

What are parents/carers responsibilities and what can they expect from the school?

Parents/carers are required in law to ensure that their children receive the education that they are entitled to by securing their regular and punctual attendance in school under section 444(1/1A) of the Education Act 1996. Whether an absence is recorded on the school register as authorised or not is wholly at the discretion of the school and is dependant upon whether the school accepts the explanation offered by parents/carers as reasonable justification for their child's absence from school.

- 1) **Parents/Carers responsibility to report a child's absence from school.** Wherever a child is absent from school it is the parents/carers responsibility to inform the school on the first day of their child's absence as to the reason why their child is not in school. Where parents/carers cannot give a date they expect their child to return to school they should ring the school each subsequent morning that their child continues to be absent from school until the day they return. It is the parents/carers responsibility to keep the school informed at all times about their child's absence from school. Absences should be reported to school by parents/carers before 9.30am.
- 2) **Schools contacting parents about absences.** No legal obligation is placed on the school to contact parents/carers to enquire about a student's absence. However in adhering to good practice and safeguarding students the school will endeavour to contact parents/carers of students who are marked as absent for 'no reason' (N) from school to ascertain a reason for the student's absence by text or telephone message. This will be done on the first day of an absence being recorded as 'no reason' (N) whenever this is practicable and each subsequent day that the absences continue being recorded as 'no reason' (N) until the student returns to school.
- 3) **Medical Appointments.** Parents/Carers should wherever possible request and or schedule medical appointments outside of normal school hours. If an appointment during the school day is unavoidable then students will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever appropriate.
- 4) **Making further enquiries.** Where absences for 'no reason' (N) have been recorded during a given week because the school has not received an acceptable explanation from the parent/carer for the absence the school will write to the parent/carer the following week enquiring about the reasons for the absence(s). Parents/carers will be given two weeks from the date of the letter being sent to respond to the enquiry; beyond this the absence will be recorded as an 'unauthorised' (O) absence due to truanting and remain as such.
- 5) **When a students attendance begins to fall.** Where ever a student's attendance falls below 95% and the school considers that their level of absences may not be reasonably justified and is potentially a cause for concern; the school will monitor and assess whether further intervention is required. Further intervention initially will be in the form of writing to the parents/carers outlining the schools concerns about the number of absences their child has had from school.
- 5) **Providing evidence to support absences.** If there is no improvement in a student's regular and punctual attendance in school after an initial letter has been sent to parents/carers then the school will inform parents/carers that no further absences will be authorised by the school without evidence to support the absence. Evidence can be in the form of:
 - a) **A medical certificate from a medical practitioner stating your child is unfit to attend school,**
 - b) **An appointment slip stating they have attended for a consultation with a medical practitioner; this will authorise one session only,**

c) The presentation of any medication prescribed for your child from a medical practitioner to the Attendance Officer in school or their representative, with the dispensing label attached, clearly stating the child's name and the date the medicine was dispensed.

Where medical evidence is not provided the absence will remain recorded as unauthorised. This will continue until we see a significant improvement in their attendance.

- 6) **Meeting with parents.** Where parents/carers have been informed that medical evidence is required in support of any absences their child may incur from school, the school will invite those parents in for a meeting to discuss in further detail any issues or problems that the child may be experiencing that are potential barriers to their learning and may be affecting their ability to access and attend mainstream education. Based upon the findings of any such meeting the school will make attempts to support the student and their parents/carers in addressing the attendance issues where this is practicable.
- 7) **Referrals to the Education Welfare Service.** Where parents/carers fail to secure an improvement in their child's regular and punctual school attendance after the school has intervened and requested a meeting with parents/carers and offered support; or where parents/carers fail to engage and work with the school to ensure an improvement in their child's attendance, the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service who may consider instigating legal proceedings against the parents/carer's under section 444 (1/1A) of the Education Act 1996 or issuing Penalty Notice's to parents/carers under section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- 8) **Arriving in school late before the close of registers.** Parents/carers have a duty in law to ensure that their children attend school on time. This means that students should be in school and ready to work at the designated start of the school day, which is 8.30am. When a child does not arrive in school at the designated time they will be deemed as arriving late to school and this will be recorded on the register as a 'late' (L) mark before the close of registers; unless there is a justifiable reason for the lateness and this is accepted as reasonable justification at the discretion of the school. The student will be issued with a break time detention and where 3 or more late marks occur within a half term the parents/carers will be sent a letter informing them of their legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular and punctual school attendance. If a student fails to attend the break time detention then a 1 hour after school detention will be issued and it will be recorded on their behaviour record.
- 9) **Arriving in school late after the close of registers.** School registers will close at 9.00am, 30 minutes after the designated start of the school day. Student's who arrive after registers have closed will be recorded as arriving 'late after the close of registers' (U) unless there is a justifiable reason for the student being late after the close of registers and this is accepted as reasonable justification at the discretion of the school. A 'U' mark recorded on the register is an unauthorised absence. The student will be issued with a break time detention and where 3 or more late marks occur within a half term the parents/carers will be sent a letter informing them of their legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular and punctual school attendance. If a student fails to attend the break time detention then a 1 hour after school detention will be issued and it will be recorded on the behaviour record.
- 10) **If a child becomes ill during the school day.** Where ever a student presents themselves in school and then subsequently becomes ill during the school day they must inform a member of staff about their illness and speak to the first aid officer who will make an assessment to the best of her ability as to whether or not the student needs to go home. If it is necessary for a student to be sent home during the school day the school will make attempts to contact parents/carer's to seek permission for their child to be returned to them and ensure that the student will be in the care of a responsible adult. Students will be issued with a pass that authorises them to be out of school during the school day. Students must not leave school without the permission of the first aid

officer or if she deems necessary a member of the Senior Management Team. Students must not contact parents/carers directly to seek permission to go home.

- 11) **If a parent/carer needs to withdraw their child during the school day.** If a parent/carer requires their child to be returned home to them during the school day for any reason they are requested to contact the school office and explain the reason for the removal. The school will then make arrangements for the child to be withdrawn from classes and returned to their parent/carer and record the removal from school appropriately in the school registers. Students will be issued with a pass that authorises them to be out of school during the school day. Parents/carers are discouraged from contacting their child directly during the school day to ask them to leave school as this causes potential Health & Safety risks should an emergency arise within the school and the school is unaware that the parent/carer has removed their child from school. All student withdrawal's from school for whatever reason should be made through the school office.
- 12) **Taking Holidays during the school term time.** The school will only authorise holidays during school term in line with North Lincolnshire Council's Policy on holidays during school term. Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from school for the purpose of a family holiday. The Head teacher does have the discretion to authorise up to 10 days holiday in any academic year (September – July) where there are exceptional/special circumstances as outlined in 'North Lincolnshire's Policy Guidelines' for exceptional/special circumstances. Exceptional/Special circumstances as defined in this policy are **'where a serving parent/carer from the Armed Services is home on leave'**, or **'a parent/carer who is suffering from a serious illness and their child's presence is required at this time'**. Requests for holidays during term time may also be considered where the parent can provide written evidence stating they cannot take their annual leave during the school holiday periods. This must be provided on the company's headed paper with a contact name and number should the school consider it necessary to investigate the request further. All requests for holidays during term time must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the date parents/carers wish to withdraw their child from school. Applications must be made on the appropriate 'Holiday in term time' request form that is available from the school. **All evidence in support of the application must be submitted with the 'Holiday in term time' request form.** Parents/carers will be informed in writing of the school's decision and this decision will be final. Exceptions to exceptional/special circumstances may be considered for:
- a) Attending a family wedding – maximum 3 days – evidence must be provided.
 - b) Attending an awards ceremony where a parent/carer or close family member is to receive a degree/honour/medal etc – maximum 3 days – evidence must be provided.

Where a request for a holiday in term time has been refused and is for a period of 10 sessions (5 school days) or more a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service who will issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the parents/carers will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Fine of £50 per parent/carer, per child.

School attendance and attainment are closely linked and when a child is not in school they miss out. Wherever possible and practicable the school will take steps to support a student and their parents in securing regular and punctual attendance in school and where parents/carers are willing and able to engage and work with the school to secure this. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring regular and punctual attendance of students in school lies with the parents/carers of the child and if required the school will refer students onto other agencies for appropriate support if necessary.