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Policy for Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances

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Name of Responsible Committee:	Board of Trustees
Trade Union Representative Approval:	
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Target Audience:	Parents and Carers
Related Documents:	Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances request form; Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances – Information for Parents.
References:	Education Act (1996) Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003)

Background

Schools are required to provide education for 190 days a year and it is expected that children who are registered at a school will attend for this time. Parents do not have an automatic right for their children to have time off school and any requests for absence are entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion.

Research shows that children do not achieve as well in their education and in public examinations the more school absence they have, for example a child absent from school for a period of two weeks each year, for exceptional circumstances and with the average absence for illness may miss the equivalent of one whole year's education over their school life.

General Principles

The following general principles underpin this policy:

- (i) The principles of honesty, openness, transparency and the spirit of co-operation underpin the policy.
- (ii) Where a request for absence form is not submitted, absences cannot be authorised retrospectively; this is prescribed in law and in these circumstances the penalty notice code of conduct must be followed.
- (iii) Data from each individual school in relation to requests for absence will be monitored by the local authority and shared with schools and the partnerships. This will allow the partnerships to assess the impact of this policy.
- (iv) The Trust will review this policy annually or in line with any legislative changes.

In order for consideration to be given, requests for absence must be for exceptional circumstances only. Swanland Primary School agrees to follow the law, in such that the provision for Head Teachers to authorise absence purely for the purpose of a family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance. Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad or contractual obligations (supported by an official letter from the parent's employer) where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue (supported by an official letter from the medical profession).
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above. Parents must discuss the matter with the Head Teacher, who will in turn assess the case individually and in consultation with other members of school staff before a decision is made. A request for absence form must be completed.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Head Teacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all children).
- 2) Year six transition day (for children in year six).
- 3) Any assessment weeks (for children in years two and six).

If a Head Teacher has any doubts, their thoughts can be discussed with the principal education welfare officer for advice and guidance prior to informing parents of their final decision. Head Teachers would be well advised to keep a log of their decision making rationale.

Looked After Children

This policy applies to all children, including those who are Looked After Children. The Head Teacher will only approve an absence for a Looked After Child in accordance with Children, Family & Adult Services guidance. The only person who can request an absence for an East Riding Looked After Child is the area manager. Requests from foster carers and social workers should not be considered.

Head Teachers should, in the cases of a child placed in an East Riding school who is a Looked After Child from another local authority, consult with the child's social worker. The social worker

will enquire from that local authority what agreements or exemptions their policy on exceptional circumstances contains.



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Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Information for Parents

You are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure your child attends school regularly. There is, however, a discretionary power held by Head Teachers to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Please note this is not an entitlement. The Head Teacher will only authorise absence in line with the School's 'Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances' Policy. Head Teachers will not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of a child's education.

Please note that supporting documents to aid decision making must be submitted at the time of your request for absence.

If your request is authorised, you are required to ensure your child catches up on any missed school work. This is your responsibility and school are not obliged to provide work for your child to complete. **The Head Teacher will not authorise any more than 10 sessions (5 school days) in any one academic year.**

Any unauthorised absence will be recorded on your child's attendance records. This may result in legal proceedings against you, either through a Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court.

Penalty Notices

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) the local authority and schools have statutory powers to tackle poor school attendance and/or unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the Head Teacher has not given permission for or where an explanation has not been provided by the parent. If your child accrues 10 sessions of unauthorised absence you may be liable for a penalty notice (one days absence equals two sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions etc.)

Penalty Notices may be used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing. They will be issued by post direct to the home of a parent after possibly just one warning, or in the case of absences without acceptable cause, warnings may not be given. This includes pupils caught on truancy sweeps, persistent late arrival after the close of registration or unauthorised absence that has not been authorised as an absence from school for exceptional circumstances. In these cases the warning is given on the absence request form and detailed within this information leaflet and no written warning will be given. Fines are issued for unauthorised absence of 5 or more days and each school day is divided into 2 registration periods.

For example if your child is absent for one day this equals 2 sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions.

If your request is declined and you still take your child out of school each parent within your household may be issued with a **£60** penalty notice for each child you have taken out of school. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after **21 days** it will increase to **£120**. If after **28 days** it remains unpaid you may be summonsed to appear before **Magistrates** to explain why your child has unauthorised school absences and you may be liable for a fine of up to **£1000**.

Support and guidance on attendance is always available and if you have any questions about this, or if you need help to achieve an improvement, please contact your child's school to discuss this.

We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from their school first. Head Teachers cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstance.



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Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Request Form

School Name:

Child's/Children's Details

Name:	D. O. B:	Class:
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Address:	Contact Numbers
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Details of Siblings of Compulsory School Age at Other Schools (or other children living in the household)
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Name:		D. O. B:		School:
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Name:		D. O. B:		School:
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I request permission for my child to be absent from school between:-

First Day of Absence from School:	Date of Return to School:	Total of Absent School Days:
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Please detail below the reason for your request for absence from school in term-time and include/attach any supporting information. The Head Teacher will not be able to consider your request without your supporting documents (eg. a letter on business headed paper from the employer showing that these term-time dates are the only time that you may take your child away, or proof if going to a wedding of immediate family). Please read carefully the *Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Information for Parents* which is attached.

Reason for Absence Request (please attach supporting documents):

Declaration:

I have read the **Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Information for Parents** and understand I/we may receive a penalty notice if my/our child receives unauthorised school absence as a result of this request. Please note the school day is divided into 2 registration periods, for example if your child is absent for one day, this equals 2 sessions and a five day absence equals 10 sessions.

Signed:
(Parent/Carer)

_____ Date:

Full Name:

For School Use Only

The school has considered your request for leave of absence and your child's absences will be recorded as follows:-

Number of Authorised Sessions:		Number of Unauthorised Sessions:		Number of Unauthorised sessions to date:	

Signed:

_____ Date:

Position: Head Teacher

We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from their school first. Head Teachers cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstance.

Any disagreement between estranged parents should be resolved prior to submitting this request to your child's school.

Original signed and completed forms to be retained with child's records.

Copy should be returned to the parent/carer of the pupil to confirm authorised or unauthorised absence prior to the intended absence period.