

The Coombes CE Primary School

All our policies reflect the Christian ethos of the school with children at heart and in mind

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Staff and Governors expect full and punctual attendance from all pupils in order to achieve their full potential. Attendance is monitored weekly by the Headteacher and the Attendance Officer.

We strongly believe every child should have access to education. Poor attendance at school impacts negatively in children's learning and disadvantages them.

Principles

- Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Local Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.
- Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.
- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause).
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register.
- Initial problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. *See procedures for raising concerns – Appendix A*
- Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way and the child's attendance falls below 90%, the school is required to account for this to the Education Welfare Officer. The EWO will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, this officer can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.
- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the LA (0118 9746000).

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

1. Sickness & Other Legitimate Reasons

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first and subsequent days of absence by 9.15am. Details of the reason can be given by phone or by email to attendance@coombes.wokingham.sch.uk. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. Further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger children, day trips, hairdresser's appointments, etc. Leave will however be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which have to take place during school time.

2. If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation for the absence by 9.15 am, the School office will contact the parent by telephone as a matter of concern.

3. Holidays

There is a national expectation that no holidays will be taken during term time.

The Headteacher retains the right to authorise leave on a case by case basis in exceptional circumstances only. Whilst the cost of a holiday might be an issue it is not considered to be sufficient to be an exceptional reason

Additionally, leave may be refused where children have already missed a lot of work or at crucial times of the year (e.g. during planned assessments).

Applications for leave should be completed by the parent as far in advance as reasonably possible using the request forms available from the school office. Applications are considered by the Senior Management Team and parents informed of the outcome, by letter if the request has not been approved. If approved, an individual programme of work will be organised for the child

Please note that if leave is taken without authorisation, the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Please be aware that unauthorised holiday absence of 5 days or more can now result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice which carries a fine of £60 or if not paid after 21 days the fine is doubled to £120 and court prosecution if unpaid after 28 days. Penalty Notices are served per parent per child.

See Appendix B

4. Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that pupils are present at registration. Children are welcome in class from 08.30am and registration is at 08.50am A late mark is awarded if arrival is between 9.00 and 9.15 am. Absence mark is given if arrival is after 9.15 am. If a pupil arrives after registration, parents should sign the pupil in at the school office.
5. Should a pupil be taken out of school before the end of the day, they should be signed out at the office and a reason given.

Appendix A - Procedures for Raising Attendance Concerns

Attendance concerns for each academic year are routinely identified by monitoring of attendance data and other evidence e.g. registers, signing-in book, teacher concerns, lack of parental engagement with school.

Concerns are shared with parents as in the guidelines below – escalating if the concerns do not resolve and attendance / punctuality improve.

1) **Initial concern identified.** One or more of:

- Attendance < 90% - particularly where this is long term (half a term or more)/there are previous or CP concerns/ multiple absences/broken weeks/the child is part of a vulnerable group
- Pattern of absence e.g. Mondays
- Absence with no reason given/lack of communication with parents
- Unauthorised absence reasons
- Poor punctuality without good reason – 2/3 late arrivals per week and/or any very late arrivals (after 9:20am) and/or regular late pick up in the afternoon (or early pick up before 3:20)

Action: The concern is shared with parents via conversation with the child's class teacher and/or with the Attendance Officer as part of talking to them about absence events - phone call or in person; log details in Attendance Officer's attendance book

2) **Concerns continue or increase after the initial chat.** e.g. attendance % does not improve or declines/ patterns persists over time.

Action: Attendance team member talks to parents to explain the consequences of poor attendance / punctuality and the role of the EWO – phone call or in person; individual attendance report to be shared with parents. Parents to be informed that their child's attendance is being monitored – child's name is added to Attendance Officer's weekly monitoring list.

3) **Attendance below 87% or persistent poor punctuality in spite of intervention as above.** **Action:** Attendance Officer phones to arrange a formal meeting in school between parents and staff, plus SENCO if appropriate; meeting confirmed in a letter to parents. OR parents invited by EWO to a panel meeting in school as above. Individual action plan agreed for each family.

4) **Attendance below 85% (Persistent Absence) in spite of intervention/parents do not engage.**

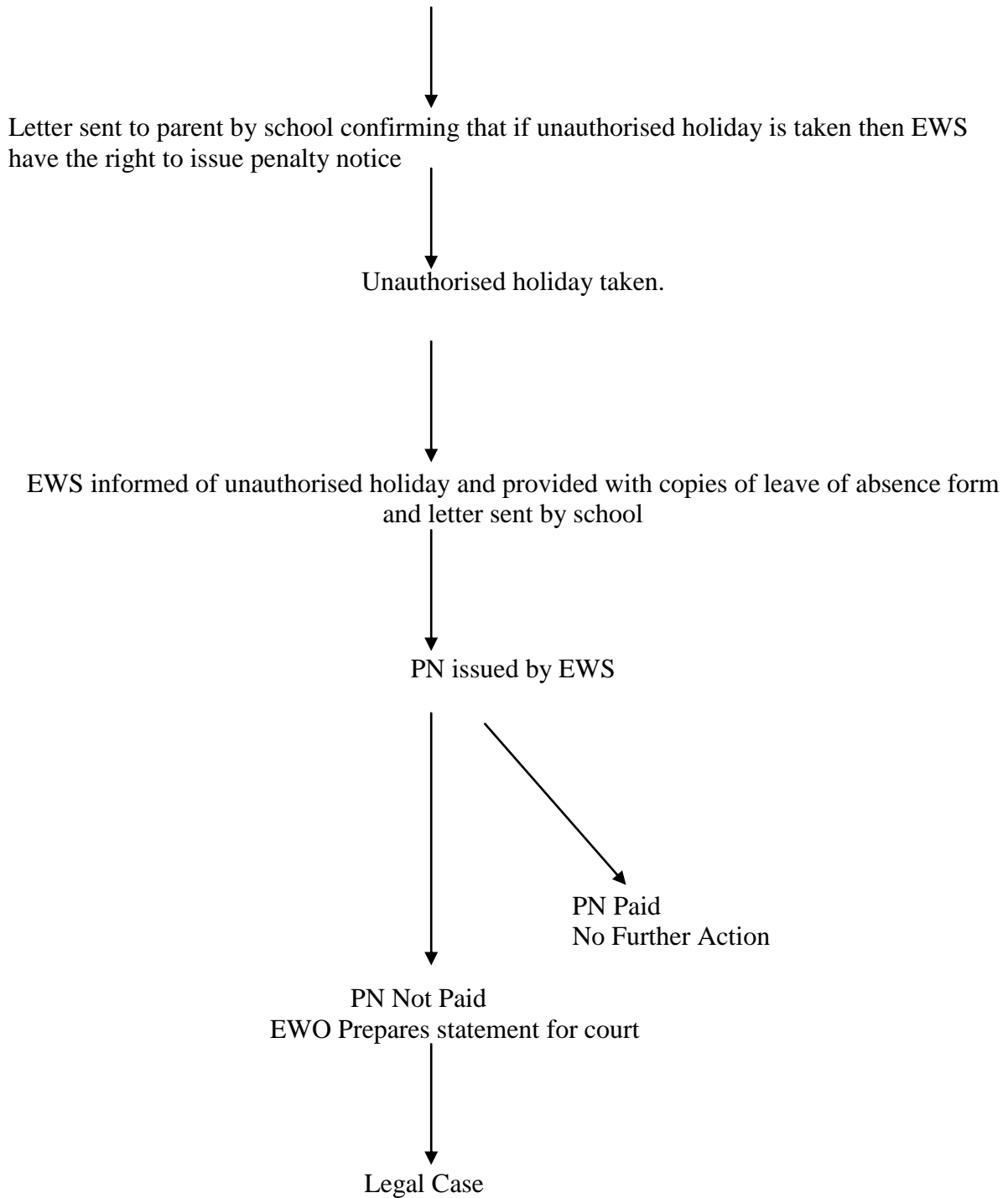
Action: Case referred to EWO at consult or by phone/email if more urgent – EWO writes to parents/meets parents in school or at home visit. No further absence authorised for the child without evidence until attendance rises above 85%. EWO takes further action if unauthorised absence persists.

Appendix B

PENALTY NOTICE FOR UNAUTHORISED HOLIDAY ABSENCE

Pathway

Leave of absence (holiday) form returned to parent: application has been refused



James Edmondson
Principal EWO
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