

Alverton Primary School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Alverton Primary School and Nursery fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Although education is rightly free for children at the point of use it is not without cost. Indeed, we spend approximately £30 per day for every child who attends our school. We may well use this figure as a basis to provide parents with an approximate cost of pupil absence where we are concerned about a pupils attendance. Of course there is a much greater cost to a child who misses out on their education than this financial penalty.

A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning. Where children's attendance falls below 90% they will fall into the category of Persistent Absentee and parents will be contacted by the Attendance Officer/Headteacher in order to address any issues there may be around this poor level of attendance.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer.

For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Truro and Penwith Academy Trust, the Local Authority and the DfE where required
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Registration

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.10am and by 1.25pm. These registers are to be completed electronically using the eSchools system. If this system is unavailable for any reason then a paper copy of the register will be provided by, and should be returned to, the School Office.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix A for the DfE attendance codes.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 9am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.10am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Unplanned Absences

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

The school belongs to the Learning Well Partnership between local schools and GP Surgeries. The school may contact a child's surgery in relation to safeguarding concerns, including those linked to a child's attendance.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where, despite seeking clarification from parents/carers, we have not received reasons for a child's absence then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

Repeated or Long Term Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Granting Approval for term-time absence

With effect from September 2013 headteachers may no longer grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The fundamental principles for defining '**exceptional circumstances**' are that they are '**rare, significant, unavoidable and short**'.

Guiding principles for term-time absence approval

- It is not possible to write a definitive list of occasions which may be classed as 'exceptional circumstances'. However, these may include religious observance, attendance at a funeral or to visit a seriously ill family member etc.
- Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The Headteacher will rightly prioritise attendance, and it is unlikely that **holidays** taken in term time will be deemed to fall into the definition being 'exceptional circumstances', and are therefore likely to be classed as unauthorised.
- The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term-time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is wholly at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.
- If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term-time then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event –holidays are therefore not considered 'exceptional circumstances'

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

A copy of the Parental Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time form is attached as **Appendix B**.

Prevent Strategy

We will be mindful of the Prevent Agenda and guidelines when assessing possible causes for pupil absence. Where concerns exist we will act in accordance with the Prevent Policy and current guidelines.

Strategies to promote Good Attendance

The school operates a number of initiatives to promote good attendance, these include:

- Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.15am to 9.45am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.
- A weekly attendance League which is published for parents in the Friday News
- An award at the final assembly of the week for the class with the highest attendance in that week.
- Rewards for all pupils who achieve 99% or 100% attendance across the school year
- Reports to parents at each termly teacher consultation meeting detailing their child's current attendance grade, with a discussion about how this might be improved.
- A school campaign to reinforce the idea that Although education is rightly free for children at the point of use it is not without cost. Indeed, we spend approximately £30 per day for every child who attends our school.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

The Governing Body

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Headteacher/Attendance Officer

The Headteacher/Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Revised - July 2019

Next review -July 2021

APPENDIX A APPLICATION FOR TERM TIME ABSENCE

Granting Approval for term-time absence

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The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Guiding principles for term-time absence approval

- It is not possible to write a definitive list of occasions which may be classed as 'exceptional circumstances'. However, these may include religious observance, attendance at a funeral or to visit a seriously ill family member etc.
- Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The Headteacher will rightly prioritise attendance, and it is unlikely that **holidays** taken in term time will be deemed to fall into the definition being 'exceptional circumstances', and are therefore likely to be classed as unauthorised.
- The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is wholly at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.
- If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term-time then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event – holidays are therefore not considered 'exceptional circumstances'

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Possible Legal sanctions

If you decide to take your child out of school without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer this matter to Cornwall County Council who as an issuing officer may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Fines are issued per parent/carer, per child. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2500 and/or custodial sentences.

Alverton School may complete a referral to the EWO for consideration of a fixed penalty notice to be imposed via the Local Authority in the following circumstances:

- A. Where there have been 10 unauthorised absences within the previous 100 sessions.
- B. Where a child's attendance has a history of being categorised as poor, and where the child is of compulsory school age,
- C. Where a child's attendance places them in the DfEs persistent absentee category, and where the child is of compulsory school age.
- D. Where an unauthorised absence has been incurred as a result of a term-time holiday, and where any one of the previous points applies (A,B or C above), or will apply as a result of that absence.
- E. Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

Request for a child to have a term-time absence

(Please read the notes on the back of this form before you fill it in.)

Section A

- Child's name: Class:
- Home Address:
- First day of absence from school:
- Last day of absence from school:
- Total number of days absent:

What are the 'exceptional circumstances' for your term-time absence request that you wish the school to consider?

I have read the attached notes. The information I have given on this form is correct.

Signature of parent or carer:

Date:

Section B— for school use only

Request approved/not approved:

Reasons:

Headteacher's signature:

Date:

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed