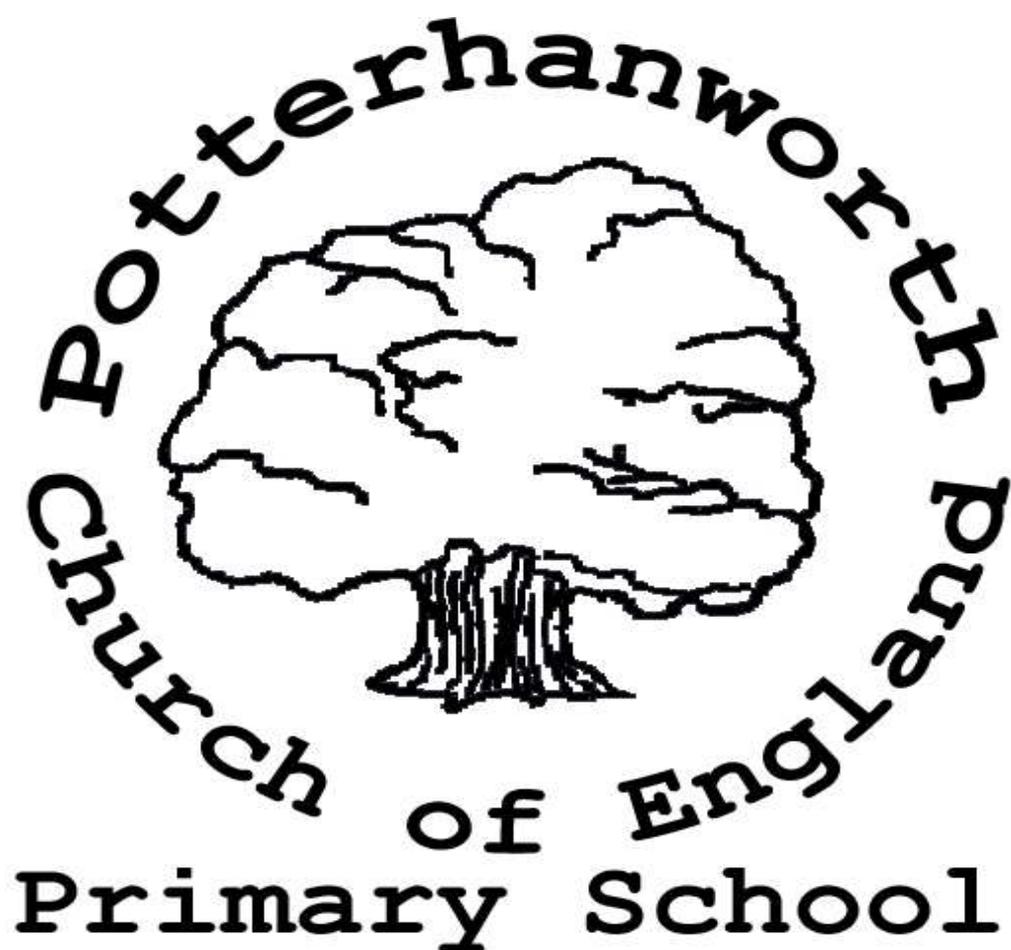


Potterhanworth Church of England Primary School
A WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY



BASED ON:
LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
EDUCATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE
ATTENDANCE POLICY GUIDANCE
October 2006

Equality and Diversity Statement

At Potterhanworth Church of England Primary School we promote equality of opportunity. We promote positive attitudes and encourage active participation of all stakeholders regardless of race, gender, disability, age, religion, belief and sexuality.

In so doing we strive to eliminate any unlawful discrimination or harassment of any group and where any such harassment is found appropriate action will be taken immediately.

Our Christian values are respect, fairness, commitment, trust, friendship and responsibility.

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The use of 'Head teacher', throughout this policy means the School Head teacher, or his/her representative, ie Senior Teacher.

VISION STATEMENT

Potterhanworth Church of England Primary School is committed to providing a quality education for all pupils. We believe that pupils can only benefit from the education in our schools through regular school attendance. We will, therefore, strive to achieve the maximum possible attendance for all pupils and we will make sure that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. Wherever possible, we will make contact with parents where a pupil is absent from school without good reason.

AIMS

It is recognised that:

- **The schools need to maintain an attendance target level of 96%.**
- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education, in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- All parties should understand that absence from school, for any reason, can have a negative impact on a child's educational progress and that holidays in term time should be avoided wherever possible.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school, as required by law.
- In the context of the law, it is only the school that can approve absence, not parents. When the school is advised of an absence by a parent/carer (parentally condoned absence), it remains unauthorised until approved by the Head teacher.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That you attend school regularly.
- That you will arrive on time (08:50) and remember to bring everything that you need for the day.
- That you will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that makes you feel that you do not want to come to school.

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure your children attend school regularly and punctually (by 09:00).
- To ensure that you contact the school on each morning of absence before 9.15am (unless previously agreed otherwise) whenever your child is unable to attend, with details of the reason for the absence. This cannot be accepted from a child's sibling, or any other child.
- To ensure that your child arrives in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect your child's attendance in school.
- Attend meetings to discuss your child's absence when requested.
- Contact the school if problems arise which may keep your child away from school, so that the school can help.
- To avoid taking family holidays in term-time. Term time absences may seriously affect the progress of your child.
- To ensure absence request forms are completed in advance of each and every occasion that you wish your child to leave school.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Contact by 10 am each morning when a pupil fails to attend school without the parent, or appropriate adult, providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to anybody without the consent of the pupil or their parent).
- A quality education

ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE AND REWARDS

Registration

- Registration begins at 9.00 am and 1.15 pm.
- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each session and within 30 minutes of the start of the session.
- Teachers to advise office of reason for absence and time of late arrival. A record of this information and pupil's name and date will be kept electronically.
- Manual registers: the present symbol should be marked in black ink and other symbols should be marked in red ink.
- Any amendments to the manual register should be marked in blue, to distinguish the difference between the old mark and the correct mark. Correction fluid must not be used.
- The school will aim to contact parents by 10 am on each day of un-notified absence (notified by a blank mark in the class register) and a log of contact attempts recorded.

Categorising Absence

Symbols to be used in Registers (Categories)

From 1 September 2006 all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence.

The Department for Education (DfE) believes that these codes are best used within electronic systems for recording attendance and absence of pupils. Such electronic systems are capable of producing the data necessary for absence returns to DfE without time consuming counting up of possible attendances and actual absences.

The use of fixed codes will also assist both Local Authorities and DfE in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

- **Only the school**, in the context of the law **can authorise absence**, a note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher/school office does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason, then the matter must be referred to the Head teacher.

Authorised or Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences:

- Illness.
- Family bereavements.
- Medical and dental appointments, where proof is available (e.g. appointment card, hospital letter/counselling appointment slip etc.)
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion.
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

Absences should **not be authorised** under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips.

- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been given
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.
- Birthdays.
- Family outings.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Head teacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

Lateness

- Any child in class for the beginning of the session will be marked as present.
- Any child arriving after this time must report to the school office.
- Arrival of a child within 30 minutes of the start of the morning or afternoon session will be marked as 'L' (late) and a reason for the lateness must be noted in the school's Management Information System. Statistically, this is an authorised absence.
- Arrival of a child outside of 30 minutes from the start of the morning or afternoon session will be marked as 'U' (Late - after registration closed) and a reason for the lateness must be noted in the school's Management Information System. Statistically, this is an unauthorised absence.
- In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the Head teacher may keep the register open for longer periods.

- Should late arrivals become regular, the Head teacher may be advised to reduce the length of time the register is open, as lateness causes disruption to class pupils and teaching and embarrassment to the late child. In such a circumstance parents will be notified in writing of such a change.

Holiday Absence

Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday during term time, and school will not authorise absences for holidays during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. If a request is not granted and the parent takes the child on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised. If a holiday request is granted, the absence should not normally be for more than two weeks in any school year. If the holiday goes on for longer than agreed, the extra days' absence should be unauthorised.

- To request holiday authorisation a parent should submit a completed holiday request form (see Appendix A) to the school office.
- Parents should state why the holiday absence is necessary during term time.

Medical/Other Absence

- To request medical or any other authorised time from school, a parent should submit a completed green absence form (see Appendix B) to the school office.
- Parents should provide a minimum of 1 week's notice, where possible, to assist teachers with their planning of work.
- Parents should state the time and place of an appointment and should attach proof of such appointments, as verification, where possible. Proof may be in the form of a letter, appointment card, sticky label from prescribed medicine etc.
- Doctor and dentist appointments should be made outside of school hours, where at all possible.
- For medical/other absences, an estimated time of collection and return to school should be stated, to assist teachers with organising their schedules.
- Appointments that cannot be verified should **not** be authorised.

Keeping Parents Informed

- The school will send children's attendance details home to parents/carers at the end of each year (or when appropriate) together with targets for improvement, as appropriate.
- A copy of this policy will be provided to each family on entry to the school, as a reminder, or if requested. A copy will always be available on the school's website.
- A meeting between parents and the school (usually the Head teacher) will be arranged to discuss the attendance of any child with a persistent absence record (see Persistent Absence) or to establish further information following a request for authorised absence.

Persistent Absence

This applies to any pupil who at any point in the year has accumulated absence of 10% or more of the available sessions, **regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised.**

- The school will monitor the absence levels of all children on an ongoing basis but at least half termly, and will take action for any persistent absence within 2 weeks of identification.
- In the first instance, parents will be contacted to advise them of their child's attendance record. If appropriate, they will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head teacher or the Head teacher's representative.
- The meeting will discuss the absences from school, any concerns either party may have and an agreed plan of action for the remainder of the school year (see Appendix C). Working together throughout the remainder of the year would offer a good relationship with parents, a well-educated child and improved attendance.
- The school may contact external agencies for further advice at any point throughout the process.
- If the parent declines to meet and discuss their child's attendance, a further letter will be sent, via recorded delivery, to outline the plan of action that the school has decided upon, and should the plan of action continue to be ignored, outside bodies should be involved and legal advice sought.

Other

- Attendance registers must be kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date that the last entries were made.
- The school will support pupils who have attendance problems and establish a mechanism for working with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- If a child moves school, the school will forward all attendance records to the destination school.

RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted by telephone on the first day of absence. All calls are logged.
- Where there is no response on the second day, a letter will be sent, or there may be a home visit from two members of the school staff or the Education Welfare Officer where the Service is already involved. Under no circumstances should staff make a home visit alone, and then should only attend with the permission of the Head teacher.
- Where non-attendance continues, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer for the school and further action planned. This may, in appropriate cases, result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service.
- After 10 days, unless other action is planned, the parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, Education Welfare Officer, parent and pupil and will aim to identify and solve the problems that are preventing the pupil from attending school.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be discussed again with the Education Welfare Officer with a view to a formal referral being made to the Education Welfare Service, if one has not already been made at an earlier stage. If a referral has already been made then the case will be reviewed and further action planned.

Reintegration

- The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme.
- Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry, with support in class as appropriate. Support from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator may be required

The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the young person and parent/carers. Programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

Specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff are:

Head teacher:

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to Governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- To liaise with the Education Welfare Officer.

School Office:

- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To follow-up by 10.00 am any unexplained absence by contacting parents/carers.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.
- To report to the Head teacher on attendance issues.
- To liaise with the Education Welfare Officer, as and when required.
- To print and attach an 'Attendance Summary' report (selecting dates from the first and last days of the academic year) for the child(ren) concerned and attach to the back of the absence request, in order for the Head teacher to make an informed decision.

Class Teacher:

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To follow-up any unexplained absence by contacting parents/carers by 10.45 am, in the absence of the office staff.
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform senior staff of concerns in a timely manner.

Governors:

- To represent their school at attendance panels.
- To request regular attendance progress reports for *Governors' Meetings*.
- To support their school's strategies for improving attendance levels and to ensure their school's attendance target and the national average attendance level is achieved.

Education Welfare Service:

The Education Welfare Service has been described as the "attendance enforcement arm" of most local authorities (DES 1991) which complements the role of each school.

Lincolnshire Education Welfare Service will strive to provide a service that recognises the uniqueness of each school and the communities they serve.

In accordance with the Education Welfare Service Remit and Procedures, we can support schools in a variety of ways:

- We will liaise with identified school staff.
- Where a referral is accepted, we will undertake home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice, as considered necessary.
- Through group work with identified groups of pupils.
- Where necessary, we will instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the Local Authority, including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court.
- We will accept referrals that meet the Education Welfare Service referral criteria, initiate contact with parents or carers and undertake assessments.
- We will plan and review casework.
- We will provide feedback to schools.
- We can offer strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, the employment of young people and young people involved in performing.
- We will support schools in the establishment and management of school attendance panels.
- We will support schools in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts within the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are unco-ordinated or disjointed.

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or the Education Welfare Service. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people. The Education Welfare Service may be able to help schools establish multi-agency meetings or may be able to advise on how schools can become involved in existing local arrangements.

Other Agencies to be used, where appropriate, in individual cases:

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Care.
- Local police.

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

The Use of Penalty Warnings and Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time

As a general rule, the Local Authority will not issue a penalty notice for unauthorised absence due solely to a holiday without permission. However, there may be circumstances where this sanction is appropriate. The Education Welfare Service will work with Head teachers to agree the most appropriate course of action for each individual case.

Resolving Disagreements

Where there is a lack of agreement between the school and the Local Authority as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

Removal from the School Roll

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These are detailed in Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (as amended 1997) and the Schools Administration Handbook (section A2). **Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.**

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school.
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the Head teacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service, to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Head teacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- Where a pupil in the nursery class has not transferred to a reception class at the school.
- Except in the case of a boarder, the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

Ensuring Pupil Information is up to Date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with a family is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

Pupils who are Missing

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the DfE National Missing Pupils Database.

Missing pupils must be reported to the Inclusion and Attendance Team. (See Appendix D)

The Process for Issuing Legal Warning Letters for Fixed Penalty Notices and Legal Proceedings

Advice for Maintained Schools

A school should try all reasonable strategies to resolve the attendance problems of a young person, and relies on the co-operation and engagement of the parent(s) and carer(s) in this process. If the school is unsuccessful in resolving the problem, or unable to gain the co-operation needed, they may consider it necessary to ask the Local Authority to prosecute the parent(s)/carer(s), to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or seek to obtain an Education Supervision Order. In the case of prosecution or a Fixed Penalty Notice, the school should send a warning letter to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that they have reached this stage.

The Warning Letter Issued by the School

Best practice shows that the school should outline the level of the young person's unauthorised absence and refer to the parent's/carer's legal responsibility. It should also explain that the school is now asking the Local Authority to consider the prosecution of the parent(s)/carer(s) or the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. It should also state that an improvement is needed. The following paragraph can be included to explain the legal position, and will provide evidence that the parent(s)/carer(s) have been made aware of the situation.

"Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure their child receives suitable efficient full time education either by regular attendance at school or education otherwise. Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly thereat, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence against that Section. The Local Authority may, where necessary, institute legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under this section of the Education Act 1996 against those parents concerned. Alternatively Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £50.00 or £100.00."

Once this has been issued, then maintained schools should contact the Senior Practitioner in the Education Welfare Service who will allocate the case to an Education Welfare Officer for further action. The Education Welfare Officer will make contact with the family. If appropriate the Education Welfare Officer will issue a final legal warning letter. If not appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer may recommend further necessary actions or casework, offering their service on a buy-back basis. If a legal warning letter is sent and there is no improvement in the child's attendance the Education Welfare Officer will complete a court report and forward this, along with accompanying evidence, to the Inclusion and Attendance Team for consideration at Legal Panel. At Legal Panel the case will either be agreed, deferred pending further information, or rejected. This is all part of the free core offer and done on behalf of the school.

As an alternative to prosecution, a school may wish to issue a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter and, if there is no improvement, should ask the authority to issue the Penalty Notice. Schools should ask the Education Welfare Service to write to parent(s)/carer(s) warning them that this is being done, and complete a request form which is forwarded to the Inclusion and Attendance Team Leader. If appropriate, the Penalty will be issued by the Inclusion and Attendance Team who administer the process.

Education Supervision Order (ESO)

Where parent(s)/carer(s) are fully co-operative in trying to ensure their child's attendance, schools may consider the use of an Education Supervision Order.

Maintained schools should call a planning meeting to which an Education Welfare Officer should be invited, together with social care, to ascertain whether they have any objections to such an Order. The Education Welfare Officer will produce the Education Supervision Order Court Report which will be submitted to Legal Panel. Before attending Court, the Inclusion and Attendance Team will nominate a Supervising Officer.

For advice on the legal process, maintained schools should contact a Senior Practitioner in the Education Welfare Service.

Legal Process contacts:

Inclusion and Attendance Team)	See Appendix D
)	
Education Welfare Team (South))	

Taking Parents to Court

It is important for parents/carers to note that the Local Authority may prosecute (they don't have to issue a Penalty Notice first) and this could result in a more severe penalty.

Parents/legal guardians could be fined up to £2,500, be given a Community Order or, in extreme cases, a jail sentence of up to three months. If the Court thinks it will help to stop a child missing school, it may also impose a Parenting Order.

Parenting Order

A Parenting Order is a Court Order which requires parents/guardians to attend parenting education or support classes. Parents/guardians will have to do whatever the Court says is necessary to improve their child's behaviour and attendance at school.

Appendix A

Request for authorised HOLIDAY absence

Pupil's name.....

Dates of absence.....Number of days requested.....

Reason holiday absence required during term time

.....

Signed

For school use only:

Attach an 'Attendance Summary' report
(selecting the first and last dates of the academic year) for each child.

Absence percentage during current academic year% for Child's name

Absence percentage during current academic year% for Child's name

Absence percentage during current academic year% for Child's name

School target and national average is no more than 4% absence. Persistent absence is 15%+

Absence days authorised on this occasion..... Register code

Absence days unauthorised on this occasion..... Register code

Signed.....Date.....

Head teacher

Comments.....

.....

.....

G2 □

Appendix B

Request for authorised MEDICAL/Other absences

Please provide a minimum of 1 week's notice, where possible, to assist teachers with their planning.

Pupil's name.....

Date of absence..... Time of appointment:.....

Place of appointment:

Time you will collect your child Anticipated time of return to school.....

Reason absence required during the school day

.....

Signed

For school use only:

Attach an 'Attendance Summary' report (selecting the first and last dates of the academic year) for each child.

Absence percentage during current academic year% for *Child's name*

Absence percentage during current academic year% for *Child's name*

Absence percentage during current academic year% for *Child's name*

School target and national average is no more than 4% absence. Persistent absence is 15%+

Medical/Other request authorised..... Register code

Medical/Other request un-authorized Register code

Signed..... Date.....

Head teacher

Comments.....

.....

..... G2

Persistent Absence Action Plan

Child's Name:..... D.O.B:

Absence Percentage:% Attendance Percentage:%

Information:

National average and school attendance target is 96%. School's current attendance level:%
Persistent absence level is anything less than 90%.

The school's persistent absence level set by Performance Management (for 2010/11) was 2.1%.
Anything above this is classed as a persistent absence school.

Attach an 'Attendance Summary' report and an 'Individual Absentee' report for each child (selecting the first and last dates of the academic year)

Reasons for absences:

Any concerns (e.g. educational attainment/home life/child's happiness in school):

Agreed plan of action for the remainder of the school year:

Date: Signed.....Head teacher Signed.....Parent/Carer

Working together will offer a good relationship between families and school, a well educated child and improved attendance.

- Copy to parent/carers []
Copy in attendance file []
Copy on pupil file []

Appendix D

CONTACT DETAILS

Missing Pupils

Missing pupils must be reported to David Coates Email: CME@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Legal Process Contacts

Inclusion and Attendance Team:

David Coates- Email dave.coates@lincolnshire.gov.uk Telephone 01522 554684

Education Welfare Team (South):

Geoff Holmes- Email geoff.holmes@lincolnshire.gov.uk Telephone 01522 553482