



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Committee Responsible:	Teaching and Learning Committee
Person Responsible:	Headteacher
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Signed.....

Date.....



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1. Introduction

All children of statutory school age (between ages 5-16) are required by law to receive an education appropriate to their needs. Parents (includes carers and guardians) are required to ensure that their children are registered in a school and attend it regularly or that appropriate alternative provision is in place which is recognised by the Local Authority.

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on a child's attainment. There is a direct relationship between achievement and attendance, even well before GCSEs or equivalents. It is a school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. This can only be done if children attend regularly.

Our aim to work with parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually.

2. Parent Responsibilities

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents should contact the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence, if their child is to be absent for any unavoidable reason such as illness. This may be done by phone, email or in person. Verbal messages on a parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a child-minder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence; subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted. (See paragraph 8: first day contact guidelines).



- Parents may not authorise their child's absence; only the school can do this, provided a satisfactory reason is provided by the parents. Should they fail to provide one, the school will record any absences as unauthorised; in some cases, this may be retrospective. Authorisation can be withdrawn should the school find out that the reason given was not truthful. In this case, the parent will be invited to discuss the matter with the Headteacher.
- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration at 8.50 a.m. Children arriving after 9.00 a.m. should report to the school reception and be signed in if accompanied by a parent.
- Parents should avoid booking family holidays in term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised without acceptable reason. (See paragraph 9, Penalties for non-attendance)

3. School Responsibilities

- The School will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and on the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.
- Registers will be taken twice daily at 8.50 a.m. and 1.15 p.m. They will close at 9.00 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. Any child arriving after the close of the registration period will receive an 'un-authorised absence' mark for that session.
- Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Headteacher.
- Schools will inspect registers weekly in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems at an early stage.
- Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Headteacher must be informed.
- Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. If no explanation has been received, the class teacher will inform staff in the school office, who will endeavour to make contact with the parent.
- All absence notes from parents should be dated and initialled by the class teacher and returned to the office with the register, where they will be stored. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, who may choose to speak to the parents.



- The Headteacher will regularly collect attendance data and use this during meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and the EWO. Other agencies, such as Social Care, may also become involved.

4. Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are **not** permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of these are:

- Because it is the child's birthday
- Going shopping
- Going for a hair cut
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Taking unapproved holidays
- Waiting for the delivery of a family baby
- The explanation is considered unsatisfactory
- No explanation is offered

5. Persistent Absentees

Persistent absentees are defined as children whose attendance is below 85% and where unsatisfactory reasons are given for absence. However, the procedures outlined below may apply to children whose attendance is above 85% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging, e.g. regular absences on particular days or persistent lateness.

The following actions are to be taken by class teachers regarding regular and persistent absentees:

- Their names are to be recorded in the 'Attendance' file in the Headteacher's office.
- Any messages received regarding absence of these children are to be recorded in this file.
- If no message is received, either, the office staff or Headteacher must be informed and attempts are to be made to contact the parent at the earliest opportunity.

If no contact is made or the message received is unsatisfactory, the EWO must be contacted for advice. Again, all this should be recorded.

6. Negative Effects of Truancy

Evidence shows that persistent truanting can have the following negative effects:



- it harms a child's education by disrupting their progress through the curriculum;
- they have difficulty with picking up where they left off;
- they have to do extra work to catch up and have trouble with keeping up with schoolwork;
- truancy becomes a habit for them when things are not going right;
- they can become prone to antisocial behaviour or even be drawn into crime;
- they are more likely to be unemployed on leaving school because of their attitude of giving up when life becomes too difficult;
- the teacher has to put in extra work to ensure the child does not miss out, which reduces the attention that the rest of the class receives;
- repeated absences can attract Local Authority action.

7. Legal Consequences of Truancy

The Local Authority requires schools to check on their behalf that children registered to them attend regularly. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for the school will follow up incidents of poor attendance and is willing to work closely with parents to try to overcome non-attendance.

However, if a child persistently truants or fails to attend school regularly, the Local Authority may decide to take legal action to ensure their attendance by:

- applying to the Court for an *education supervision order* or a *school attendance order*;
- imposing a *fixed penalty fine*;
- bringing a *prosecution*.

8. First Day Contact Guidelines

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The procedure is as follows:

- 1) As soon as the registers are returned to a school office, staff there will check absentees against messages received.
- 2) For persistent absentees, see paragraph 5. For other pupils for whom no message has been received, staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity. (This is also to check that the child is safe and not away from home without the parent's knowledge)



- 3) When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for the absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that it will be recorded as an 'un-authorized absence'.
- 4) Where no contact is made, a message will be left asking the parent to contact the school. If it is impossible to leave a message, a note should be sent.
- 5) The results of the procedure will be then added to the registers.

9. Requesting Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances

What the Regulations say

Recent amendments in 2013 to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have adjusted the Regulations. They make clear that Headteachers may not grant absence for holiday during term time under any circumstances. However, this apparent absolute prohibition is clarified by the following quote: "*The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave*".

What are 'exceptional circumstances'?

The fact that a holiday is cheaper during term time is not considered to be an 'exceptional circumstance'. Examples of 'exceptional' are: one-off and unavoidable circumstances resulting from a parent's employment commitments; trauma or bereavement in the family; where the opportunity for such a holiday is unlikely to happen again. However, ultimately it is for the Headteacher to decide.

10. When Authorisation Will Not Be Granted

In line with national and local guidance the following list outlines when permission will **not** be granted:

- During transition time, as a pupil is settling into the school.
- Before or during Year 2 and 6 SATs or important revision periods leading up to these.
- If the pupil has attendance **below 95 %**.
- If the pupil already has unauthorised absences.

11. Penalties for Unauthorised Absence



Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. The following points should be noted:

- Parents or carers who take their children on holiday in term time without school's permission or are late returning from an extended holiday, may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child, which must be paid within 21 days.
- If payment is made after 21 days the penalty is increased to £120.
- Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the relevant authorities, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.
- Penalty Notices may be issued after 10 unauthorised absences in a 12-week period; this is 10 registration periods, i.e. 5 days.
- Children who are late without good reason after registration closes (9 a.m.) also receive an unauthorized absence mark.
- If a request for absence during term time is authorised, parents are required to ensure their child catches up on any missed school work. It is the parent's responsibility and school are not obliged to provide work for their child.

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