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School Attendance and Term Time Pupil Leave

Principles

We believe high levels of attendance and a punctual start to the school day are important to all children. Our aim is to ensure that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled and as a result achieve their full potential. We recognise the link between attendance and good learning and endeavour to work in partnership with all parents to uphold and reinforce this message to impact on the outcomes for our pupils. As a school we will encourage parents to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Our policy is founded on our core values of happiness, compassion, respect, responsibility, achievement and independence.

Safeguarding

SHAPE School British Section fully recognises the responsibility it has under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Through their day-to-day contact with pupils and direct work with families, staff at the school play a crucial role in noticing indicators of possible abuse or neglect and referring them to British Forces Social Work Service, and Senior Educational Social Worker, Pupil and Family Services.



Legal Requirements

The law (The Education Act 1996 & Pupil registration regulations 2013) requires all schools to record the attendance of each pupil at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Schools should follow up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised;
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on the school's electronic register.

The Government expects:

- Parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly and arrive to school on time.
- Schools and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.

Our Home-school agreement informs parents/carers that we expect them to:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school daily of any absence;
- Notify school immediately of any changes to emergency contact details.

As a school we will:

- Provide a welcome atmosphere;
- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality; monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality;
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition;
- Inform parents of their child's attendance and punctuality on the termly report format and when an absence request is submitted;
- Ensure that this policy and the schools' procedures for absence requests are published and accessible on our school website.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Parents should refer to the school prospectus which they will be given on admission, and is also available on the website, for full details regarding school timings for different phases.

School Gates

School gates open at 08:45 in the morning.

Registration

All children should arrive at school at 08:45 when the bell will signal the start of their school day. Registration will close at 09:00.

Any child arriving after 09:00 and before 09:30 will be marked as late in the register and receive an L code in the register.

If a child arrives at school after the close of registration they should be escorted by their parent to the school office. If a child is more than half an hour later than the opening time for registration then they will receive a U code in the register. A U code equates to an unauthorised absence for that session and will count towards their annual attendance which will be reported on the child's annual school report.

Persistent Lateness

The school follows a three-step system for children who are persistently late:

- Step 1 - When a child is considered to be persistently late (this is at the discretion the Deputy Head Teacher) then the school will send a letter to the parents/carers informing them of their child's persistent lateness and the school's concerns.
- Step 2 - If a child continues to be persistently late the school will send a second letter to the parents/carers requesting a meeting to discuss the matter and see if there are any ways in which the school can help
- Step 3 - In the event that the child's punctuality still does not improve then the school will refer the matter to the relevant Unit Welfare or Head of Establishment.

Other Reasons for Absence

From time to time children need to be absent from school for other reasons such as medical appointments. Such absences usually only take up part of a day. School should be informed of such absences in writing in advance and children should be brought in to school for morning registration and back to school straight after the appointment. Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours where possible. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

If a parent informs school that their child has a medical appointment first thing in the morning i.e. between 08:45 – 12:15 then the appropriate code (M) will be recorded in the register to indicate this.

If a child attends a medical or dental appointment and returns before 13:15 the register entry will be amended to reflect that they attended the second part of our school day. Similarly, if a child leaves school to attend a medical/dental appointment before the start of the second session and does not return by 13:15 they will be marked as absent for the second session.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school informing the chain of command

of concerns; if a child fails to attend school regularly, without lawful excuse, the parent will be guilty of an offence and may face disciplinary action.

Authorised Absences

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 any absence is always required.

Parents/carers should notify the school before 09:00 on the first school day of his/her child's absence from school. If any child is absent and the school has not been notified, the home liaison clerk will call the family. In the event that contact could not be made the home liaison clerk will record this on the register. If there are any child welfare / safety concerns then the matter may be referred to the Unit Welfare team and/or Social Services. Examples of authorised absences are:

- Illness;
- Religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs;
- Absences allowed by the school. These would usually include:
 - medical appointments;
 - exclusions;
 - extreme family emergencies/occasions such as bereavement.

Holidays During Term Time

In April 2013 the government issued amendments to 'The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Therefore, our school will only authorise holidays in line with DCYP Policy.

Parents should apply by completing the form available from the school office and in the Annex below if they are considering a holiday in term time. The school will consider the request and let parents know in writing whether it has been authorised. More information on Term Time Leave is provided later in this policy

Unauthorised Absences

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy;
- Unexplained absences;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Looking after other children/ birthdays or staying home with visitors;
- Day trips or holidays in term time not authorised by the school.

Whilst any child may be off school because of illness, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regards to attendance are best sorted out between the school, parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will seek to act immediately.

Joint Services Publication (JSP) 342, states that: 'It is the duty of the parent of a child of compulsory school age to ensure that that child receives efficient fulltime education. Failure to ensure that a child of school age receives efficient education will be referred to the Commanding Officer where the parent is a member of the Services or to the parent's Head of Establishment in the case of other entitled persons.

Summary of procedures to promote good attendance/punctuality:

The following tables show specific procedures to maintain and encourage excellent attendance.

Daily procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Parents ensure pupils arrive at school on time	Parents	
Parents inform the school by 09:00 if their child is absent that day	Parents	Office/Support staff update registration codes
Pupils arriving later to school are registered at reception.	Office	Absence mark on the School Information Management System amended to a late mark by Data Manager.
Teachers record attendance using Bromcom. This is done at 08:45 and 13:15.	Teachers/ Supply Staff Teacher/TA	Staff use paper register, if required.
First day absence phone calls are made to inform parents of their child's unexplained absence for that day	Office	Office updates attendance codes
Parents provide written note, including dates of and reason for absence upon the child's return to school	Parents	Office collects at reception/ Teachers collect these and pass on to Office for filing

Weekly procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Absence codes for individual pupils are updated using Bromcom to show reason for absence	Office Staff	Information provided here is used to provide targeted interventions as appropriate

Half termly and termly procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Analyse attendance/punctuality data to monitor trends and progress	DHT	
Discussions as required in response to specific attendance/punctuality concerns of a particular cohort of pupils	HT and DHT	
Individual attendance/punctuality discussed with pupils and families at parent's evenings	Class Teachers	Mentoring and advice on attendance/punctuality issues provided to all families
Analyse attendance/punctuality data and information to identify cases of concern and develop appropriate interventions	DHT	Targeted intervention for individual concerns
Meeting to discuss individual cases monitor progress and refer new concerns	HT and DHT	
Review success and impact of attendance/ /punctuality strategies for the term	DHT	Amend and refine interventions as appropriate

**TERM
TIME
PUPIL
LEAVE**

Attendance regulations in England changed w.e.f. 1st Sept 13, removing the former notional limit of 10 days that head teachers could authorise for children to be absent from school during term time for family holidays. 1 All term time pupil leave applications in England have to now be on 'exceptional grounds' in line with the regulations.

Existing DCYP attendance guidance, together with JSP 342, had effectively created a "10 + 10" policy, i.e. the potential for up to 10 days of term time pupil leave to be authorised by the head teacher for family holidays as well as up to 10 days of term time leave to coincide with DCYP policy.

The DCYP position is that from December 2013 there are no grounds for parents to apply for term time for their child/ren for family holidays. There are two grounds on which parents can apply for term time pupil leave which are;

- a) for exceptional circumstances. By definition this is decided upon by the head teacher on a case by case basis and application form is at Annex A. Examples of 'exceptional' would include bereavement or serious illness of relatives, medical needs where treatment is required in the UK by the child's primary care giver etc.
 - b) to link with Post Operational Leave with a maximum of 10 days. The application form for requests linked to POL is at Annex B.
- Please note there are no grounds for parents to apply for term time leave for their child/ren to coincide with either pre-tour leave or for 'R and R'

Post Operational Leave (POL)

It is recognised that families face unique circumstances in a military community given operational tours. The entitlement to and granting of POL, for service personnel, is covered by JSP 760 Chapter 3 with SCE acknowledging that section 3.004 requires POL to be taken 'as soon as possible and at the latest within one month, after a Service person's return from qualifying Operations or Deployments'. POL therefore does frequently coincide with academic terms.

POL is for serving personnel and is a valuable part of the staged process of returning from operational tours. However, it is important that parents understand the potential detrimental effect on a child's education by them missing school. The application form makes note of that fact. The granting of POL to a serving parent is a separate issue to the authorisation, from a head teacher, for a child to be absent from school.

It is essential to highlight that families can and do enjoy the POL of the serving parent without going away and without therefore requesting that their child is absent from school during term time.

Attendance data

Through defining any term time leave as being 'exceptional' the England regulations intend that such leave will be infrequent. Given the DCYP pupil profile DCYP schools may experience the majority of pupils simultaneously having a parent deployed on an operational tour and therefore a potential high number of requests for absence linked to POL.

DCYP schools therefore can experience a significant impact of term time leave for pupils following an operational deployment. Attendance data reflects that. It is expected that this dynamic is understood, i.e. by HQ DCYP, SGC and Ofsted.

To enable transparency in the data DCYP attendance data will now be expressed through two figures being;

1. one overall school attendance figure and
2. an additional school attendance figure which is 'attendance minus code H and minus code G'. (For information DCYP uses national attendance codes. As a result, the only relevant code to record absence agreed to by the head teacher when linked to POL is code H. Code G is when a child is absent without that being agreed by the head teacher and without that child having been ill).

Non-compliance

Unfortunately, there will be occasions when term time leave has been applied for by a parent, not agreed to by the head teacher but then taken anyway. For the purposes of school data such absences should continue to be recorded as code G, defined as 'Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, not agreed ...'

For information it is noted that in relation to the serving parent the current BFG Standing Order 3208 notes that;

Attendance at School

78. In accordance with Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent of every child of compulsory school age must ensure that their child receives appropriate full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have (either by regular attendance at school or otherwise).
79. Parents should be aware that if the child is of compulsory school age and is a registered pupil at a school they have a duty to ensure that the child attends school regularly. If the child fails to attend school regularly, without lawful excuse, the Parent will be guilty of an offence and may face disciplinary action.

N.B. In England there is a legal power for head teachers to issue penalty fines to parents who do not comply. That power does not exist overseas. However, the above instruction does outline potential action within the context of disciplinary action for the serving parent to be decided upon by the appropriate unit.

Application Process for term time pupil leave

The application process requires parents to submit their application to the head teacher, who has the sole authority to approve term time pupil leave.

When deciding whether to authorise such requests, head teachers will consider a range of issues, for example the individual pupils' previous attendance record as well as their age and stage within the academic cycle.

Annex A – for exceptional circumstances

Annex B - for term time leave linked to a period of POL and therefore requires the prior signature by a Unit representative, signing that the parent is entitled to apply for term time pupil leave. N.B. Any authorisation for term time pupil leave remains the sole responsibility of the head teacher.



REQUEST FOR TERM TIME PUPIL LEAVE – EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Name of Child: _____ Class: _____

I would like to request permission for my child to take 'exceptional' term time leave from school for the following reasons and understand that family holidays are not a valid reason and that any absence may be detrimental to my child's education.

Outline of exceptional circumstances:

The exceptional leave I am requesting for my child is planned from (date) _____

My Child will return to school on _____ resulting in a total absence of _____ school days.

I understand that I may be required to provide evidence of the above if required and that this may require this information to be discussed with the relevant Unit Welfare Office.

Signature of parent: _____ Date: _____

Head teacher use only

Thank you for your application for 'exceptional leave' for your child.

Your child's attendance record for the last term/academic year is as follows:

% attendance

a) I confirm that this exceptional leave has been agreed:

Signed _____ Date _____

b) Your request for exceptional leave has not been agreed for the following reason:

Signed _____ Date _____

Term Time Pupil Leave



REQUEST FOR TERM TIME PUPIL LEAVE TO POST OPERATIONAL LEAVE

Name of Child: _____ Class: _____

I would like to request permission for my child to take 'exceptional leave' from school during term time due to my own post operational leave. I understand that any term time leave for children is discouraged and may be detrimental to my child's education.

Reason for exceptional leave:

I understand that HQ SCE expects that a maximum of ten days is applied for and that the Head of household must have returned from a minimum of a 3 month tour of duty which is deemed by the chain of command to be hazardous or dangerous. This request form is pre-signed by my unit, in the box below, confirming that I am entitled to apply – I understand that actual permission for this exceptional term time leave from school can only be granted by my child's head teacher.

UNIT DECLARATION

Name of Unit _____ Rank/Name of Unit representative _____

This is to certify that _____ is entitled to apply for 'exceptional leave' for their child from school as a result of operational leave.

Signature of Unit representative _____ Unit Stamp _____

The exceptional leave I am requesting for my child is planned from (date) _____

Until _____ resulting in a total absence of _____ school days.

Signature of parent: _____ Date: _____

Head teacher use only

Thank you for your application for 'exceptional leave' for your child.

Your child's attendance record for the last term/academic year is as follows: % attendance

This % means that the number of sessions missed last term / year =

a) I confirm that this exceptional leave has been agreed:

Signed _____ Date _____

b) Your request for exceptional leave has not been agreed for the following reason:

Signed _____ Date _____