and or from Education Children Missing in Education are:

'Children who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing from education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.' (DfE Children Missing in Education 2016)

Children Absent from Education

Often children can be persistently absent from school or have prolonged absences. Of course, there may be a satisfactory reason for their absence, most often medical, for why this is needed, for example, the child is having operations/treatments.

However, on other occasions, the child is frequently absent but there does not appear to be a satisfactory reason. This is different from a child being a 'child missing in education' (as described above) but it is still a concern.

As stated above, it is mandatory that children of a compulsory age attend school, but of most importance, frequent absences impact on a child's development across all domains, not purely cognitive.

If a child's absence continues despite interventions to identify and address the underlying cause with both the child and parents, then consideration may be given to seeking advice from social care in order to support the family.

3. Procedures for Children Absent from Education and Children Missing in Education

- If a new pupil fails to attend at the beginning of first day of the agreed or notified admissions date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Schools must monitor all pupils' attendance through their daily register.
- Schools must address poor or irregular attendance with both parents and child.
- Schools should follow their local authority guidance in terms of the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have missed ten school days or more without permission.
- Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the Admissions Register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. The type of enquiries may include the school/local authority checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate). This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds (and medical evidence) to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. In these situations, where it is unknown why the child is not attending school, and the parents are not responding to school communication, consideration may be given to seeking advice from social care.
- Home Education: Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove their child from school with a view to educating at home, the school will coordinate a meeting with parents/carers to explore why they are considering this option. Schools will explore keeping the child in school whilst respecting parental choice. Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

4. Safeguarding

- The school has a safeguarding duty in respect of its pupils, and as part of this will investigate any unexplained, persistent or prolonged absences. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation.
- It is important that the school's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community
- Where there are safeguarding concerns about any child's absence; persistent absence; prolonged absence; or unexplained absence, the school will always talk to the child and parents about their concerns. They will also follow its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which includes notifying the the local authority attendance services, and also referring to social care as appropriate.
- If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the school will inform the Police.
- Where there is a concern that a child's safety or well-being is at risk, the school will take action without delay.

5. Appendix 1 - Attendance of Sponsored International students (Child Student and Student visas)

Cognita acts as a sponsor for international students who have Child Student and Student visas. The United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has a duty to ensure that all sponsors discharge their responsibility to act in accordance with the immigration rules. As a school we are responsible for ensuring that these students are appropriately cared for and that any safeguarding concerns are addressed.

Knowledge of the sponsored student

Prior to any children sponsored by Cognita arriving at the school, it is important that the school's pastoral team (including the child's form tutor/class teacher, Head of Year, Head of Phase) have knowledge of the child's circumstances, including who has parental responsibility, the child's care arrangements, and contact details for the carer/Private Foster carer in the UK. The most senior member of the pastoral team, with support from the DSL, should have oversight of all international students sponsored by Cognita.

Responsibility for each sponsored student starts from the moment the Cognita International Recruitment Team assigns the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS), i.e. before the student leaves their home country and enrolls at the school. The Headteacher, school admissions team, most senior member of the pastoral team and DSL should be aware of the child's travel arrangements to the UK.

Records of sponsored student information

At the very least, this should be the student's passport and their BRP (once this has been issued, after arriving in the UK). If the child is aged 4-11 years old, then they will be here with one of their parents under the Parent of a Child Student visa route. We should have the parent's passport and BRP too.

Other appendices we hold, depending on circumstances, may include:

- Appendix A: letter of consent from the parents/guardians for Cognita to sponsor their child
- Appendix B: letter of undertaking from intended carer (if the child isn't coming to the UK with one or both of their parents)
- Appendix C: letter of consent from parents/guardians to intended carer
- Appendix D: close relative care arrangements (if the child is going to live with a grandparent, brother, sister, stepparent, uncle (brother or half-brother of the child's parent) or aunt (sister or half-sister of the child's parent) who is aged 18 years or over and has UK Settled Status.
- Appendix K: travel confirmation form (detailing travel arrangements to the UK)
- Appendix P: genuine student English interview (conducted and completed by the Cognita International team)
- Appendix Q: student route finance declaration (confirming the family have sufficient funds to meet the UKVI requirement for sponsorship)
- Appendix S: Tuberculosis certificate declaration

Arrival to the UK

If the child fails to arrive as expected, the school should report this as a matter of urgency to the Cognita International Recruitment Team (IRT), who are responsible for updating UKVI if the child fails to enroll. Cognita are responsible from the moment the CAS is raised. The school needs to complete the enrolment checklist (Appendix F in the UKVI handbook) and upload it to the student's sponsor file on Teams.

Arrival to start school

If the student does not arrive when expected to start school, the school should notify the IRT immediately. If the student does not arrive within ten working days of the enrolment period, the IRT must report this to UKVI.

Once the child has arrived safely, the UKVI School Champion, in collaboration with the DSL, will aim to ensure that their needs are met, including pastoral need, and they will liaise with the child's parents and carers for the ongoing needs of the child.

Absences from school or pastoral concerns

With regards to safeguarding this potentially vulnerable group of students, any lack of engagement in study/social activities displayed by them, any absences, or failure to return to school after a holiday or break, should be escalated initially to the Regional Safeguarding Lead on the day it occurs. The RSL will escalate the concerns to the Cognita International Recruitment Team as needed (but no later than 5 working days after the event); the latter is obliged to report the child to the UKVI if the child has ten consecutive unauthorised absences.

A formal meeting with the child's parent/guardians/carers must be arranged if a sponsored child's attendance falls lower than 92% and again if it falls below 82%. A record must be made of this meeting and saved in the child's folder in Teams, with agreed action points to improve the child's attendance. If a sponsored child's attendance falls below 80%, Cognita may be required to withdraw sponsorship of their visa and they will need to leave the UK. It is a requirement of the UK Visas & Immigration (part of the Home Office), that schools demonstrate how they track attendance of this group of potentially vulnerable children.

Changes in circumstances of the sponsored student

Schools should be proactive in determining whether there has been any change in a sponsored international student's circumstances. The school should liaise with the parent(s)/guardians of all sponsored international students every term to check whether:

- the student and their parent/guardian's address has changed; or
- the student's childcare arrangements have changed (e.g. moved from living with their parents to a private foster care arrangement).

Changes in circumstances must be reported immediately. These can include:

- a change in where a student studies;
- a change in the student's course;
- a change in a student's registered address;
- a change in whom the student lives with (e.g. from parent to private foster care); or
- any other circumstance that suggests that they are breaking the conditions of their permission to stay in the UK.

Templates are available in the UKVI handbook.

6. Appendix 2 – Attendance Guidance for Parents

Note – this section is intended to be used by schools to share with parents in whatever form is most appropriate.

Introduction

Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the early years.

The legal framework

Legislation in the UK specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school.

The same law requires the school to have an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers. Failure to do so is an offence.

Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement:

- Of pupils who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% manage to achieve five A* to Cs including English and Maths;
- Of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to achieve five A* to C GCSEs including English and Maths; and
- Of pupils who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve five A* to Cs including English and Maths.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities

- Encourage regular and punctual attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning.
- Provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately.
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An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head in advance.

Good attendance

Our school considers good attendance to be above 96%. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) if there are attendance concerns. If attendance does not improve, the school will contact the local authority in accordance with local authority procedures.

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