



Attendance Policy

Policy updated:	Dec 2020
Policy adopted:	Dec 2020
Status:	Policy & Guidance
Review cycle:	Annual
Review date:	Dec 2021

Introduction

This school is **committed** to providing a full and efficient educational experience **for all pupils**. It is also committed to meeting the DfE (Department for Education) and Plymouth targets for raising levels of school attendance. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, **excellent attendance is crucial**. We organise and do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems, which impede full attendance, will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is **vital all children are at school, on time, every day** the school is open. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

To achieve these aims the school has:

- Attendance targets
- A policy of celebrating good attendance through reporting back to parents throughout the year
- A clear policy and procedure on authorising leave, including holiday absences
- A thorough practice for recording and reviewing punctuality and lateness
- A clear course of action for first-day contact between parent and school, whenever a child is absent
- A comprehensive and detailed procedure for taking formal action where a child's attendance is unsatisfactory.

Start and Finish Times of Registration

Morning Session

Due to Covid-19 restrictions in place at school currently, we are staggering the start time for pupils across the school. Schools starts as follows:

Foundation: 9.10am
Year 1: 8.55am
Year 2: 9.05am
Year 3: 8.50am
Year 4: 8.50am
Year 5: 8.40am
Year 6: 8.40am

Children should be in class by the time stated above. Registers close 10 minutes after the start of school time stated above. Any child arriving after this time is marked late. If a child arrives after 9.15am then they are deemed to be absent for the session unless the school has received notification of an urgent medical or dental incident from a parent. If no such notice has been received, then the child's absence will be unauthorised. If a child has more than 10 unauthorised absences, then the parents may be subject to legal action. The school is keen to avoid this and both staff and governors would appreciate your cooperation and commitment to getting all pupils into school on time and before such measures need to be taken.

Afternoon Session

Lessons commence as follows:

Foundation: 12.30pm
Year 1 & 2: 1.00pm
Year 3, 4, 5 & 6: 1.30pm

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All staff will understand the registration process in the school.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session and returned to the school office promptly.
NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.
3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through a variety of media: newsletters and parents' meetings.
4. The school will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
5. All pupils with attendance below 95% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those children at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
6. The school will identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures.

Parents/Carers

1. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action in accordance with s444 Education Act 1996.
2. Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing the school at which their child is registered of the reason for any absence by phone call or, where possible, in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. This should be done by 9.15am.
4. Parents should not arrange family absences in term time.
5. Parents/Carers can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.
6. Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the school's prior written permission.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by a parent/carers. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:

- Illness (1)
- Medical appointments (2) (routine medical/dental check-ups should be made out of school hours whenever possible), if the medical appointment occurs in the morning or afternoon, your child is expected to attend school before or after the appointment (you'll need to provide evidence of the appointment)
- Transport that wasn't provided by us when it should have been

- Unavoidable cause (this means an unusual/extraordinary event that couldn't be avoided)
- A specified, limited period for an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness
- A funeral of an immediate family member
- Religious observance (you'll need authorisation from the school at least four weeks before the event)
- A specified, limited period for children of service personnel about to go on deployment (you'll need to provide a letter from the Commanding Officer as evidence)
- **One day** for a wedding of an immediate family member (you'll need to provide the invitation as evidence)
- **One day** for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade (you'll need to provide the invitation as evidence)
- A one-off sporting events/performing arts competition if your child is participating and is at county standard or above (you'll need to provide a letter from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence)

Absences from the school, in addition to term time holiday, will not be authorised for:

- Absences not agreed, this will always include first and last day of half terms, unless medical evidence provided.
- Birthdays, if ill on a birthday medical evidence will be required
- Shopping
- Caring for other family members
- Visiting relatives
- Mild colds or illnesses.
- To interpret for family members
- Having no school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Weddings abroad (even if it's immediate family)
- Family anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problems
- Attending immigration interviews with parents or guardian
- Moving to a new house
- School refusal
- Lateness after the school's registration period

This list provides examples and isn't exhaustive.

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been **absent for 3 consecutive days** or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 95% and/or the child is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided. Referral to School Nurse/Family Support may be made to offer advice and support to the family.

(2) Medical/dental appointments

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence. All non-emergency appointments will not be authorised.

Holidays in term time/Leave of absence Legislation

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739764/Guidance_on_school_attendance_Sept_2018.pdf

These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave, as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Requesting the absence

All requests for a child to be absent from school during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance (unless in exceptional circumstances that prevent this notice) of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from the school office.

The Head teacher or person with delegated responsibility will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are exceptional circumstances. Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision. If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Penalty Notice (PN) to the parent(s)/carer(s) for the unauthorised absence.

If you fail to make sure your child attends school regularly (even if they're missing school without your knowledge), you may be issued with a penalty notice (a fine for children who miss school without authorisation) or subject to a criminal prosecution.

A penalty notice of £60 may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will normally lead to prosecution.

We can issue penalty notice if:

- your child has eight or more unauthorised absences from school over a six-month period (eight absences are equal to four school days as there are two sessions in a school day)
- your child has been late to school after registration has closed eight or more times over a six-month period
- your child is found during a truancy sweep and the absence hasn't been authorised by the school, and there are already eight previous unauthorised absences
- you repeatedly fail to provide the school or our Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service reasons for your child's absences (this includes ignoring our attempts to contact you)
- your child is found in a public place during the first five days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion

If you are convicted of an offence under s444(1) Education Act 1996, and you commit a further offence within the next 5 years, you will be summonsed for the more serious offence contrary to s444(1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £2500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

If a child is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued. If the parent(s)/carer(s) can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an exceptional circumstance and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a referral for legal action will not be made to the Local Authority.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

On the first day of absence the parent/carers should ring the school between 8.00am and 9.15am to inform the office that their child will be absent and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is to also be provided.

Between 9.15am and 10.30am attendance/administrative staff will phone the parents/carers of any pupil whose absence is unexplained. If any member of staff is concerned about an absence, they will liaise with the administration staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they should relay their concern to the Headteacher or Parent Support Advisor. The school will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work. If there is no contact on the second day, the attendance/administrative staff will phone all contacts and a member of staff may visit the home address, if necessary. If there is no contact a letter will be sent on day three advising that medical evidence will be required for further absences and that the absence will not be authorised.

If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff may visit the home address, if necessary. If, after three days, the school has any concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the school will contact the allocated Education Welfare Officer for advice. It remains the school's responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary. If a child is absent from school for 5 days, but the school knows where the child is, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority for legal action. If the child is missing for 20 consecutive days, and after making reasonable enquiries, the school cannot locate the child/parents, a Child Missing in Education (CME) form should be submitted.

****** If the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or if the school has safeguarding concerns and feels the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Gateway (MASH) and the Education Welfare Officer. A child may be referred to Gateway if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the

task at hand. Pupils who arrive 10 minutes after registration begins will be considered late. An appropriate mark is recorded in the registers and entered on the computer through the attendance programme.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- Pupils who arrive 10 minutes after registration are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Children who arrive after 9:15 am should be considered as 'Late after registers close' (U - unauthorised absence).
- Registration staff will record the appropriate late mark in the registers, and these will be entered into the computerised attendance programme.
- All children's attendance records will be checked fortnightly for 'lates before registers close (L)' and 'lates after registers close (U)'. Where these lates cumulate to 3 or more in a half term the school will send a letter to the parents/carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

** 10 or more 'late after registers close' (U) codes could result in the school making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken **

A child is late after registers close when they arrive after 9.15 am.

Attendance letters

All pupils with attendance below 95% will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the Senior Leaders and administration team, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees. (Persistent absentees are pupils who have missed 19 days which equates to 38 sessions during the course of the academic year, which equates to an attendance percentage of 90% or below).

Absences may be unauthorised by the school where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer for an absence or if the school feels the reason for the absence is untrue. The Parent Support Advisor may telephone parents/carers for clarification of the absence.

Where a pupil's attendance is below 95%, the following actions should be taken:

Attendance letter 1 (Green Warning) will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 95%.

Attendance letter 2 (Amber Warning) will be sent as soon as 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers to attend a meeting with the class teacher/Headteacher/Parent Support Advisor, as considered appropriate by the school.

Attendance letter 3 (Red Warning) will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the above meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the Headteacher/Parent Support Advisor.

Persistently Absent letter will be sent where a pupil's attendance is below 90%. All persistently absent pupils will be monitored for improvement. Parents/Carers will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher/Parent Support Advisor if no improvement is seen. All persistently absent pupils will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Late Letter will be sent if there are 3 or more lates (before and after the register closes) over a 3 week period. Lates will be reviewed fortnightly and a Red Attendance letter will be sent to parents/carers if no improvement is seen.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Working with families and our community, it may be appropriate to personalise the school's approach to promoting positive attendance for individual families. The school will always treat each case individually and seek to identify the most appropriately positive way forward to improve the overall attendance of children.

Attendance targets

The Local Authority support the headteacher and governors in setting aspirational attendance targets on an annual basis.

Publication of School Attendance Information

Each parent will receive a copy of their child's attendance percentages termly and at the end of the year. The school attendance policy and procedures will be published on the school website. Any parent can request their own child's attendance figures at any time. The school will be happy to provide that information in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Parents will receive a termly attendance ladder letter stating their child's current attendance and where their child's current attendance sits of the ladder.

Conclusion

It is the policy of the school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. The school will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our pupils. Our partnership with families will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If, at any time, a child has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a 6 months period, the school will consider making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution at a Magistrates Court. Please see the Local Authority website for further details.