

# **CREETING ST MARY CEVAP SCHOOL**



## **Attendance Policy**

Date of Policy	September 2024
Review Date	September 2026
Head Teacher's signature	Mrs Christine Friar
Chair of Governors' signature	Mrs Marianne Brame

## **Introduction** (*Excerpts from Improving School Attendance Guidelines September 2022*)

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Creeting St Mary CEVAP School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher, Mrs Christine Friar (01449 720312) [office@creetingstmary.suffolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@creetingstmary.suffolk.sch.uk), is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school. The school will work together with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the

lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all pupils, parents, staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

### **We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:**

Publishing class data in newsletters

Termly reminders to parents about holidays not taken during term time

Grades for attendance are included on child's annual report to parents

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.

- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.
- A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.

### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Suffolk LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head Teacher who has responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

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

### **Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

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

### **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

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

## **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Supporting the importance of regular attendance by booking holidays during the school holidays. Absence due to holidays during term time will be unauthorised.

## **Registration**

The school door opens at 8:30 and registration takes place at 8.45 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 8.55 am and by 1.05pm. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present) These registers are then returned to the school office.

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 8.45am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8.45am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 8:55am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **ABSENCES**

Parents/carers should contact the school office by phone 01449 720312 or email [office@creetingstmary.suffolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@creetingstmary.suffolk.sch.uk) on the first day of their child's absence before 9am **and continue to do so until their child returns to school**. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence they should also provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence the school office will follow safeguarding procedures and telephone the main contact, if the main contact is unavailable, a message will be left asking for them to call back. If a call has not been received by 9:30 further calls, texts and emails will be made to additional contacts until we are able to ascertain the reason for absence.

If we have been unable to make any contact then we will call the primary contact and inform them of our intention to make a home visit to check on child welfare unless we hear back from them. Home visits will be made by 2 members of staff in the afternoon.

If the school is unable to establish contact then advice will be sought from the Professional Consultation Line, EWO, LADO or EHE team promptly and acted on appropriately.

## **Illness**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open unless they are too ill to attend.

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. The school will work with pupils and parents to support pupils back into

school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, providing support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

### **Pupils with medical conditions**

Pupils with long term illness or other health needs may need additional support to continue education, such as alternative provision arranged by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. This applies whether or not the child is registered at a school and whatever type of school they attend. The education must be full-time or as close to full-time as the child's health allows. DfE's statutory guidance on ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs sets out that local authorities should provide education as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. Local authorities should have a named officer responsible for the education of children with additional health needs.

In cases of long term absence it is the school's safeguarding responsibility to maintain in person contact weekly.

### **Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Where this is the case the school will work with their parents to improve attendance, putting additional strategies and support in place and making reasonable adjustments where necessary to help them access their full-time education. For those affected by anxiety about school attendance joined up pastoral care should be in place where needed and a time-limited phased return to school may be appropriate.

We will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and talk to pupils and parents to understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance developing individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

## **Part-time timetables**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

## **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

The headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. The headteacher cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

Improving attendance is everyone's business. As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Senior Leaders, DSLs and Safeguarding governor will monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends identifying intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This analysis will provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and parents.

Thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data should be conducted to identify patterns and trends. This should include analysis of pupils and cohorts with specific characteristics, identifying patterns in uses of certain codes and days of poor attendance.

Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies. Specific strategies will be developed to address areas of poor attendance identified through data analysis.

The headteacher will report on attendance data to the governing body to support them in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

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

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

### **Persistent and severe absence**

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working

together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, parents, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners including school nursing team, Emotional Well-being Hub, GP. For more detailed support on attendance please contact the headteacher or family liaison officer via the school office 01449 720312 or [office@creetingstmary.suffolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@creetingstmary.suffolk.sch.uk)

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children.

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. The school and local authority should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment. Refer to the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education.

## **Working together to improve attendance - PROCEDURES**

### **MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify individual patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

### **EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

## **LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family and wherever possible the person should be kept consistent.

## **FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.

## **FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

## **ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. Where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate parents may be prosecuted. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support. Where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance) intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement.

In all cases, the school should monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

The school is committed to sharing information and working collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe for the benefit of the pupil and any siblings who attend

different schools. This will also be beneficial in supporting transition between feeder schools. Every time a pupil's name is to be added to, or deleted from, the school admission register outside of standard transition times (including the statutory reason for deletion). Confirmation of attendance at new school must take place before the deletion, and for additions it must be no later than 5 working days after the child begins the school.

## Footnotes

This guidance should be read alongside the statutory guidance documents on parental responsibility measures, children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions at school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and safeguarding.

3. For the purpose of this guidance, a parent means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

The policy should be applied fairly and consistently but in doing so schools should always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of their policy, schools should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The policy should be easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the school's website. Parents should be sent it with any initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated.

