



Attendance Policy

Committee	Curriculum & Attainment
Date Approved by Governing Body	7-3-18
Last Review Date by Committee	6-3-18
Next Review Date by Committee	March 2020

'Celebrate Learning, Achieving and Friendship in God's Love'

Pupils need to attend school regularly to fulfil their potential and to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Government expects schools and authorities to

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled; and act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly

Principles

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

This Policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the wellbeing of children including safeguarding, behaviour, anti-bullying, and support for children with medical needs.

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of 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, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

We expect our pupils to attend regularly, so that they benefit fully from all the opportunities we provide for their education, progress and achievement.

School Responsibilities

- we will promote positive behaviour and attendance through our use of curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance appropriately;
- we will promote and encourage good attendance and punctuality by providing a warm, welcoming atmosphere where children want to learn and feel safe
- we will work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance

- we will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team such as Education Welfare Workers, where required, in order to ensure all children can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance;
- we will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this;
- we will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern;
- we will keep appropriate attendance records and data gathered will be used to inform the Governing body of attendance and punctuality trends. This information will enable Governors and senior staff to effectively target attendance and punctuality as necessary;
- we will provide parents of their child's overall attendance at the end of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms via the end of term school reports.

Parental Responsibilities

- Ensure, as a legal requirement, that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly;
- inform school straight away if your child cannot attend and give the reason;
- ensure the school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance;
- talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with homework or friendship problems;
- do not book holidays in term time - this will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances;
- ensure school has all your up to date contact details;
- encourage your child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them.

The importance of good attendance and its link to attainment:

The Department of Education (DfE) has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on chances of succeeding in tests and exams. The research is based on data from all schools in England going back several years. The DfE say that the results are very clear - missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement.

How should parents report an absence?

- by telephone - all parents have the school's phone number (01538 308356) and are asked to leave a message on the answer machine if staff are unavailable;
- by letter;
- in person at the school office;
- by showing an appointment card or letter;
- by filling in a *Leave of Absence* form in advance.

What should parents do if they wish to request a leave of absence?

Parents should contact the school to find out how to make a request for permission and fill in a *Leave of Absence* form. We would strongly recommend that this is done before planning any leave of absence. We would expect that the form be completed wherever possible not less than a week **before** the absence is requested.

What happens if a child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?

The absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences and this may result in a Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority. In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

Schools are 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**.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, other unavoidable cause or exceptional circumstance.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Lateness

Parents are expected to arrive punctually for the start of the school day at 8.55am; parents are advised to arrive at school at 8.50am. Registration is between 8.55 am and 9.10 am. Children arriving after 9.15am must report with their parents to the school office, where they will be registered via the late book; they will receive a late mark in their class register (Late Mark = L). Families who regularly arrive late will be contacted by the Headteacher. Education Welfare may become involved if the problem cannot be quickly resolved.

First Day Contact Procedure

The school follows up any unexplained absences on the first day of absence to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the schools management information system (which is used to download data to the School census). The absence and attendance codes are national codes enabling the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulations.

If school hasn't been contacted by a family member to advise of the reason for the child's absence by 9.30am, then a member of school staff will endeavour to make contact by telephone, text or email.

What if my child has a medical or dental appointment?

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays. However, we recognise that this is not always possible. Authorisation will be given where confirmation of the appointment is received via one of the methods already listed. Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment whenever possible.

Procedure for taking a child out of school during the school day

Parents/carers report to the office and office staff arrange for children to come to the office. Exit from school during school hours is only through the main entrance. The absence is recorded in a book with the reason, time and whether the child is returning to school.

Days of Religious Observance

Attendance at a religious observance held by a religious body will be granted as an authorised absence. The Headteacher should be consulted in advance of the event.

Leave during term time

On 1st September 2013 a significant alteration in law came into effect which changed the grounds on which a Headteacher could allow a pupil to go on holiday during term time. There is now **no** rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays. The law now states that "leave of absence shall not be granted" unless the Headteacher considers that there are "exceptional circumstances relating to that application".

What are "exceptional circumstances"?

Leave of absence owing to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement) would clearly be considered exceptional. Other than this however the Headteacher will deal with applications on a case-by-case basis. Taking holidays in term time for financial reasons would not be considered an exceptional circumstance. If the Headteacher is in any doubt as to whether leave should or should not be granted, advice will be sought from Staffordshire Legal Services Unit or the Educational Welfare Officer.

Each case will be treated in isolation at the time of the request, with no prior precedents being taken into account. Due to the potential legal implications of taking your child out of school during term time, please be prepared to provide written evidence to support your request.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. Where difficulties are identified, parents and children will be supported by the school, the Local Support Team for targeted Services and, as appropriate, other Partner Agencies. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice will be issued:

New Staffordshire County Council guidance came into force from 1 January 2018 and is detailed below:

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

From 1 January 2018 **any** period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. The head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence may be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. This has now changed to 10 marks, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

Please refer to Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices September 2017 (to commence 1-1-18) for further information at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education.

Further Information

Admissions Register:

School keeps an admission register which records the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school.

All schools must keep a record of attendance register entries for at least 3 years and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they;

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- have been permanently excluded.

Elective Home Education:

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority via Entrust at enquiries@entrust-ed.co.uk of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this - particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.