

CASTLE GARDENS

Building Together for the Future

Attendance Policy

Updated March 2017

To be reviewed March 2018

In Castle Gardens we believe it is our duty to educate the pupils academically, socially and emotionally. It is important that we do this in an environment, which is both responsive, and sympathetic to their needs. Children and parents should recognise this and feel confident about voicing any fears or concerns, knowing that they will be listened to by the principal and relevant staff members.

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. At Castle Gardens Primary School we will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Aims

It is our aim at Castle gardens to provide a caring and supporting ethos which promotes a positive culture and encourages good attendance.

We aim:

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Castle Gardens Primary School.
2. To encourage those children with good school attendance
3. To support those parents who feel their child is reluctant to attend school
4. To achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children in mainstream classes (except for those who have chronic health issues)
5. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
6. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
7. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.
8. To raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
9. To establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
10. To recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

The Importance of Attendance

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and promote social development.
- A good education will give the child the best possible start in life and enable him or her to make the best of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.
- Employers of school leavers will take into account the young person's school attendance and punctuality record before making a job offer.
- Young people who are away from school without good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.

Roles and Responsibilities

All members of the school community have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Teachers

Individual class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Principal

The Principal and the Attendance coordinator (Mrs P. Harbinson) are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence

- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Administration staff (Mrs J. McCluskie) in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the principal
- Sending out appointment invitation and reminder letters regarding attendance

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at Castle Gardens Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If a pupil has been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher on the day of return.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Providing the teacher with a note of explanation after an absence for accurate record keeping
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Board of Governors

The role of the Board of Governors is to ensure that the principal keeps a General Register of the pupils at the school and a Pupil Attendance Register and that appropriate action is taken to encourage good attendance at school.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

Education Authority – South Eastern Region

Education Authorities through the Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents and carers meet their own responsibility towards their children's education. If they do not, the Education and Library Board is duty bound to use the legal processes of Court action, to uphold a parent's duty to make sure that the young people in their care receive an education.

Reasonable Reasons for Absence - When can children be absent from school?

A child registered at a school can legally miss school only in very limited circumstances.

These include when he or she:

- is ill.
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment.
- is taking part in a religious event.
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral

Some unacceptable reasons for absence:

- Birthdays.
- Visiting relatives.
- Shopping.
- Hair appointment.
- Looking after other members of the family.

Term-time Holidays

Absence from school should be avoided wherever possible as it causes disruption to the child's education and may affect their relationships within school. If a holiday is planned during term-time the child will miss part of their education and may miss important tests or exams.

Parents should discuss this with the principal in exceptional circumstances but at Castle Gardens we consider that all term-time holidays count as absences.

Regular Non-Attendance

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed.

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home.

Should attendance not improve, the parent is then invited to come to meet with Mrs Harbinson and Mr Gray where there will be opportunities for them to discuss reasons for absence.

Support will then be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance by identifying strategies that could be put in place via an action plan. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. Each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for a referral to the Education Welfare Service. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

If a child is missing school without good reason, schools and ELBs have a number of legal powers that they can use.

The Education Welfare Service receives referrals from schools when pupils' attendance is a cause for concern or when attendance drops below 85%.

The initial response to a referral of a pupil by a school to EWS is a home visit. This provides the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) with an opportunity to assess whether the absence is condoned by parents and if they are in a position to ensure regular attendance.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns. (See Appendix 1.)

Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 states that it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have.

The order also states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. Parents are legally responsible for making this happen. If a child or young person who is registered at school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.¹

1: School Attendance Matters - A Parent's Guide (DENI)

Promoting Good Attendance

As a school operating a positive reward ethos we are keen to promote any success that an individual may have including good or improving attendance and punctuality. We use the following strategies to support and promote good attendance:

- Clear procedures for monitoring and identifying attendance and lateness patterns
- Attendance rules communicated to parents and pupils in a clear concise manner (e.g. via website)
- Parents are kept informed of attendance below 90%
- Recognising that pupils may face disadvantages and offering pastoral care arrangements in place to support them
- Ensure that information recorded is accurate
- Meet with parents to discuss learning expectations and discuss attendance as part of the learning
- Identify pupils who are vulnerable to becoming persistent absentees and have action plans in place for those pupils
- Incentives for before and after school include a Breakfast Club and a selection of after-school activities covering a wide-range of interests

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

At Castle Gardens P.S. we operate a house system to reward children for good behaviour and effort - this can also be used as a means to reward those with good and improving attendance and punctuality at the discretion of the class teacher. Prizes and stickers can also be used. Each individual child's circumstances will be taken into account in this process.

Procedures for Recording Attendance

Attendance/absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning and the SIMS registration document returned to the office promptly. The codes contained in *Appendix 2* should be used to record pupils' attendance and absence as detailed in Circular 2015/10.

Accurate records of all pupils' attendance or absence at school should be recorded diligently on C2K as this information may be required as evidence in cases of non-attendance being brought to court.

We are required by law to continue to hold copies of pupil attendance records and pupil registration records for not less than 10 years from the date on which the register ceased to be used.

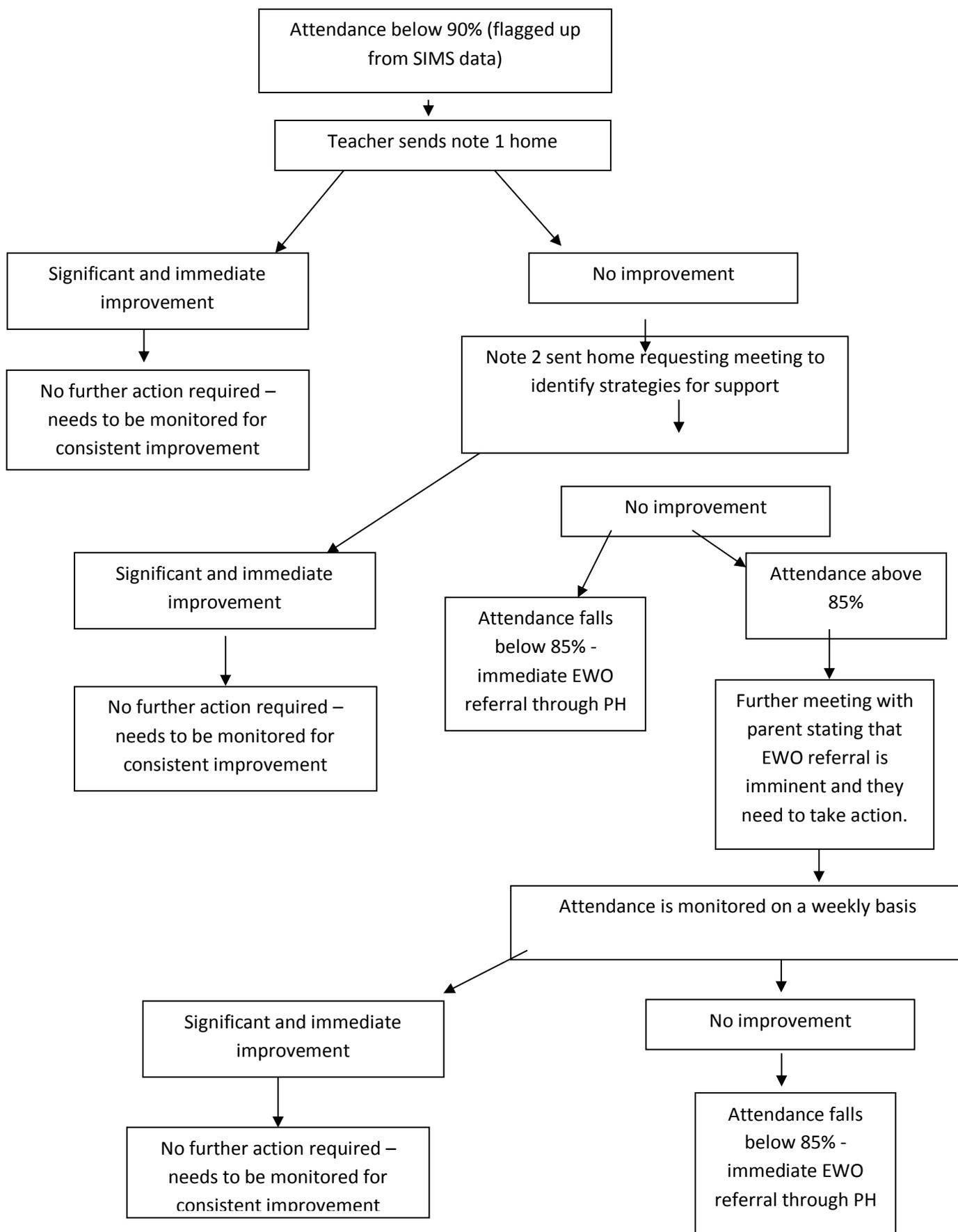
To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm>

Castle Gardens Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Appendix 1

Improving Attendance



Attendance will be monitored through SIMS and those who are achieving below 90% will be identified for support. Notes need to be written at all stages of this process and passed on to PH who will keep them on file for future reference.

Appendix 2

ABSENCE CODES:	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING
/ \	Present: / = (AM); \ = (PM)	Present
A	Artistic Endeavour	Authorised Absence
B	Bereavement	Authorised Absence
C	Suspended	Authorised Absence
D	No reason provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
F	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Other Absence	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised Absence
L	Late (before registration closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	Unauthorised Absence
O	Other Exceptional Circumstances	Authorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity	Approved Educational Activity
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Approved Educational Activity
U	Late (after registration closed)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational Visit	Approved Educational Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
X	Only staff should attend	Attendance not required
Y	Exceptional Closure	Attendance not required
*	Not on roll	Attendance not required
#	Holiday for all	Attendance not required
!	No attendance required	Attendance not required
1	Alternative Education Provision (organised by the ELB)	Approved Educational Activity
2	Home/hospital tuition (organised by the ELB)	Approved Educational Activity
3	Elective Home Education	Attendance not Required
4	Pupil Referral Unit	Approved Educational Activity
5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework - EF)	Approved Educational Activity
6	Training Organisation (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity
7	FE College (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity
8	Intensive Support Learning Unit	Approved Educational Activity
9	CAMHS	Approved Educational Activity