



## **Pupil Attendance and Requests For Absence In Term Time Policy**

### **Attending School Is Very Important For Every Child**

For every child, attendance at school is not just beneficial; it is essential. Attending Cedar School is directly linked to improved learning and healthcare opportunities. As well as this, attending school helps Cedar children grow in terms of:

- Communication
- Empowerment
- Discovery
- Aspiration
- Resilience

### **Whose Legal Responsibility Is It That Children Attend School?**

Parents/carers are legally responsible under the Education Act 1996, section 7, for ensuring that, if their child is of compulsory school age, he/she receives full-time education by regularly attending school.

### **By What Time Must Children Arrive At School In The Morning?**

- All children must be at school by 9.00am which is when the school doors open. This is when lessons begin.
- If a child arrives after 9.10am, he/she will be recorded as 'late'.
- If a child arrives after 9.30am, this will be an unauthorised absence unless the child's parents/carers can provide the school with an acceptable reason, or unless the absence has been previously agreed as 'exceptional circumstances'.

### **Absence In Term Time**

There are two reasons why a child may be absent in term time. The first is if the child is unwell; the second is if a request for absence is authorised by the headteacher.

#### **1) Child Is Unwell**

##### **What If A Child Is Unwell?**

Parents/carers must phone the school office by 9.15am on the morning of each day that their child is unwell to notify the school of the reasons why their child is not able to attend school. This is an important aspect of Cedar School's safeguarding procedures. If a child is not registered in the morning, then we must satisfy ourselves that the child is safe. Provided that the reason for absence is significant and that there are no current concerns about the child's attendance, such an absence will usually be recorded as authorised. If the parent/carer does not get in touch, school staff will contact parents/carers on the first day that a child is absent without explanation.

## 2) A Request For Absence Is Authorised By The Headteacher

### What Does The Law Say About Requests For Absence In Term Time?

Under Amendments made in 2013 to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the law states that headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence from school **in exceptional circumstances**. The decision as to whether any request is considered as 'exceptional circumstances' rests solely with the headteacher.

'Exceptional circumstances' should be rare. In considering whether or not to authorise a request for exceptional leave of absence in term time, the headteacher will look at each individual case and **will only grant authorisation if the circumstances are truly exceptional**.

### Making A Request For Absence Due To 'Exceptional Circumstances' In Term Time

- Any request for exceptional absence in term time should, ideally, be made at least three weeks prior to the requested leave of absence. **Requests for absence must be submitted using Cedar School's 'Request For Exceptional Absence' form**. A copy of the form is at the end of this policy. Telephone, or other, requests, will not be authorised unless there is an emergency situation.

Requests can be completed:

- by hand on the form and returned to school in an envelope marked for the attention of the headteacher ... *or* ...
- electronically on the form and sent by email to [info@cedarschool.co.uk](mailto:info@cedarschool.co.uk) (marked for the attention of the headteacher).

A request for exceptional absence, using this form, must also be made for a child attending an appointment during the school day. Appointments should be scheduled for weekends or holidays wherever possible.

### The following are examples of circumstances which *could* be considered as 'exceptional':

- The absence is to attend an appointment which is supporting the child towards meeting an objective in his/her Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) ... and which cannot be met through the teaching or health team at school. *(In the event of a health appointment being held at some distance from the child's home, the headteacher may require evidence that the appointment cannot take place nearer to the home.)*
- Return of parent/carer from active service (armed forces)
- Terminal illness of an immediate family member
- Young Carers
- Disability or respite leave
- Obligatory religious observance
- Wedding of an immediate family member

### The following are examples of circumstances which would not *typically* be considered as exceptional:

- Family holiday/cheaper holiday dates
- Wedding of someone who is not an immediate family member
- Visiting relatives either in the UK or abroad
- Limitations on parents'/carers' leave, making it difficult to coincide school and work holidays
- Attendance at an appointment which could take place at another time

Unless the exceptional circumstance is an emergency, **authorisation must have been requested ideally up to three weeks in advance.**

Unless the exceptional circumstance is a significant and unexpected emergency, **authorisation for absence will not be granted retrospectively.**

Parents/carers may be asked to provide additional information or to speak with the headteacher to discuss the circumstances regarding any request for exceptional absence.

If a request for exceptional absence is declined by the school and parents/carers continue to take their child out of school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

### **What Happens If A Child Is Away Even Though The Absence Has Not Been Authorised?**

Cedar School works in close partnership with Southampton City Council's Education Welfare Service. Each term, an Education Welfare Officer undertakes an audit of our attendance, meeting with the headteacher and other school staff. During these meetings, the Education Welfare Officer and relevant school staff review the attendance levels of all children, analyse 'late' arrivals and discuss any children for whom attendance is a cause for concern. Equally, if the school has a concern about a child's attendance at any point, the school will contact the Education Welfare Service. As a consequence, it may be decided that further action is required. This could include a request to issue a penalty notice or a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service for a formal investigation to take place. If no improvement is made in the child's attendance, this may result in legal proceedings being brought against parents/carers in the Magistrates' Court.

### **How To Ensure That Children Regularly Attend School**

Parents/carers can help support their child attending school by:

- having a routine from an early age and sticking to it
- taking an interest in their education - ask about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities
- discussing any problems which their child may have at school and letting their teacher or headteacher know about anything that is causing concern
- not letting their child take time off school for minor ailments or holidays during term time
- making sure their child understands the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- making sure he/she understands the possible implications for themselves, and for you as a parent/carer, if they do not attend school.

To avoid disrupting a child's education, parents/carers should arrange (as far as possible), appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays.

### **Some Figures About Attendance**

Attendance and prompt arrival at school make a huge difference to a child's learning:

<b><u>Minutes late per day</u></b>	<b><u>= days of lost learning per year</u></b>
5	3.2
10	6.5
15	9.5
20	12.5
30	19

## COVID-19

At this time of COVID-19, all government guidelines must be followed. Absence due to the need to self-isolate or quarantine is authorised. If your child is officially instructed to self-isolate through the national 'Test and Trace' service, he/she must self-isolate. **None of this requires a 'Request For Exceptional Absence' form to be completed.**

**It is illegal to attend school if a child, or anyone in the child's household, has one of the coronavirus symptoms and has not received a negative COVID-19 test result. Our COVID-19 Flow Chart must be followed. Children who are self-isolating, but well, are required to engage in Cedar's Remote Learning.**

### COVID-19 Flow Chart

