

Attendance and Absence Policy

CMAS School Devon

CMAS School Gloucestershire



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Introduction

This policy has been created in order for CMAS School to meet its statutory and legislative obligations regarding attendance.

The purpose of this policy is for Proprietors, School staff, Parents/Carers and children to have a clear guide to our school's approach to attendance and absence procedures for all children on roll with us and their families. It provides a sound basis for ensuring that children and young people attend school regularly and that absences are robustly monitored.

Rationale

As an organisation we work with young people who have specific needs that have led to disengagement or challenges in engaging with education. We are mindful of the challenges that these specific needs place on the young people and the families.

We aim to work collaboratively with each individual, families and other professional bodies in order to support young people on our roll to re-engage and achieve so that they can continue on to future education opportunities and achieve success in their lives.

At CMAS School we believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this, we take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

Regular school attendance is essential to ensure the best outcomes for our pupils. By `regular` our policy is that all pupils attend each and every day that they are expected to attend. There may be exceptional circumstances when absences may be agreed in line with national attendance code guidance.

Attendance and engagement are part of our curriculum, which allows us to see improvements over time as a part of the progress that our young people make. This progress is celebrated and used to contribute to and build on a child's success.

Our Aims

- To engage all children and encourage them to access education and support
- To improve the overall attendance of the child at school
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all children
- To provide support, advice and guidance about attendance and punctuality to parent/carers and children.
- To be systematic in our approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To ensure positive and consistent communication about attendance and punctuality between home and school.
- To promote positive, constructive, and effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Officer and with other services and agencies.
- To recognise the needs of the individual child when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To deal with extenuating circumstances appropriately and creatively; showing sensitivity and understanding

Parental Responsibility

Our school expects that parent/carers will:

- Inform a member of staff of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- Endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible to liaise with the school to enlist support for appointments if needed.
- Endeavour to take family holidays out of school hours and during term time.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parent/carers, young people and all members of school staff.

We encourage attendance by:

- Consistent, clear communication with parent/carers and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance
- Giving parent/carers details on attendance in our face to face contact and other communication.
- Discussing attendance with parent/carers at school meetings, with the current percentage attendance being reported
- Reporting to parent/carers on their young person's attendance within the annual school report

CMAS School – Our Responsibility

- The Head School is responsible for attendance matters, supported by the teachers, mentors and administrative staff
- Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using our internal school management software. It is a statutory duty for teachers to maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents. The Head of School is legally responsible for ensuring that register marks are taken twice per day at the start of the AM and PM session.
- Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging, a meeting at school or a home visit is carried out to support parents/carers to work with school to help resolve the difficulties
- Where there is no response to school intervention and where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted without explanation, the school will refer to the 0-25 team and Education Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parent/carers

Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as significant illness, medical/dental/therapeutic appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013 made clear that Heads of School may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional and/or unavoidable circumstances' exist. This policy has been written in line with DfE guidance issued in July 2019 –School attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities.

- "Exceptional" is defined as rare, significant, unavoidable and short. "Unavoidable" is an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time i.e. after school or during holidays. Parent/carers are asked to arrange a time to meet with the Head of School to discuss a past or future absence they feel is exceptional and/or unavoidable.

If an event can be scheduled outside of term time (or after the school day) i.e. special occasion shopping/routine dental appointment, then it would not be described as an “exceptional, unavoidable circumstance” and cannot be an authorised absence.

- Absence during term time for holidays are therefore not considered an exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.
- Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:
 - Significant illness
 - Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but we ask parent/carers to try to make these after school if at all possible)
 - Days of religious observance
 - Seeing a parent/carer who is on leave from the armed forces
 - External examinations
 - Bereavement/funeral

Recording attendance

A register is taken by 9.15am and by 1.15pm. This data is recorded on our internal school management software for the senior leadership team and Proprietors to see. OFSTED will also examine our attendance rates when we are inspected.

- If absence is due to illness Parent/carers are asked to contact the CMAS School mentor before 8 am on each day of absence, and for as long as the illness continues.
- If we do not receive contact, the mentor will visit the home as usual and can provide support for the family and young person.
- The goal for each day is for the child to be engaged in learning. The individual curriculum goals will determine how best that need is met (inc. factors such as content and setting).
- If possible absence is for reasons other than illness (lack of engagement or difficulties experienced which are affecting anxiety or other SEMH reasons) the CMAS School mentor will endeavour to engage the young person in activities related to their well-being curriculum, rather than the scheduled activity for that session and provide support towards engagement. If this is successful, then this will then be recorded as **attendance**.
- If the young person is unable to engage despite best efforts the child is entered in the register as absent and the 1-2-1 mentor will provide the reasons to be marked accordingly. If no specific reason is known, the young person will be marked as **unauthorised absence**.
- The Head of School has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised
- If we do not receive contact, and the mentor visits the address as normal and is not able to meet with the parent or the young person we will continue to attempt contact via the phone. The CMAS School mentor will return to the home within a further hour and try and make contact again. The CMAS School mentor will also contact their manager to seek advice and other contact information on record will be used to establish contact to confirm wellbeing.
- If a pupil has had an absence of 5 or more days, we will ask for information (i.e from the GP) for the Head of School to consider if the absence can be authorised. If a pupil has a medical appointment during school time (that cannot be arranged after school or during the holidays), we will ask for a letter or medical appointment card for the Head of School to consider if the absence can be authorised

Monitoring attendance

- Each Friday, the Head of School will examine attendance for the week with support from the Senior Leaders
- CMAS School mentors, teachers and SLT will communicate with parents/carers about attendance on a regular basis.
- Attendance will form part of the curriculum framework at CMAS School, and improvements in attendance over time will inform a young person's progress.
- Improvements in attendance, and good attendance will be celebrated by CMAS School and parents as part of a young person's progress and achievement.
- Attendance figures are discussed with parent/carers at teacher meetings.
- CMAS School recognises that some absences are inevitable (i.e. significant illness) but our attendance target of 96%, which is in line with local and national targets for schools and local and national practice is an aspiration and we will endeavour to support families and other agencies in helping our young people to achieve this.

Engaging with parents and carers

We believe regular attendance is so important in ensuring best outcomes for our young people that we will review our attendance performance each term. We regularly look at the young persons, where there is a pattern of absence. We will monitor this and endeavour to support families and young people in challenging this. We provide that support to ensure attendance of all pupils who are in receipt of free school meals is prioritised.

Part-time time-tables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs; this decision is made by the Head of School in consultation with external agencies, families and the local authority.

A part time timetable is time limited, must not be treated as a long-term solution and can only be made with parent/carers agreement. This will be reviewed every two to four weeks within the time limited period. The school will mark the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as **authorised absence**. (Code C).

Persistent absence/non attenders

As of September 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that any pupil whose attendance falls below 90% will be classed as a Persistently Absent Student. Therefore, if a pupil misses 19 or more days over an academic year they will be classed as Persistently Absent.

School Actions:

- A meeting will be held with the young person and parent/carer and other agencies to discuss the barriers to attendance and plan strategies to help and support the young person and family to address issues and improve attendance.
- These interventions will be targeted and regularly reviewed
- CMAS School will always endeavour to recognise the individual challenges faced by young people and be as flexible as possible with the interventions to achieve re-engagement

Pupils not attending school

If a pupil fails to attend and parent/carers have indicated that they do not intend to send their child back to our school the following steps will be taken:-

- Advice will be sought from 0-25 team and EWO service
- An attendance meeting will be held with relevant agencies and the local authority to determine parent/carers views and to set an Action plan
- A member of staff with whom the parent/carers have a professional relationship with, will make a daily phone call home. The outcome of this call is logged on the welfare check spreadsheet and recorded in Scholar pack
- The Head of School will email parent/carers at the end of each week
- Any input from the Educational Welfare Service will be monitored