



24-25-035

18 September 2024

TO ALL PARENTS/CARERS

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. At Cams Hill School, we aim for all our pupils to have an attendance record of greater than 95%.

The biggest reward for good attendance is that your child will make good progress and achieve well. To help with promoting good attendance please can you:

- Ensure that you will ensure that your child attends school regularly and that you notify the school as soon as possible when your child has to be unexpectedly absent. Again, please ensure you have downloaded the app and registered on it. <https://studybugs.com/about/parents>
- Ensure that you only request leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances** and that you do so in advance giving the school at least six weeks' notice where possible.
- Ensure that where possible you book medical appointments around the school day but when this cannot be avoided, and your child has an appointment in school time you notify the school in advance.
- Ensure that you work with the school to help with the understanding of any barriers to your child attending school regularly.

With a clear message being given to all of our community on the importance of good attendance at Cams Hill School, I wish to update all parents/carers on the guidance issued by The Department for Education to all schools, in relation to School Attendance. The updates became statutory on 19th August 2024. There are some changes in the law that parents/carers must be informed of. These changes have come about due to concerns nationally regarding persistent absence (below 90%) of pupils in schools.

The legal changes are as follows:-

- There is a new national threshold of **10 unauthorised sessions** for any reason (equivalent to **five school days**) within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered. Unauthorised absences include holidays, truancy and arriving late after the registers have closed. Registers will close at 09.00.
- The new rules mean you will **no longer be able to take your child out of school for one week's holiday without a penalty notice being issued**. No holidays will be authorised in term time. Please do consider these outcomes carefully before making a holiday application.
- There has been an increase in the penalty fine from £60 to £80 for each child. The fine is given to **each parent**. Furthermore, in education law, anyone who lives with the child and who has day-to-day care of the child is also considered to be a parent, whether they are the biological parent or not. For example, this includes step-parents and partners. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160.

- If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
- If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them.

I would also like you to be aware of other strategies we will be implementing in order to improve attendance and ensure children are in school.

- Assistant Heads of Year will ring parents/carers daily during the first hour of the day, of any child not in school who is identified to be a persistent absentee (less than 90% attendance).
- Following a period of absence of three days or more, there will be a return to school interview with your child. This will be conducted by Mrs White (Attendance and Home School Link).
- Where a child has been absent from school for three days and we have not received communication from a parent/carer, the school will conduct a home visit. Whilst we would endeavour to make contact, these visits can also be unannounced. These visits are important for safeguarding reasons and if there are concerns, the school will refer further to external agencies such as Children Services.
- Should your child's attendance fall below 95% then a letter will be sent out to inform you that your child is on a **Stage 1 'Monitoring Programme'**. This means that your child's attendance will be monitored over a 4-week period and that no more absence will be expected.
- Should there be further absence during this 4-week period then you will receive a letter inviting you in for an **'Attendance Support Meeting' (Stage 2)** to discuss an individual attendance support plan for your child. This will be with the year team and Mrs White (Attendance and Home School Link). A 4-week attendance plan will be formulated at this meeting with clear targets agreed. The school will also require medical evidence for any child when absent on Stage 2 or absences will be unauthorised.
- Should Stage 2 not be successful, then your child will move to **Stage 3 'Team around the child'**. Again, there will be a meeting in school with relevant key staff, and where necessary other relevant external support, for example from the Local authority. A new individual attendance plan will be written with clear targets to be met. Failure to meet the terms of this second plan will lead to the school referring to the Attendance Intervention Team and will result in a case conference with external agencies such as children services. This will also include discussion of legal/financial penalties.
- The school will be sending out communication through the school attendance system of Studybugs to keep you informed of your child's attendance.

We are aware already aware of pupils who experience long term medical conditions and this of course is taken into consideration, but it is important that your child's year team and the attendance team are fully aware of such circumstances.

Whilst writing, please can I also ask you to read the letter regarding punctuality to school sent on 4 September 2024. The school has been clear in its communication and unless there is severe traffic affecting a large number of the school community, traffic problems, regardless of where you are travelling from, will no longer be accepted as a reason for arriving late to school.

We very much hope that you will work with us in promoting the importance of good attendance and punctuality and ensure your child is in school every day.

Your sincerely

Mrs P Newman  
Associate Assistant Headteacher