



ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Some children find attending school harder than others and therefore it is essential when trying to improve attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove barriers by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance should not be seen in isolation so effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with school efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources including pupil premium.

- We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:
- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

The law on school attendance

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 school or by education otherwise than school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Children with a good attendance record have a higher chance of making good progress and achieving good grades. For the most vulnerable children, regular attendance is an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

An absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trust and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where it is not successful, or it is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Headteacher:

- Implementation of this policy at school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Identify trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance and punctuality of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Devising strategies to address areas of poor attendance and punctuality identified through data and monitoring intervention of these strategies
- Benchmarking data
- Make referrals and work with Education Welfare/Attendance Officer to tackle persistent absence and lateness, provide background information, monitor and follow-up
- Consider leave of absence in exceptional circumstances
- Liaise with social care/CIC team where necessary
- Make referrals to the LA for the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices as appropriate

Teaching staff/SENDco/Office:

- To follow up absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school: initially with a first-day absence telephone call.
- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
 - To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness..
- To report to the Government on attendance twice a year.
- To consistently administer the attendance procedure and monitor regularly.
- To ensure that registers are taken twice daily: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- To promote good attendance
- To tackle lateness as and when it occurs (with parent when child has gone to class)
- Make first day phone calls when a child is absent and a parent has not contacted us
- Ensure punctuality/absence issues are addressed at parents evening if relevant

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- To have children in class ready for learning by the start of the day at 8.45am or 09.00am depending on key stage. If your older child starts earlier than a younger sibling then please bring them at the earlier start time.
- To inform school on **first** day of any absence.
- To request leave as far in advance as possible and only if it is an exceptional circumstance.
- To make applications for leave in writing on the school's '**Leave Of Absence Form**', giving the reason for the request.
- To work with the school and EWO to improve lateness and attendance.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day. If this cannot be helped then to inform school in good time and provide evidence if required.

If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving
- Talk to your child's class teacher in the first instance.

ABSENCES DURING TERM TIME - LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

Valid reason for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- Other possible exceptional circumstances where the head may grant term-time absence
- Flexi – school requests (these need to be applied for in writing stating all reasons, individual cases only).

Applications for a **leave of absence** will be considered individually and will take into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. As leaders should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that one will be granted for a family holiday. Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised. Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for leave of absence during term time'. These may be obtained from the school office.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

AS OF 1ST SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60 IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

What constitutes as an exceptional circumstance?

The governors have agreed on the following criteria:

Bereavement

Serious illness of a close family member

Service postings

Educational sporting events

Examinations

Academic events (including music festivals)

Significant family event

Holiday with specified educational benefits

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

THE PROCESS FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The school will monitor attendance each half term (more regularly for individuals with poor attendance). Analysis will be used to provide regular reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with parents, SENDCO, pupil premium lead, safeguarding lead. It will also be used to identify patterns and trends such as particular days, particular lessons etc. Data will be benchmarked against local, national and regional levels. A termly report will be sent to the governing body for scrutiny.

Process:

Stage 1: Where there are concerns about attendance and punctuality the school will make contact with home.

Stage 2: If the concerns persist the school will arrange a meeting between the parent/carer and the school representative

Stage 3: If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service to deal with the on-going issues.

Should concerns persist the EWO will agree action (as above) and where necessary meet with the parents/carers. Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action.

Stages of intervention from the local authority

VOLUNTARY SUPPORT – Helping parents to access services of their own accord and/or a voluntary whole family plan to tackle the barriers to attendance

FORMAL SUPPORT – A formal parenting contract agreed by the pupil, parent, school and/or local authority. Progressing to a legally binding Education Supervision Order in the Family Court if there is non-engagement and deemed necessary.

STATUTORY CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INVOLVEMENT – Where there are safeguarding concerns and an Education Supervision Order is not appropriate or has not been successful the case should be considered for S17 or S47 statutory social care involvement.

ATTENDANCE PROSECUTION – Where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate, the case should be considered for attendance prosecution in the Magistrates Court (or a FPN for irregular attendance).

What is a parenting contract?

A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. It is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. It is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. It should be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution. (See p35-38 Working Together to improve school attendance May 2022).

What is an Education Supervision Order?

Where a voluntary early help plan or formal parenting contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision order (ESO) can be a useful alternative to provide legal intervention without criminal prosecution. Where safeguarding concerns exist, the lead practitioner should discuss with the designated safeguarding lead and social care to agree an ESO would be more suitable than a S17 (children in need) or S47 (child protection) plan. ESO's are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in advising and directing to full time education. (see pages 38 and 39 Working Together to improve school attendance May 2022).

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)?

These can be used by schools where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. They are intended to prevent the need for court action and must be issued in line with Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them, a local authority officer or the police. All schools must send copies of these to the local authority.

FPN's may be issued where parents allow their child to be seen in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. (See pages 43, 44 of Working Together to improve school attendance May 2022).

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but before 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. There is no right to appeal.

SICKNESS

Please notify the school on the first day of the absence. Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a slight headache or slight cold or because they are tired after a late night is not acceptable. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note: that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

Part-time (or reduced) timetables

All pupils of compulsory 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. A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary with a view to becoming full time. This can only be in place if the school has agreed to the pupil being absent for part of the week and therefore the absence must be authorised.

Working to improve attendance

As a school we will work with families and other partners to improve attendance in the following way:

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.

MONITOR – Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND – When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils (if appropriate) and parents to listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them

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.

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. This may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE – Where all 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.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether the pupil is

- Present
- Attending an approved of-site educational activity
- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

LATENESS

Punctuality is an important life skill.

Children must be in class by either 08.45 am or 9.00am. each day depending on key stage. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time and will be closed at 09.05am.

Lateness will be monitored by the school. If a parent arrives late then the classteacher will approach them at the end of the school day to discuss their reasons and to explain how disruptive it can be/was for their child. Late arrivals will need to report to reception where they can order lunch. If the arrival at school is after the registers have closed at 9.05, the pupil will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem. Referrals will be made to the local authority if it continues after this stage.

GOVERNORS

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance and challenge. All governing bodies should therefore:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individuals or cohorts who need it most
- Monitoring attendance figures of the whole school
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed by the Headteacher and the Governing Body. It has been written according to the "Working together to Improve School Attendance" guidance from the DFE published May 2022

Amended: October 2023

Next Review: October 2024

Executive Headteacher: Miss Paula Blackburn

Russ Monhemius: Chair of Governors

APPENDIX ONE: LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Pupil Name:

Date of Birth:

Class/Form/Year:

First Date of Absence:

Date of return:

No. school days absent:

Exceptional reason for absence:

Name of parent (who child resides with)

Home tele no. Mobile telephone no.

Email address

Signature of parent

FOR HEADTEACHER

DATE RECEIVED:

CURRENT ATTENDANCE %

LAST YEAR'S ATTENDANCE %

EXCEPTIONAL REASON ACCEPTED: YES/NO

NAME AND SIGNATURE

DATE PARENT INFORMED

THIS ABSENCE HAS BEEN AUTHORISED / UNAUTHORISED.