



## Attendance Policy

The document sets out the policy of Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School with respect to pupil attendance.

### Rationale

At Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School we understand that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy, will be reviewed, amended as necessary, approved by the governors and published annually on the schools website in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

### Aims

We believe that the foundation for good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents and the child. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

At Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School we will:

- Provide regular information about attendance through regular communications via newsletters and the school website.
- Include attendance information in reports about your child's performance in school and how any absence maybe affecting their attainment
- Reward good attendance
- Work with you and your child to achieve maximum attendance

At our school we expect:

- Pupils to arrive at school on time every day.
- Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly

## **Attendance: The Legal Framework – roles and responsibilities**

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school.

Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for prosecution in the magistrates' court.

To avoid this happening we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

**Authorised absences** are those that have been agreed by the Head Teacher.

**Unauthorised absences** are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those absences which the Head Teacher has not agreed.

## **Partnership Working – roles and responsibilities**

Do you know these facts about absence and attendance?

Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment. (DfE)

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year

90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year

85% equates to one and half days off every two weeks in a school year

A secondary age pupil whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

*"Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education." The National Audit Office*

At Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School attendance is the business of everyone in our school community. The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

We expect that parents and carers will work with us if school absence becomes a concern. Parents and carers can help to promote positive attendance by:

- Ensuring children arrive at school on time, before registers close, appropriately dressed, in a 'condition to learn' (ie not too tired or too hungry) and with the right equipment for the day
- Working in partnership with us to help their child(ren) gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- Working in partnership with us to take an active interest in their child's education
- Working in partnership with us and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child's attendance

## **Procedures**

Our school attendance target is 96%. Pupils who miss any days of school in a school year will contribute to the school not achieving the attendance target set by the governing body.

Legally the school register must be taken twice a day.

***Together we can... "Soar on wings like eagles, Run and not grow weary, Walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31***

At Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School, the register is taken at 8.50am (morning registration time) and once during the afternoon session at 1.00pm. Pupils arriving after the registers have been closed will be coded (U) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a valid reason is provided. If the reason given is not valid and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised absence. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be taken into account if any legal action is taken.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:

- A pupil's attendance falls below 90%,
- A pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
- A pupil has more than 4 recorded late marks in a term
- A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

Parents are asked to:

- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a valid reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should make contact with school before the start of the school day, either by telephone or the school absence email address ([office@coombebissett.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:office@coombebissett.wilts.sch.uk)).
- Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school.
- Wherever possible arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment. If attendance at a medical or dental appointment is unavoidable during the school day, parents should ensure that the time the child is out of school is kept to a minimum. For example, if the appointment was at 11am we would expect your child to register at 8:50am and to be collected in enough time for you to make the appointment. We would also expect the child to return to school after the appointment unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival.
- Only request leave of absence/holiday in term time if it is for an exceptional circumstance. (The process for requesting leave of absence is explained further in this policy).

Examples of types of absence that are not considered valid and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Head Teacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a 'present' mark (after the close of registration)

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent and the parent/carer has not advised that their child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The office will initially phone parents. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will make contact with nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

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After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedure for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

### **Collecting your child from school**

We ask that all parents/carers ensure that they are able to collect their children from school on time. School finishes at 3.15pm. If parents are unable to collect their child as usual then they will need to tell the school. In these circumstances, we will not release children to anyone of whom we have not been advised. If children remain uncollected from school, the protocol is the children will wait in the entrance hall while parents are phoned. Procedure in Appendix 1 (Protocol for schools when a child has not been collected as expected by parents at the end of the school day) will be implemented.

### **Monitoring attendance**

Regular monitoring of the registers will be made by the Head Teacher, to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), Severe Absence (SA) patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the whole school year and a severe absentee (SA) if they miss more than 50% of schooling for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we combine this with tracing academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning. The Head Teacher will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting. We may ask parents to agree to a Parenting Contract which details how we will work together to improve attendance. However, if absence continued the school may make a referral to the Local Authority for interventions that may include penalty notices and court action.

### **Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances**

In accordance with Department for Education guidance, leave of absence from school including for holidays in term-time, may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.

Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require at least 2 weeks' notice unless the absence is related to an emergency.

We do not normally give retrospective agreement for leave of absence. In exceptional circumstances and with a valid reason, consideration may be given as to whether the absence can be retrospectively authorised.

Requests will be considered by the Head Teacher and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed.

Any pupil who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school.

Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Where an unauthorised leave of absence is taken, parents may be issued with a penalty notice. This will be in the sum of £120 per parent/carer for each child, but is reduced to £60 per parent/carer for each child if paid within 21 days of issue.

## **Consequences of persistent and severe absence**

At Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns.

If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer you to the local authority.

The Education Welfare Service has a range of actions available which include:

- 1) The parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice, which carries a fine of £120.00, per parent, per child. This is reduced to £60.00 if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- 2) The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.
- 3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

## **Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance**

At this school we take every opportunity to promote excellent attendance for all pupils. We will celebrate excellent attendance through our whole school reward system.

We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. Coombe Bissett CE (VA) Primary School provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues which might impact on your child's attendance it is important that you talk to us so that we can support you and your child. You can speak to the Head Teacher or Class Teacher by contacting them via the school office.

There may be times when we ask other agencies to become involved to help us understand and work with you to encourage regular school attendance. (e.g. Wiltshire Council, School Health, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Advisory Service, Medical Needs Reintegration Service) If we feel that this would be helpful we will discuss with you first.

We are very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and we welcome any feedback which helps us to shape how we work with families to address attendance issues and reward excellent attendance.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The attendance policy will be reviewed at least annually by governors and school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community.

We will ensure that the policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that we strive to achieve.

## Appendix 1

### **Protocol for schools when a child has not been collected as expected by parents\* at the end of the school day.**

This protocol will be brought to the attention of parents, in writing, when their child first starts at the school. The protocol is also referred to in the school's child protection policy.

Parents must provide the school with a record of their contact details:

- Name/s
- Address/es
- Telephone number – mobile, home, work
- Where possible, parents should also provide the school with the contact details of three or more relatives/carers who can be called when the parent/carer cannot be contacted or in the event of an emergency.

The school aims to keep this record up to date by reminding parents in newsletters and at parent consultation evenings of the need to notify the school of any changes.

School staff will not ever take a child home with them but will care for a child who has not been collected until:

- He/she is reunited with a parent or other nominated responsible adult, or
- Advice is sought from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/the Emergency Duty Service (EDS) re next steps.

### **School procedure**

If a child is not collected by a parent or carer, this will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- The DSL will make sure every effort is made to contact the parent or carer or named alternative carer as per the child's school records for up to 30 minutes from the end of the school day. This might include speaking to known friends or neighbours of the parents, where appropriate.
- If no contact is made, the DSL will arrange for staff to either visit or drive a child to his/her home address (within one hour of the end of the school day), depending on child's individual need and circumstances. The DSL will ensure the child has adequate supervision at all times (whether in a car or waiting at the school).
- The visit/transport will happen in all but very exceptional circumstances, particular to an individual family e.g. previous incidents of aggression towards staff, anticipated travel time to the child's home of over 1 hour.

When the above procedure has been followed and the child has still not been reunited with a parent or carer, staff will escort the child back to the school:

- If the child is known to the children's social care, the DSL will contact the child's allocated social worker or the EDS if it is out of normal office hours.
- If the child is not known to social care, the DSL will consult with MASH or the EDS for advice.

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- The school will provide MASH/EDS with the following information about:

The child:

- Name(s), date of birth and address
- Gender, ethnicity, religion, language spoken
- Any additional needs – dietary, SEN, behavioural difficulties, medical
- Any current or previous child protection
- Any previous significant or pattern of incidents of not being collected from school

The parent (and alternative carers):

- Name/s
- Address/es
- Telephone numbers – mobile, home, work

The DSL will record and review any incident when a child is not picked up by parents or picked up late (when no reasonable explanation is given) as part of the school safeguarding and child protection processes.

### **Social Care/Police procedure**

EDS or MASH will advise the DSL of the next steps. This may include carrying out appropriate checks with partner agencies such as the Police and make further attempts to contact the parent/carer.

If a member of staff thinks a child is at risk of significant harm, is injured, or abandoned, they will contact

- the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **0300 456 0108**
  - 8.45am – 5pm Monday – Thursday and
  - 8.45am – 4pm Friday
- out of hours Emergency Duty Service (EDS) on **0845 6070 888**  
or
- If there is immediate danger, phone the police or emergency services on **999**.

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