

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

March 2015



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This document acknowledges that both the Local Authority and schools must apply their powers fairly and consistently.

A student's absence will have a serious impact on their attainment. They need to know that every absence is noticed and appropriate action is always taken. Absence can also be the first sign of a safeguarding issue.

These policies and procedures will enable the school to:

Boost attainment and achievement levels by increasing and maintaining high levels of attendance.

Report regularly on attendance to parents.

Work effectively to improve attendance with our various partners and parents/carers/pupils.

Student attainment and achievement depend on regular presence in school. Any absence leads to missed learning opportunities and other experiences, and may cause difficulties with social relationships. It may also lead to a threat to the welfare of our pupils or to opportunities for anti-social behaviour.

The attendance of a pupil at school is central to meeting the Every Child Matters agenda. Only when a pupil is in school can a true responsibility be taken for safeguarding all the interests of the pupil.

School attendance is seen as a 'whole school issue'.

Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the school, the parent/carer, the pupil, partners in the Local Authority and the Police. Parents/carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority, through its Education Welfare Service, to ensure that this happens.

Aims, understanding and principles of good attendance

- To support school to maximise the achievement of all pupils.
- There is a clear link between good attendance and educational achievement.
- Regular and punctual attendance is vital if pupils are to benefit fully from academic, personal and social opportunities, which are offered to them within the school.
- Parents/carers play an important role in supporting the school and encouraging pupils to reach good attendance levels.
- A broad and balanced education is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- School will take appropriate action to promote good attendance.
- Understanding that non-school attendance is a safeguarding issue.

What the school, parents/carers and pupils can expect of the Education Welfare Service

- The Education Welfare Service has a key function in working closely with schools, families, teams within the LA and other services and agencies, both statutory and voluntary. The Education Welfare Service aims to promote excellent levels of attendance and punctuality at school or otherwise, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment.
- To work within a legal framework, through the DfE and discharge its duties with regard to ensuring that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving a suitable education by regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents/carers to meet their respective responsibilities.
- To support school to fulfil their legal responsibilities with regard to pupil attendance.
- To support and challenge schools in respect of data analysis, registering of pupils and marking of registers including authorising absence, persistent absence, early intervention and monitoring.
- To undertake register inspections on a termly basis as a minimum. The admission register and the attendance register of every school must be available for inspection during school hours by:
 - Any of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools appointed under Section 1(2) and 5(2) the Education (Schools) Act 2005(b);
 - Any Inspector registered under Section 2(1) Schedule 1 of that Act; and
 - In the case of a school maintained by a Local Authority, any officer of the Local Authority authorised for that purpose (Education Welfare Officer).
- Promote partnership working between the Local Authority, schools, parents/carers and other services and agencies by offering guidance, support and assistance in this area.
- Assist schools in creating a framework which promotes consistent practices and procedures.
- The Local Authority will work to overcome any language/interpretation/understanding barriers and work with schools and other agencies/services/individuals to assist in overcoming any barriers that may be presented by the pupil or their family in order to ensure the pupil receives the education to which they are entitled.
- Provide training/information to staff/pupils/Governors on attendance issues as and when required.

What the school expects of its pupils:

- To attend regularly.
- To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day and ensure they arrive promptly to each individual lesson.
- To hand any letters regarding absence from parents to the Class Teacher.

What the school expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their parental responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time. Parents/carers should be aware it is their responsibility in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full time education suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
- To ensure that they contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend (within the first half hour of the start of the school day).
- To ensure their child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day with equipment, completed homework etc.
- To avoid medical appointments during the school day unless absolutely necessary and to collect from and return pupils to school whenever an appointment is unavoidable during the school day.
- To contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- To inform the Class Teacher and seek authorisation from the appropriate person within the school for any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the school day.
- To ensure the continuity of their child's education by taking holidays during the school holiday period.
- Work in partnership with school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parent consultation evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.

What parents/carers and pupils can expect of the school

- To maximise attendance rates as one of their key tasks, with clear procedures to identify and follow up absence and provide a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- Inform and involve Governors.
- To nominate a member of the senior management team to be the Attendance Lead for the school. The Parent Support Advisor will also be involved in helping to ensure punctual attendance.
- Identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism and punctuality.
- Support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance.
- To respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non-, or irregular school attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent/carer. This will be reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed, eg school should recognise that some parents/carers have difficulty understanding written communications. (School will also recognise the reluctance of some parents/carers to come into school).
- Be alert to critical times – eg return to school after a period of long term sickness, a return after a traumatic event (either at home or school) or during the period leading to a phased transfer.

- Produce whole school Attendance Policies and Procedures which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents/carers.
- To provide a broad and balanced education which is motivational and relevant to all students, and is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- The encouragement and promotion of good attendance.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and basic analysis of attendance data will be undertaken regularly.
- First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a valid reason.
- Prompt action on any problems identified.
- Close liaison with the Education Welfare Service and other services and agencies to assist and support parents/carers and pupils where needed.
- Notification to parents/carers of their child's attendance record through an annual report home and regular updates throughout the academic year.
- All staff will maintain high expectations in relation to attendance, all pupils will be made aware that their presence is compulsory and that their absence is noted.
- Systems of reward for attendance as well as achievement and sympathetic reintegration strategies for long-term absentees.
- Provide effective primary/secondary liaison.
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service where school intervention has failed to secure an improvement in attendance. Schools will always refer to Education Welfare Service where a child is a Persistent Absentee pupil and there are no acknowledged reasons for absence by the school. Discussions with Education Welfare Service may start at 90 per cent, 10 unauthorised sessions or 5 days' absence with no contact.

The role of the school's Governing Body

The Governing Body of each school is expected to set an attendance target for the school on an annual basis. It should be equal to or exceed the previous year's target. The Governing Body may wish to appoint a governor with specific responsibilities for attendance as a matter of good practice. Attendance will be a regular item at Governor's meetings.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil. The Local Authority will use the 1996 Education Act and the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (penalty notices) in order to fulfil its duties in ensuring regular school attendance. Section 23 of the Anti-social behaviour Act gives powers to the Local authority to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of, but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. These powers came into force on 27 February 2004.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised. A parent/carer may be required to provide evidence to support absences due to illness or other reason.

Registration

Schools are required to take an attendance register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Registration 1991 and the Education (Pupils Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 stipulate that schools should maintain an attendance register for each class containing the names of all pupils in the class.

Taking the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by all staff, pupils and parents/carers.

School session times vary from school to school. The school session times for this school are 8.50 am and 1pm. The school register is a legal document and may be required as evidence in court. It must be completed fully twice daily. On each occasion schools must record whether every pupil was present, absent, present at approved educational activities or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Registration will take place promptly at 8.50am after the start of the session. The school doors open at 8.30am and teachers welcome children into school from this time. Parents/carers are expected to ensure their child is in school at least five minutes prior to the start of session time in order that registration can take place and their child does not receive a late mark.

Registration will close at 9.10am after the start of the session. Once registration has taken place/has closed the following procedures apply: if a pupil arrives late and the register is still open, they should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (**late defined as coming into school via the main door – having missed normal entry into school**), pupil to sign into the late book as they arrive.

If a pupil arrives after the close of registration and provides a satisfactory explanation from the parent/carer, they will be marked as authorised absent for that session, eg medical appointment - 'M'.

If a pupil arrives after the close of registration and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, they will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' – 'U' for that session.

Pupils who arrive late after the school start times, should report first to the main office, where a record will be made of the time the pupil arrives. The register entry will then be amended in accordance with the details above. The school will accurately record the arrival time of each pupil in a late book.

All teachers must take registers in their classroom at the appropriate times and will notify the school office immediately of any absenteeism/late attendance.

Inspection of the registers will take place regularly by both school assigned staff and the Education Welfare Service to ensure correct procedures are followed, accurate marking of registers and appropriate monitoring of attendance takes place.

Accurate tracking of late arrival to school will take place. Pupils may be expected to make up lost time within school. Parent/carers will always be informed in writing of the school concerns over late arrival and action taken by the school to intervene with parent/carers to ensure the pattern of late attendance does not continue.

Where pupils continue with patterns of unauthorised late attendance despite intervention by the school, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service for investigation into the

circumstances of the late attendance. Appropriate sanctions such as penalty notices/prosecutions will be enforced where necessary, after appropriate casework intervention where there has been little or no improvement.

Grounds for deleting registered pupils from school admission registers are detailed in Keeping Pupil Registers – (**Held in Attendance File in Office**).

Authorised/unauthorised absence

It is vital that all staff within the school adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. Absences should be recorded in accordance with the Attendance Codes (**Held in Attendance File in Office**) issued by the DfE.

Examples of when absence may be **authorised**:

- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions stated in the Education Act 1966 Section 444(6) are met.
- Other exceptional circumstances, as set out in guidance from the LA.
- The pupil is excluded from school and appropriate information and paperwork have been forwarded to the parent.

Note: The absence of pupils taking part in appropriately supervised educational activities outside the school is recorded as 'approved educational activities' as appropriate. This is equivalent to 'present' for performance table purposes.

Schools should not record pupils who are off-site as present unless confirmation has been received of their attendance.

The following activities show when an approved education activity category can be used:

- Field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas.
- Participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities.
- Interviews with prospective employers or for a place at a further or higher education establishment (year 11 only); or for a place in another school.
- Link courses, whereby pupils attend college for part of the time.
- Pupils receiving part of their tuition off site at another location while remaining under overall supervision of the home school (ie a flexible arrangement short of formal dual registration).
- Any pupil who does not attend a provision off-site and is not attending school has to be marked as absent in the school register.

Examples of when absence should be unauthorised

- No explanation is forthcoming within an acceptable time limit (ie 2 weeks).
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The parent has been advised that absences will not be authorised without appropriate medical confirmation.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings.
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (eg a birthday).
- The pupil is absent from school for the purpose of an unauthorised holiday.

Any absence taken without the permission of the Head teacher/Principal will be recorded as unauthorised absence in the school register, which is a **legal document**.

It is for the Head teacher/Principal and **not** the parent to make decision as to whether the absence should be authorised.

It is the parent's responsibility to provide all evidence of absence and bear any costs that this may incur.

Holidays in Term Time

What the Law says

Regulations make it clear that a head teacher may not authorise an absence in term time for the purpose of a family holiday. This was brought about by an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, which has removed references to holidays and the 10-day period. The amendments make it clear that head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If a holiday is taken without the school's permission, this should be recorded as unauthorised absence and noted on the child's records. If a child has not returned within 20 days of the first day of absence, then the school may take the child off roll, after consultation with your named Education Welfare Officer.

If parents have taken pupils on term time holiday when permission has not been granted, schools will request a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice fine is £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, there may be a prosecution in Court. These fines are per pupil and will apply to both parents if relevant, ie. a fine for a family with two parents and two children will total £240, rising to £480.

It may be timely to indicate that there are 190 statutory school days a year; so there are 175 other days (weekends and school holidays) available for holidays which would not have a negative effect on a child's education.

What this school will do

When deciding whether to authorise a term time holiday, the school will need to consider if there are **special, individual or exceptional** circumstances for the request. There are some obvious considerations:

- Close to or during examinations.
- When valuable group work with other pupils is taking place that cannot be repeated.
- If a child needs help in certain subjects to access all the education support that is offered.
- During the induction period when a child transfers from one school to another and needs to familiarise themselves with the new school environment.
- During the first year in a new school when pupils may experience problems settling in.
- Previous similar requests.
- Overall attendance pattern.

Holidays during term time should be seen as an exception to the norm. So, what are 'exceptional circumstances'?

It will be the decision of the Head teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. The Head teacher will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term-time.

An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or there may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the Head teacher might consider that an immediate holiday might enable the child concerned to better deal with the situation; or the holiday might be a unique, one-off never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

The Head teacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Head teacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Other factors will include the likely impact on the child's education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning; **there is a strong link between the amount of absence in a school and the qualifications that its pupils achieve**; whether the holiday falls during a year in which the child is due to take a public examination or be involved in Government tests (eg SATs).

Procedures for following up absence

Absences should be explained by parents to the school on the first day of absence prior to 9.30am. Notes, letters and telephone messages should be retained by the school with dates and times if appropriate to ensure evidence is available for recording purposes and any legal intervention taken by the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service. All verbal conversations should be recorded with date, time and names of staff and parents involved for the same reason.

To ensure the safety of children, where parents have not contacted the school prior to 9.30am, the school will operate its first day contact procedures and telephone parents to ascertain the reason for absence. If contact cannot be obtained, a letter will be sent by first class post on the same day (or no later than the third day), requesting contact be made with the school and reason given. Where there are concerns as to the safety or welfare of a child, the school will endeavour

to contact parents via an immediate home visit. This may be done in conjunction with Education Welfare Service, Children's Social Care, Health or the Police where appropriate.

Failure to respond within five days to absence telephone calls, letters or home visits will result in an immediate referral to the Education Welfare Service for investigation.

Where possible, parents should confirm in writing the reason for absence from school.

If a pupil is persistently absent or late after register has closed and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have proved unsuccessful, a referral will be placed with the Education Welfare Service for investigation and legal intervention if necessary. This may include a full prosecution, penalty notice or Education Supervision Order. Parents are informed of this in the School Information Handbook and Local Authority leaflets sent to parents on a regular basis.

Prior to referral to Education Welfare Service, schools will have contacted parents in writing of their concerns and attempted at least one appointment in school with the parents to discuss these concerns. Parents will be advised that the school will no longer authorise absences without appropriate evidence, until there is an acceptable improvement in attendance and that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. Registration certificates will show unauthorised absences when referred to Education Welfare Service – 'O'.

Children missing from education or who may otherwise be at risk

Schools will follow the procedures set out in the Children Missing from Education Policy and Procedures as agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. It is important that parents/carers inform the school if they move house/area etc, giving full details of any new address and the proposed school. The Education Welfare Service will follow up all pupils who are believed to have left the area. The school and the Education Welfare Service will make 'reasonable' enquiries to locate the pupil. No pupil should be deleted from the school roll until the Education Welfare Service has agreed this.

Truancy sweeps

The Education Welfare Service and the police undertake truancy sweeps a number of times throughout the year and often in conjunction with other services and agencies. Any pupils found during the school day will normally be returned to the school and parents will be notified. Evidence from truancy sweeps may be used in prosecutions.

Strategies for promoting attendance

- The school will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will always be taken. Early intervention is often the key to preventing more frequent absences.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to pupils. Every effort is made to ensure that learning tasks match pupil's needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Good attendance will be praised appropriately. These involve 'On- time Heroes' and awards for excellent attendance.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evening, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be reintegrated back into school upon their return.
- Pupils who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Attendance Lead will have regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- School will regularly analyse their data so that early identification can be made of pupil's absence and especially those who are persistent absentees (or in danger of becoming a persistent absentee – PA). A pupil is considered to be a PA pupil if their attendance falls below 85%.
- Good attendance will be promoted with children through attendance awards made termly and annually to pupils with 100% attendance in assembly and class and those with the greatest improvement in attendance.
- Consider target setting for individual form groups, pupils etc.

Attendance Statistics

All non-Academy schools are required by the Local Authority to submit attendance figures to the Local Authority/Education Welfare Service on a regular basis. Schools will regularly analyse attendance statistics in order to ensure effective strategies are in place to support pupils in raising attainment and attendance.

Where schools feel they have a disproportionate category of students (eg travellers, SEN, ethnic minority groups) and the school feels that this category causes a negative impact on the overall attendance percentage, it is suggested that calculations can be undertaken both including and excluding that category so that the impact can be more clearly seen.

Safeguarding

School attendance is a safeguarding issue – see School Safeguarding Policy. It is therefore vital that all registers must be marked correctly and up to date.

The school Attendance Policy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the Behaviour, Anti-bullying and SEN policies. The active involvement of Governors, parents/carers and all staff within the school is essential to the review process. Pupils can also make a valuable contribution to policy development.

Appendix

These policies and procedures are based on:

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 1989 Section 36.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999

The Education Acts 2002 and 2005

Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Criminal Justice Act 2003.

The Children Act 2004.

Guidance on the education-related provisions included in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. Sections 19, 20 and 23.

Human Rights Act (HRA).

Race Relations Act Amendment 2000.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005.

Single Equality Act 2010.

The Education Act 1996 Sections 444(1/1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act.

Dfe Behaviour and Attendance Strategy.



Signed: -----
Headteacher

Approved by Governors at the meeting held in

Signed: -----
Chair of Governors

Date: