



Cavalry Primary School

Attendance Policy

Document Control

Date	Revised amendment details	By whom
October 2022	Approved by TEFAT	Trustees
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Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others



Related Policies and Documents

[TEFAT Attendance Policy](#)

[TEFAT Safeguarding Policy](#) and Cavalry Local Safeguarding arrangements App A

[TEFAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy](#)

[School attendance parental responsibility measures](#)

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

[DfE Working together to improve school attendance Sept 2022](#)

[DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance Sept 2022](#)

1. Introduction

Promoting good school attendance and reducing absence is vital to: ensure children's day-to-day welfare and safeguarding; ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education; ensure that pupils make good progress academically and personally and to ensure that pupils leave us with the best possible opportunities for their future.

This policy aims to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly; consequently they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

The policy outlines the **responsibilities for the school and parents** in ensuring that pupils' attendance at Cavalry Primary School is the best it can be. It also describes the strategies used by the schools, alongside The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust and Cambridgeshire County Council to support and improve attendance.

2. The importance of culture and curriculum

High standards of pastoral care, excellent teaching and learning and an **exciting and broad curriculum** motivate children to want to attend school. They also build confidence and trust with parents who may feel nervous or anxious about leaving their children at school.

At Cavalry, we recognise that school must be a place where children feel valued, safe, welcome, accepted and supported in order for them to want to attend. This culture is established and maintained through regular staff training, inductions for new staff and pupils, high expectations regarding conduct, and school systems such as behaviour recognition and rewards. This culture is supported by effective and regular communication between staff teams, as well as between teachers and parents. Pupil voice is used to measure our success in maintaining such an ethos.

The curriculum offered by the school helps children to maximise their academic success as well as developing their sense of self and their responsibilities to the wider community. We strive to broaden children's opportunities and experiences by introducing them to new and exciting topics through the taught curriculum, off site visits, sporting competitions, public performances and opportunities to work alongside community organisations.



3. Attendance systems and procedures

3.1 Definitions of Leave:

Cavalry Primary School expects attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

Authorised leave:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness, subject to pattern of illness or a medical appointment where supporting evidence has been provided to cover the period of absence. However, there is an expectation that the pupil will be in school for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending where the appointment falls within the school day.
- Religious Observance - only day (s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to
- The leave of absence has been authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.

Unauthorised leave:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the Parent/Carers, such as shopping, hair appointments, visiting family or birthdays.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence of appointment details have not been provided when asked for.
- There has been no reason provided by the Parent/Carers to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

3.2 Attendance Registers

Accurate and timely registers enable the school to safeguard children as well as to recognise and act upon any concerning attendance patterns. Staff follow the school Register Protocol which is reviewed and shared at least annually. Registers are taken at the start of every morning and afternoon session, specific registration times are 8.45 to 8.55 a.m. and 1.10 to 1.15 p.m. Children arriving after registers close are recorded as 'Late'. Daily contact is made with off-site providers when used to ensure the register is accurate.

3.3 Recording and responding to absence

During pupil inductions, parents are asked to contact school on the first day of a child's absence to explain the reason. If no reason is given, or further information is required, a phone call is made to parents. Once sufficient information has been gained, an absence code is determined by the appropriate member of staff in line with DfE guidance in [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (September 2022). This decision is based on the information provided by parents when a child's absence is reported and will influence whether an absence is authorised or not.



3.4 Home visits

Home visits are routinely carried out by the attendance officer and office team if no contact can be made by phone and further information is needed or to see how a child is. Home visits are not pre-arranged and can be made at any time, at the discretion of the school. Staff will always carry their school ID and will expect to see the child in question, if only briefly, in order to ascertain how they are.

3.5 Monitoring and improving irregular attendance

The attendance officer monitors cases where attendance is below 95% fortnightly. For children whose absence has increased, actions are taken which aim to prevent children becoming or remaining a 'Persistent Absentee' (<90%).

These actions may include but are not limited to:

- Step One. A letter advising Parent/Carers of our concerns regarding the level of their child(ren) attendance and/or lateness
- Step Two, an informal meeting to ascertain barriers to accessing education and offering support and signposting. At this stage, the school may require proof of illness in order to authorise future absences on the grounds of sickness.
- Step Three. A formal Parent Contract Meeting to be held in school, with Parent/Carers to discuss concerns and, working together, identifying support which can be offered and signposting. Targets will be set to improve the attendance and/or lateness. These targets will be reviewed at the end of an agreed monitoring period.
- Step Four. Should the targets set at step three not be met following a review, despite every attempt by the school to support the family, a request for the issue of a penalty notice/fine or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) for children of statutory school age.

Pupils who have been suspended or who are absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate support to return to school, build confidence and bridge gaps in their learning. These plans are drawn up in collaboration with parents and the pupil (providing they are able to understand the process).

3.6 Attendance and safeguarding

Concerns about any extended or persistent absence are referred to the appropriate team or staff member. It is recognised that poor attendance may be a sign or symptom of a wider safeguarding issue that requires support (this includes but is not limited to domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, FGM, CCE, CSE or financial strain). Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, action will be taken in line with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.



3.7 Children Missing from Education (CMfE) Referrals

Academies have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. If a child is absent and contact cannot be made with parents directly (by phone or home visit), and their whereabouts cannot be confirmed by any of the additional named contacts held by school, then the Local Authority's CMfE team is notified immediately and police are asked to carry out a safe and well check at the home address. The CMfE team is also notified if a child is known to have moved out of the area so is no longer attending, or if a parent enquiring about a school place states that their child is not currently attending a school.

3.8 Recognising and rewarding good attendance

To help children and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance and monitor their own and their class's attendance, it is discussed and celebrated in the following ways:

- The class with the best attendance in each Key Stage is announced in our weekly achievement assemblies and receives our 'good attendance teddy bear' as a guest in their classroom for the following week
- The classes with the best attendance are also celebrated with parents and the wider community through our weekly newsletter.
- Individual attendance figures are shared with parents in our termly written reports (October, February and July) with a RAG rating to help parents understand their child's attendance.

4. Term-time leave of absence requests

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Term Time Leave Request form and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents requesting to take their child out of school during the school day.

A leave of absence request form **MUST** be completed in all circumstances, as far in advance as possible, and a minimum of 5 school days before the requested absence starts. Forms must be requested from and returned to the school office. One form must be completed per child and incomplete forms will not be considered.

Where a period of absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances, the number of days will be determined by the headteacher. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that permission for leave is obtained *before* travel or accommodation are booked.



This is line with DfE guidance which states that:

215. Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

216. An application for leave of absence should (and from certain schools must) not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE, September 2022)

After submitting a request for term time leave to be authorised, parents will be informed of the headteacher's decision in writing within five school days.

Exceptional circumstance (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis, such as up to two days absence from school to visit a dying relative, death of a family member, attendance at a funeral or any unavoidable one off event, but the following examples of requests for leave of absence that do not meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised and could be subject to a penalty notice/fine for pupils of statutory school age are:

- 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
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance

Periods of unauthorised leave are referred to the Local Authority Attendance Officer so that consideration can be given to issuing a penalty notice.

If the school suspects Term Time Leave has been taken but the parent/carers have not completed a Term Time Leave Request Form, we will write to all parent/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.



5. Formal and legal interventions

Cavalry Primary School will always seek to resolve any attendance concerns by working to support the family with improving a child's attendance. Where this is not successful, or when those with parental responsibility for the child do not engage with this support, then the academy will work with the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service to address poor attendance.

The first step would be to set up a formal parenting contract between parents and the school.

5.1. Parenting contracts

- A formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or Local Authority to address irregular attendance at school.
- Are not legally binding but allow a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.
- Are not a punitive tool, they are intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.
- Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.
- Aim for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the Local Authority to work in partnership.
- Parenting contracts contain:
 - Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
 - A statement from the school and/or Local Authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
 - A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.
 - The period it will be in place for (most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed).

If a parenting contract is not effective at improving a child's attendance, or is deemed not appropriate, the Local Authority has the option to progress as far as needed through the following, hierarchical legal interventions;

- **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)** - non compliance can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1000
- **Attendance prosecutions** - if found guilty, depending on the circumstances parents can be sentenced to a community order, a parenting order, a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- **Parenting orders** - breaches can lead to a fine of up to £1000



Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services may decide that either a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan is a more appropriate form of support.

5.2. Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Penalty notices are used when parenting contracts are not appropriate, such as when a parent(s) takes a child out of school for term time leave that has not been authorised.

- The fine for a penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child (ren) this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.
- Parent/Carers who take unauthorised leave during term time or whose child has a pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period could be subject to the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution.
- The definition of parent in relation to a Penalty Notice includes and Step-parent and the partner of a parent who lives in the same household.

For full details of the school attendance parental responsibility measures available to schools and Local Authorities see [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) (DfE, January 2015) or Section 6 of [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE September 2022)

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1. Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Informing the school on the first day of non-attendance by telephoning the school office.
- Ensuring that medical appointments are booked outside school time wherever possible.
- Speak to the child's class teacher or the school's attendance officer (Alison Deller) to seek support for any issues that may be preventing their child from wanting to attend school.
- Understanding and accepting that absences for family holidays or visits and special occasions will not normally be permitted. Approval will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Principal.
- Working alongside the school to address and improve any patterns of poor attendance.
- Complying with the DfE statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) (January 2015).



6.2. Pupils, when developmentally ready to take some responsibility for their learning, are expected to:

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive on time, ready to learn.
- Tell a trusted adult if there is a problem that might lead to absence.

6.3. All staff are responsible for promoting good attendance. Those with specific responsibilities include:

- The member of SLT appointed as **Attendance Lead** is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance taken by the school. This is the headteacher.
- The attendance officer checks absence after each register period, carries out first day calling and home visits and supports parents with improving their child's attendance. The AO also monitors attendance data for individuals and groups and works with the attendance lead to decide on and implement actions in response to patterns shown in data.
- **Class teachers and TAs** discuss attendance daily and refer concerns to the AO
- The **headteacher** decides whether term time leave applications are approved or not (see 'Term time leave of absence requests', above).
- The **school's family worker and SENDCo** work with children who face attendance barriers and families who need support.

Our schools is supported to improving pupil attendance by the following partners:

- **Cambridgeshire Attendance team**, including Education Inclusion Family Advisors and Local Authority Attendance Officers.
- **The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust** Regional Director, DSL for the Trust and Legal, SEND and Governance Director