



Harting C of E Primary School

Leave of Absence Policy

Owner: Personnel Committee

Reviewers: Full Governor Body

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LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers in establishing the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- Enable pupils to progress smoothly and confidently through the school;
- Maximise the continuity of all children's education at the school;
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

Being at school

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Quite simply, children who have good attendance generally achieve better than those who do not. It is clearly part of our role to ensure everything possible is done to promote good attendance.

By law, parents whose children are of compulsory school age and registered at school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they fail to do this, they are guilty of an offence and may be given a penalty notice or prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Parents also have the responsibility of ensuring that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

We value the school's relationship with parents and carers. Through this partnership, we hope to make their children's education a success and to ensure that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves the best possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day;
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- 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 absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school;
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school;
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child;
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

We expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere;
- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns;
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition;
- Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils;
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents;
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly;
- Consider requesting verifications from a GP or other relevant body in the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions;
- Monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order;
- Notify the Local education Authority (LEA) after 15 days of sickness;
- Notify EWO after 10 days of unexplained absence.

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. By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.

For school pupils the classroom doors are open from 8.30am. Registration takes place at 8.45am and pupils who arrive after 9.00am will be recorded as late to school.

Registers close at 9.15am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.

Afternoon registration is taken at 1.05pm.

Persistent lateness by a pupil will be investigated with the parent/carers and may be referred to Education Welfare if there is insufficient improvement.

Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

Pupil Leaving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally *in loco parentis* and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school;
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time;
- Parents are requested to **confirm in writing**, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time;
- Pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return;
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.

School Holidays

The West Sussex website publishes the school holiday dates for its schools in advance:

http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/learning/schools_ages_4-16/school_term_dates_and_holidays/term_dates.aspx

INSET days are published as soon as the school has agreed these, but please note that these may be subject to change.

Under the amendments to the 2006 regulations, **headteachers may no longer grant absence for holiday during term time under any circumstances.**

As a West Sussex school, we believe that taking holiday during term time damages the children's learning opportunities and makes it harder for the teachers to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are delivered to all pupils. However, it is understood that there are sometimes good reasons why parents may wish to take their children out of school.

Leave of Absence

The Headteacher and Governors have determined that permission may be granted, **in exceptional circumstances**, for a maximum of five days of absence providing your child has a good (95% or higher) attendance record over the previous three terms.

What Are Exceptional Circumstances?

Whilst it isn't made exactly clear what constitute exceptional circumstances, the table below might be helpful.

Authorised Absences	Unauthorised Absences
*Genuine illness of the pupil; * Hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the pupil; * Bereavement; * Major religious observances * Visits to prospective new schools * External exams or educational assessments; * Events related to the Armed Forces such as welcoming returning service personnel from long postings abroad.	* Family holiday; * Shopping trip; * Day trip; * Visit to a theme park; * A birthday treat; * Oversleeping due to a late night; * Looking after other children/other family member; * Appointments for other family members.

Where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application must in writing, and submitted by email or as a letter, for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed five school days in any one academic year.

If leave is taken **without prior authorisation** by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

It is very unlikely that leave of absence will be authorised during end of year assessment periods. Assessment periods are arranged to fit in with the end of Key Stage 2 assessment dates which can be found on the Internet:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/assessment/keystage2/a00203532/about-ks2>

Please note that schools are advised to delete from roll a pupil who fails to return within 10 school days of the agreed date unless there is good reason (i.e. illness).

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised leave and may also be issued when a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

Penalty Notices for Holidays

In line with the amendments made to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, please note the following:

- The Headteacher can now request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for 5 or more days of holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation;
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days;
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance;
- Penalty notices are issued to **each** parent, for each child.

Illness

We support and approve absence due to illness in the best interests of both the child who is unwell and the main school population.

If your child is unwell, we would appreciate a telephone call as soon as possible after 8.15am. If we have not heard from parents by the time the register has been taken, we will contact you by telephone to check the reason for the absence and to let you know that your child has not arrived in school.

If you do not contact the school, once your child returns to school, we will ask for a letter explaining the absence. We would ask that by the end of the third day of illness there is either a return to school or evidence can be provided that a doctor's advice has been sought. The letters are kept on file and are regularly checked by the Education Welfare Officer.

We also like to know if your child walks to and from school unaccompanied, so that we can monitor their arrival at school.

MONITORING

Attendance is monitored weekly by the school office and termly by the Headteacher, reported to Pupil Entitlement. Certificates for good attendance are presented to the children.

Attendance targets are set annually, form part of our School Development Plan and if they dip sufficiently can trigger an Ofsted inspection.