

Attendance Policy – a summary for parents

All schools and parents have **statutory duties** with respect to ensuring their children have good school attendance. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a 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 a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Principles

Good school attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Nationally, the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment and those persistently late fall behind their peers.

The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through ensuring that school is a calm, safe, happy and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, please do not cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression to them that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Schools are legally required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing and why the office should be called on the *first morning of absence*.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason for example, a genuine illness or other unavoidable cause such as an essential hospital appointment.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. As Head Teachers can only grant leave of absence in *exceptional* circumstances, leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Unauthorised absences are those for which no “leave” can be given. This includes:

Holidays

Unexplained absences and random days off

Children that arrive too late to get a mark as the registers have closed.

Please do remember that your children have excellent relationships with staff and should be able to talk to us about everything and anything in school so we can work together to keep them safe and happy. We are their trusted adults and encouraging them to tell untruths to us about absences puts them in a very uncomfortable and difficult position.

Procedures

- On the first day of absence, parents should phone school as soon as possible to give an explanation for the absence.
- Foreseeable absences should be covered by a note in advance or presentation of an appointment card etc.
- Family holiday requests – head teachers can no longer authorise absences due to new government legislation. Therefore any time taken off due to holidays will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Persistently poor attendance will be picked up by the Local Authority Early Interventions Team and may result in a parenting contract established and/ or a penalty notice being issued.

What Parents Can Do

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This includes problems with arriving on time as well as whole day absences as **arrivals after the register closes in a morning is recorded as unauthorised absence**. Working in partnership with school is nearly always successful as we all want the same thing – for your children to be happy and learning in school. If difficulties cannot be overcome in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to Early Interventions or other agencies.

For your information – a summary of thresholds for action

UNAUTHORISED – once a child has **10 unauthorised absences**, (equivalent of 5 days over two consecutive half terms) the Local Authority can issue a fixed penalty fine of £80 per parent per child.

ALL ABSENCES

Attendance of 90%

(equivalent of 1 day off every 2 weeks,
or 3 days off every half term)

You will receive a warning letter from school and may be invited to attend a meeting.

If no improvement,
or if attendance falls below 90%

You will be invited to a meeting in school to agree a plan of action to improve attendance.

If no improvement or if absence intensifies
(eg below 85%) or **if established patterns emerge**

The LA's attendance support team will become involved and a parenting contract drawn up. Home visits may be organised.

If no improvement through lack of engagement with contract

The LA will look to put more formal support in place eg through an Education Supervision Order or a fixed penalty notice will be issued. If the poor school attendance persists the Local Authority may also consider prosecution under Section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996, which can carry a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to three months imprisonment.