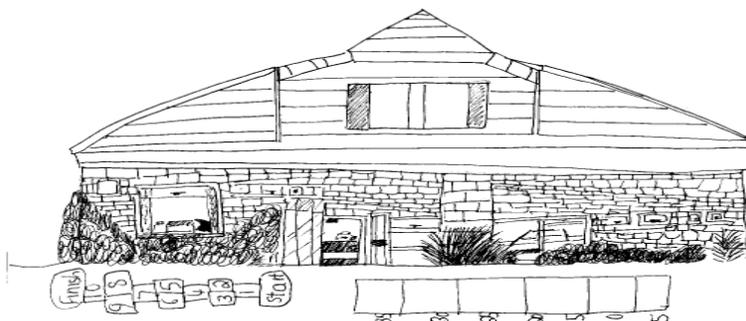


**Graveley Primary**  
**School**  
**A Church of England (VC)**  
**School**



**Attendance Policy**

**Autumn 2018**  
**To be reviewed: Autumn 2020**

## **Introduction**

Graveley Primary School is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children and families. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

This Attendance Policy is intended to inform parents in how the school aims to meet its responsibilities and to provide an agreed framework within which consistent practices and procedures can be applied.

At Graveley Primary School, we want the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance helps children to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

## **Target Setting/Monitoring**

In November 2010, the Department for Education issued the following information to schools and local authorities about attendance targets from Summer 2012:

*'The Department expects all schools and local authorities to continue focusing on reducing overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence. Absence will continue to be monitored closely via the pupil level school census and the Secretary of State's power to require an individual school to set absence targets where a school's absence record is of particular concern is being retained.'*

A new inspection framework for maintained schools and academies was introduced in September 2013. The quality of teaching and learning judgement relates to attendance because, however good the teaching, it does not benefit pupils if they are not present.

## **Expectations**

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between school, parents and pupils. All these groups need to understand the expectations which the policy makes of them.

## **Responsibilities - Schools**

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

**Graveley Primary School will:**

- Provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis
- Encourage good attendance and investigate all unexplained and unjustified absence
- Follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality
- Keep parents informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record
- Work closely with parents should attendance or punctuality give cause for concern

**Responsibilities – Parents and Carers*****Section 7 of Education Act 1996 states:***

*It is the duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.*

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have.

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

**Parents should:**

- Ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and ready to learn
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- Impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and relevant meetings
- Work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- Ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- Notify the school if their child is absent. This should be done as soon as possible on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence in writing (email is acceptable)
- Maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- Ensure the school is informed of any changes of contact details
- Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- Avoid booking holidays during term time

**Pupils:**

- Are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually
- Must remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the relevant person
- Are expected to be ready to learn
- Will not leave the school without permission from the Headteacher

**Doors open**

- Breakfast club opens at 7.30am. Early drop off starts at 8.30am.
- School opens at 8.50am. Pupils may enter the buildings at that time under the supervision of a member of staff. Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.40am.

## **Registration**

- Registers are called at 8.55am and 1.00pm. Registers close at 9.00am and 1.05pm. Registers are marked consistently by staff.
- Any pupil arriving after closure of the register will be marked absent for the whole of the session.
- Pupils are called by name and respond in the prescribed formal manner.
- Registers will be marked in accordance with DfE guidance. See Absence and Attendance Codes January 2009, **Appendix A/2.**

## **Punctuality**

At Graveley School, we actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness will be monitored and followed up.

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

## **Lateness**

Any pupil arriving after 9.00am or 1.05 pm should report to the school office and sign in the late book.

Entries in the late book will be transferred to the computerised registration system by the school secretary at the end of each day.

In exceptional circumstances e.g. bad weather, the Headteacher will authorise an absence once the register has been closed.

## **Following up Lateness**

The names of pupils who arrive late will be monitored.

If a child has more than 3 late arrivals in a two-week period, parents will be asked for an explanation. Parents whose children are regularly late for school, will be contacted by a member of school staff who will work with the parent(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

## **Absences**

Parents must provide an explanation for all absences from school either in advance or on the first day of absence. Messages may be left on the school answer phone. This should be followed up in writing (email is acceptable). The Headteacher will decide whether to accept the reason given and whether to authorise the absence.

Notification must be provided for all absences from school. Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (via telephone call or

personal contact) in relation to the particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence.

Graveley Primary School will usually authorise absence for illness, days for religious observance, exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement, music or dance exams. We will not authorise absence for shopping, birthdays, looking after siblings or any holidays during term time.

Notification of any authorised or unauthorised planned absence must be made in writing with a minimum of 14-day's notice (**please refer to Appendix A3**). In exceptional circumstances of medical appointments being made, this 14-day period may be waived with the discretion of the Headteacher. Acknowledgement and confirmation of this correspondence will be sent home (**please refer to Appendix A4**).

*All decisions regarding the authorisation of an absence are made by the Headteacher.*

### **Following up Absences**

Graveley Primary School follows up all absences from school. If no reason has been provided for a pupil's absence by 9.30am on the first day of absence, a parent of the pupil will be contacted by the school office via telephone – all attempts will be logged with time(s) of attempt.

If the school office are unable to make contact with the primary contact for the child, then they may seek to gain contact with all other named emergency contacts provided on the child's registration form. If contact is not successful, then the school office will notify the school's Designated Senior Person (DSP). Where no reason for absence has been provided and there have been previous concerns about safeguarding, a referral may be made to Children's Services.

If no reason has been provided for a pupil's absence after 3 consecutive days, a letter will be sent to the parent of the pupil.

If a pupil returns to school after an absence without a written explanation from his/her parent and this has still not been received within 3 days, a letter requesting this will be sent to his/her parents.

Parents whose children have less than 95% attendance in school in a period of 1 term, will be contacted by letter. Pupils whose attendance is less than 90% will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer.

If a child returns to school after a prolonged period of absence, he/she will be allocated a peer buddy and a staff mentor.

The Headteacher will refer a pupil absent for a long time due to medical reasons to the Education Support Team for Medical Absence (ESTMA). Pupils with ongoing significant medical issues may be subject to a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) to ensure their educational and pastoral needs are met. This would ensure the involvement of all parties involved in the child's welfare (including medical advice).

### **Leaving and returning to School during School Day**

Parents must notify the school office and sign their child out in the signing out book, if a pupil leaves the school site during the school day.

Pupils must provide an appointment card or a letter from their parent/carer requesting that they be allowed to leave school. They must show this to the school secretary.

Pupils must be signed back into school at the school office on their return. The signing in and out record will be the responsibility of the school secretary in the event of fire.

### **Term Time Holidays**

Graveley Primary School will not authorise family holidays during term time except in exceptional circumstances. This is in line with other schools' policies in the Stevenage and Hitchin area. Additional work will not be provided for any holidays.

### **Child Performers**

The Headteacher may pre-authorise up to 10 days absence for pupils who are child performers taking part in roles etc. Requests for such pre-authorised absences must be made in writing to the Headteacher at the start of the academic year or when the child starts performing. A meeting will be called between the Headteacher and parent to discuss the issue further. Please note that any such requests will take up to ten days to process depending on the Headteacher's availability.

### **Rewards**

Good attendance is recognised at the end of each academic year with a certificate in the end of year assembly.

### **Working with the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)**

Graveley Primary School works in partnership with the allocated AIO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school. When attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with the AIO the school will make a referral to Children, Schools and Families for the AIO to work with the family on a formal basis.

The Headteacher meets the AIO as required. Information to enable the AIO to carry out an effective consultation visit and/or home visit will be provided by the school secretary.

### **HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL POLICY**

#### **Policy for AIOs working with children whose absence has been authorised**

- If the AIO becomes concerned (through checking the attendance register) that a pupil has accumulated significant amounts of authorised absence this will be discussed with the relevant member of school staff.
- If it is agreed that there is a concern about the pupil's attendance the school should share this concern with the parents.
- If concerns about the pupil's attendance remain, the AIO will consider accepting the referral in accordance with the Attendance and Pupil Support Service referral procedures.
- If the AIO, after making contact with the parents, is of the opinion that the absence is in fact unjustified he/she will advise the school to discontinue authorising the absence.
- AIO will give priority to those cases when the absence has been unauthorised.

(Note: if a pupil's absence has been authorised by the school the LA cannot cite that absence as evidence of non attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.)

**Publication of Information**

Graveley Primary School shares information on individual pupils' attendance as necessary with parents, pupils and staff.

Attendance is a standing item on the agenda of school Governors' meetings.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Attendance Registers**

Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Schools should ensure that pupils can be accounted for in an emergency and that a pupil removed from the school at lunchtime will not go unnoticed.

Registers must record whether each pupil is present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registers should open and close at regular, set times.

**They should not be kept open for longer than 30 minutes.**

When calling the register, the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools must use the national set of symbols as required by the DfE.

When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

Entries are made into a computerised registration system and print outs are made weekly. These are kept bound in a single volume for each particular school year and retained for a period of not less than 3 years.

Schools are required to notify their AIO of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason. In Hertfordshire this is achieved through the regular consultation visits of the AIO. Primary schools who do not have regular consultation visits should notify their attached AIO.

A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register.

**A pupil of compulsory school age shall have his/her name deleted from the admissions register when:**

- the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a School Attendance Order and another school is substituted by the LA for that named in the Order or the Order is revoked
- the pupil has been registered at another school. (Schools can register Traveller children even if they are on the roll of another school. The school the child normally attends is the base school; the other registration is temporary)

- the school has received written notification from the parent that they are educating the pupil themselves. (Elective Home Education)
- the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance of the school
- in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding 10 days for the purpose of a holiday, the pupil has failed to attend the school within the 10 school days immediately following the last day of absence which was granted and the school is not satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause
- the pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- the pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and both the school and the AIO have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her. In such cases the school should ensure that a Removal From Roll form is sent to the Attendance and Pupil Support Team in the local area office in order that efforts can be made to trace the pupil. This may involve contacting other relevant agencies and Authorities that may be able to provide further information (see 7.12).
- the pupil has died
- the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and intends to cease to attend. (All registered pupils are required to remain at school until the leaving date - last Friday in June. "At school" includes for these purposes approved educational activities undertaken off site, including work experience).
- the pupil has been permanently excluded and the exclusion has been upheld
- the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and has not on completing such education transferred to a reception class at the school
- the pupil attends a special school and the LA gives consent for his/her name to be removed

If a school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, the school should complete a Removal From Roll form and return it to the local Attendance and Pupil Support Team office. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed. If a school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of the Children Missing Education Officer. E mail [csf.cme@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:csf.cme@hertscc.gov.uk)

When a pupil's name is removed from the admissions register the school should notify the Children, Schools & Families Pupil Support Team.

Registers should be made available for inspection by Attendance Improvement Officers when requested. Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.

## **Appendix A/2 – Attendance Codes**

**At Graveley we follow the DfE Advice on School Attendance published October 2014**

### **Absence and Attendance Codes**

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations.

### **Present at School**

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

### **Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm**

Present in school during registration.

### **Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed**

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

### **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity**

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

### **Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:**

#### **Code B: Off-site educational activity**

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

#### **Consortia Schools**

Pupils attending consortia schools as part of their course only need to be placed on the registers of their 'main' school rather than on all of the schools they attend. They should be treated as guest pupils at the other consortia schools. The consortia schools however, must ensure they have suitable systems in place for monitoring and reporting the attendance and absence of the pupils involved, which must be shared with the 'main' school.

**Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment**

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

**Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment**

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

**Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity**

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

**Code V: Educational visit or trip**

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

**Code W: Work experience**

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code. 10

**Authorised Absence from School**

Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

**Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:****Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made**

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance

register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

### **Code H: Holiday authorised by the school**

Headteachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

### **Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)**

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

### **Code M: Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of 11 school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

### **Code R: Religious observance**

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

### **Code S: Study leave**

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

### **Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

## **Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

### **Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher.**

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided**

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

### **Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

### **Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

## **Administrative Codes**

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

### **Code X: Not required to be in school**

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

### **Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

**Code Z: Pupil not on admission register**

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

**Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure**

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be

**EXTENDED TRIPS OVERSEAS DURING TERM-TIME**

In deciding whether to grant extended leave of absence, schools should consider the particular circumstances of each individual case. It is important that schools show an understanding of the parents' perspective whether or not they are able to agree to the request for absence.

When deciding whether to grant leave of absence schools may wish to consider the following:

- A visit involving family overseas has an entirely different significance than the normal associations with a holiday.
- Visits may be very important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up.
- Parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweighs the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school – maintaining family links in extended family situations may involve greater significance and greater pressures in some cultures than it does currently in many western cultures.
- The reasons for parents making a visit may be, for example, family illness or bereavement. It is less easy for parents to undertake these normal and necessary activities where long distances and high costs are involved.
- If it is possible to include school holidays in the leave of absence so as to limit the amount of term time the pupil is absent.
- Governing bodies may wish to consult with local minority groups.

If leave of absence is agreed schools should consider:

- Explaining the work the pupil will miss, how it can be made up on return and how the parents could help the pupil.
- Whether work can be given to the pupil while he or she is away.
- Preparing a study pack.
- Asking the pupil to make notes and observations on a class topic.
- Going through any work done by the pupil on return.
- Sharing experiences in a positive way with the class and teacher on return.

Parents should be informed of the regulation on removal from the school roll if the child does not return on the agreed date. Parents should be asked to contact the school if the return is delayed. Schools should ensure that they have a contact number in the UK so that they can make enquiries if the pupil does not return at the agreed time.

## **OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**

Occasionally, parents/carers may advise schools that they need to take their child away from school for a period of time and that they do not know the date of return. An example might be when a close relative, living at a distance from the family, is dying.

Schools should consider whether these absences should be regarded as 'family holidays' or as an ordinary absence from school and should always make sure they have contact details for the parents, **including an address to which letters can be sent at their destination.**

If they are to be regarded as an absence, not a holiday, the school should decide if the absence can be authorised. Code 'C' (Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)), is for exceptional occasions which may warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- the nature of the event for which leave is sought;
- its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?);
- whether the parent gave advance notice; and
- the pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Examples might include special occasions such as attending the wedding of a family member, family bereavement, prison visits.

If the absence is prolonged, schools should read **Statutory Instrument No. 1751 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**. These give detailed information about when a pupil may be deleted from the Admissions Register. Schools should discuss this with their Attendance Improvement Officer.

## **STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME:**

- Schools and the Local Authority should actively discourage holidays during term time
- The school's Attendance Policy should state that holidays during term time are not acceptable
- Parents should be given a clear message at every opportunity, e.g. at parents evening, in newsletters, school brochure and bulletins, about taking holiday in term time. This should be maintained as a child moves through infant, junior and secondary school.
- Parents should be informed of dates when leave of absence will not be granted, e.g. school examinations or SATs. It will be helpful to send the school calendar to parents at the start of the term so that they are aware of term times and important dates.
- Parents requesting holidays could be invited into school to discuss the proposed absence and implications for their child of missing school time.
- Schools may wish to agree joint policies within their local area to provide consistency. This will ensure parents are aware of practice and ensure that schools are operating on the same basis with attendance figures.
- Term time holiday absence may be recorded on the pupil's report.
- To identify the extent of the issue keep a record of the amount of absence taken for holidays. This could be published by the Governors in their report to parents, giving the absence figure excluding holidays during term time.

## **APPENDIX A3**

### **Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Request Form**

<b>Pupil's Name:</b>	<b>Date of birth:</b>	<b>Class:</b>
<b>Address:</b>		
<b>Contact number:</b>		
<b>I request permission for my child to be absent from school between:</b>		
<b>Date of first day school absence:</b>	<b>Date of return to school:</b>	<b>Total number of days absent from school:</b>
<b>Please indicate below the reason for your request for absence from school in term time and include any supporting documentation. The Headteacher <u>will not</u> be able to consider your request without supporting documents.</b>		
<b>Parent's contractual conditions (a letter from your employer must accompany this application).</b>		
<b>Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad (a letter from the Service Welfare Officer must accompany this application).</b>		
<b>Child or parents rehabilitation of medical/emotional issues (a letter from your GP must accompany this application).</b>		
<b>Emigration investigation (some form of evidence should be included with this application).</b>		
<b>Family wedding or funeral.</b>		
<b>Exceptional and unforeseen circumstances (please state).</b>		
<b>Parent/carer's signature:</b>	<b>Name of parent/carer:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

**You are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure your child attends school regularly. However, the Headteacher has a discretionary power to authorise absences in exceptional circumstances (please refer to the school's Attendance Policy). Any unauthorised absence will be recorded on your child's attendance records.**

**If your child's attendance falls below 90% they would be classed as a 'persistent absentee' and their attendance would be monitored by the Attendance Improvement Officer. The government expectation is for every child to attend school at least 95% of the time.**

**We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from the school first. The Headteacher cannot retrospectively authorise absences under any circumstances.**

**For school use only:**

<b>The Headteacher has considered your request for leave of absence. Your child's leave of absence will be recorded as follows:</b>		
<b>Number of authorised sessions:</b>	<b>Number of unauthorised sessions:</b>	<b>Number of unauthorised sessions to date:</b>
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Position:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

**APPENDIX A4 - Acknowledgement and confirmation of request for leave**

Date:

Dear Parent,

Thank you for your letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ advising of (Child's name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ absence from school on (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

As you are aware, in line with our Attendance Policy, I am unable to authorise this absence. Therefore the leave will be recorded as unauthorised on our register.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

## **APPENDIX C**

### **WORKING WITH THE ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OFFICER (AIO)**

You can expect your AIO to work with you in the following way:

- a) Consultation Visits (if applicable): These will be arranged with you at a mutually convenient time. During the consultation visit the AIO will meet with the relevant member(s) of staff. Together, they will identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties, agree on action to be taken and exchange information on work undertaken.
- b) Casework: the AIO and a member of school staff will agree the referrals to be made.
- c) Other work: The AIO will offer advice, guidance and strategies to support schools to improve attendance. These may include:
  - analysing attendance data to identify and highlight issues, trends and concerns
  - working in partnership with heads and pastoral staff to plan, implement and evaluate systems, procedures and policies to address issues identified
  - disseminating good practice

You can expect the AIO to:

- inform the school as soon as possible of any dates arranged for visits that cannot be kept.
- provide a basic cover service if the allocated AIO is absent through illness for more than one consultation visit.

To ensure schools are able to make the most of AIO consultation visits and support, and that the AIO is able to provide schools with the best service, your co-operation is needed in the following areas:

- designate members of staff to attend consultation visits
- ensuring your SIMS registers are up to date for consultation visits, and where requested individual registration certificates are printed off immediately prior to the consultation visit
- ensuring allocated staff members are given adequate time to meet with the AIO.
- giving as much notice as possible if the consultation visit has to be re-arranged as school staff are not available
- ensuring that there is a quiet, private place where the consultation visit can take place without interruption
- ensure work is undertaken by the school prior to referral and that copies of letters and records of meetings accompany the referral forms
- ensuring that any actions agreed in the consultation visit are followed up as soon as practically possible
- ensuring that EWN1 forms are completed accurately and promptly .

Attendance Improvement Officers are keen to support schools whenever the need arises so please contact them between visits if you need their help or advice on an attendance issue.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Authorising Absence and Approved Educational Activity**

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Schools should communicate to parents their policies with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence. Some parents, such as those whose first language is not English or who do not read or write may experience difficulty in providing notes. In such cases schools should seek to make alternative arrangements.

Schools are encouraged to keep all absence notes for at least a term and when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern to retain the notes until there is no longer a concern.

#### **Absence should be authorised if:**

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:
  - i) the child's transport to and from school
  - ii) boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school
  - iii) enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return
- there is a family bereavement

Absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation.

Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as approved educational activity. For statistical purposes such pupils are counted as present even though they are physically absent. A pupil should be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is on:

- an approved work experience placement
- a field trip or educational visit
- an approved sporting activity
- a link course
- the pupil is attending an interview with a prospective employer
- or for a place at university, college, or a place at another school
- receiving special tuition at another school (or at an ESC)

(Note: If a pupil is attending an ESC under dual registration procedures the base school should always confirm that he/she is actually attending the ESC before marking him/her as 'approved educational activity'. Also it should only mark the pupil as 'approved educational activity' on those days when he/she is due to attend the ESC; on days when he/she is not due to attend the ESC he/she (unless attending the base school) should be marked as 'authorised absent').

The key features of approved educational activity are that they are:

- i) educational and directly linked to the school's programme
- ii) approved by the school
- iii) supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school

(Study leave is not an approved educational activity.)

Schools should ensure that in the event of a fire drill or other emergency evacuation they are able to carry out an immediate headcount as to the number of pupils physically present on-site.