



Discovery Federation

Attendance Policy

Updated: September 2019 by Mrs C. Robson

INTRODUCTION

Under Section 36 of the Education Act 1944 parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education, whether by regular school attendance or otherwise. In most cases children attend school. Parents are thus primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend, and stay, at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

Regular school attendance is important, without it the efforts of teachers will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places the children at risk and in some cases, it can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social behaviour. Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly 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.

Parents are encouraged to see themselves as partners with the school in the education of children and to ensure that they maintain regular, punctual attendance. School is committed to working with parents and supporting parents in ensuring their children attend school regularly.

AIMS

The aim of this document is to ensure that pupils are expected and encouraged to achieve maximum attendance dates in order to take full advantage of the educational and general opportunities available to them within the school.

- a) This will be achieved by:-
 - i) Providing a meaningful, caring, educational environment where the child feels respected as an individual and an important part of the school community.
 - ii) Developing a meaningful rapport with pupils and parents and ensuring they are aware of attendance requirements of the school.
 - iii) Having an accurate registration system which is used consistently throughout the school.
 - iv) Encouraging and celebrating good attendance.
 - v) Making full use of any support services and taking appropriate action in the case of pupils who fail to achieve satisfactory levels of attendance.
- b) For safety reasons, to be able to identify:-
 - i) Pupils who are present e.g. in cases of fire.
 - ii) Pupils who are marked present but are not physically present e.g. hospital visits or work study.

RATIONALE

The maximising of attendance rates is one of the key tasks of schools. It is recognised that irregular attendance raises complex issues. Pupils may be failing to attend regularly for a variety of reasons. Some of these may be outside the immediate control of the school but the school should actively pursue the goal of regular attendance. Attendance needs to be recorded and persistent absence needs to be investigated and appropriate action taken.

CATEGORISING ABSENCE

Schools are required by law to record attendance every morning and afternoon and to distinguish between attendance and absence and within absence to delineate between authorised and unauthorised absences.

i) **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation has been received by telephone or letter authorising the absence. If no explanation is received initially it is necessary to provisionally code the absence as unauthorised, pending the receipt of a satisfactory explanation. Provisional entries should be confirmed as soon as possible but in any event by not later than two weeks after the start of the term following the absence.

A pupil arriving after the registration period may be marked as unauthorised and marked as absent for the session. If there is no satisfactory explanation for the lateness, received by telephone or letter, the absence should be treated as unauthorised. The register will be closed at 9.10 a.m. for morning sessions and 12:50 p.m. for afternoon sessions. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as unauthorised.

ii) Authorised Absence

Essentially authorised absences are all those absences which are not attributed to truancy i.e. due to:-

- Sickness however, where we have genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness we can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. We can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but will advise parents of our intention. We will not request medical evidence unnecessarily but may from time to time to support investigations. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, or doctors' notes.
- Receiving treatment at hospital, dentist etc.
- Religious observance by religious body to which parents belong.
- Failure of school transport involving children living over 2 miles.
- An approved public performance.
- Death of a close member of the family.
- Educational visit.
- Exclusion.
- Lateness after registration (where a satisfactory explanation for the absence is received by telephone or letter)

ABSENT CHILDREN

Parents of children who are absent should ring school as soon as possible on the day of absence to let school know the reasons the child will not be in. Our school clerk will contact the homes of any absent children after 9.15am to seek the reason for absence and ensure their safety if we have not received a telephone call.

LATENESS

If a pupil arrives late but before the end of the registration period, he/she is entitled to an attendance mark. However, their name and the time they arrived will be included in the Late Book. Parents will be contacted if a child's name appears in the Late Book five times within a two-week period. Children arriving after the close of register will be marked U. An action plan will be developed to support and improve the child's punctuality and will be monitored over the next half term. If there is no improvement in the child's punctuality, school will liaise with parents to complete and submit an Early Help Assessment, requesting additional support for the family. Lateness will also form part of half termly reports to parents along with attendance, effort and behaviour.

INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE

- Weekly whole class attendance award delivered by the attendance fairy.
- Those children with full attendance in any term will receive a certificate and a letter will be sent home.

SCHEME FOR RECORDING ATTENDANCE

The scheme for recording attendance is based on the L.A.'s Common Scheme for Recording Attendance and Absences and is collected electronically. At the end of each term parents of those children with below 95% attendance will receive a letter inviting them to attend a meeting in school with the School Operations Manager, and if necessary, the Head teacher or Deputy Head Teacher. An action plan will be developed to support and improve the child's attendance and will be monitored over the next half term. If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, school will liaise with parents to complete and submit an Early Help Assessment, requesting additional support for the family. Attendance will also form part of half termly reports to parents on their child's attitude and behaviour.

HOLIDAYS

Head Teachers no longer have the authority to authorise holidays. Holidays will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. A request form must be completed and submitted to the school office (see appendix 1). This will be reviewed and discussed by the headteacher and governors and a decision will be issued in writing. We will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If we grant a leave request, it will be for the head teacher and governors to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm. Any holidays taken during term time without authorisation will be treated as unauthorised and marked as G.

FOUNDATION UNIT

Nursery /Part-time pupils

The importance of regular attendance at Nursery (part-time education) is stressed from the outset. However, it is realised that attendance is dependant on an adult bringing and collecting their child each day.

If a child is ill or unable to attend, the parents are encouraged to inform the school as soon as possible.

The school does make full use of part-time places.

If a child does not attend for a period of time (3 weeks) with staff unaware of the reason, a letter is sent out to the home. If there is no response to this letter the place is then offered to the next child on the waiting list.

Full time pupils (Reception age) are subject to the incentives/ procedures as pupils in the rest of the school.

PENALTIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December.

School will always work closely with parents to facilitate attendance of children. We will consider every aspect of a pupil's case, including the involvement of other professionals, before judging whether or not to refer to the LA to issue a Penalty Notice (see appendix 2). This must include discussions with attendance support staff who have knowledge of or involvement with the family. Further support may be offered and can take several forms such as parenting contracts and orders.

Local authorities also have other powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order, or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.



Form for Request for Leave of Absence from School



Please note that there is no automatic right for pupils to be granted authorised absences for family holidays. School considers every request for holiday leave in relation to the criteria below.

Pupil Details					
Name					
Date of birth					
Ethnic Origin					
Class Group					
Address					
Sibling/s in other school and school attended	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Sibling Name/s:</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Year Group:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>School:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Sibling Name/s:	Year Group:	School:	
Sibling Name/s:	Year Group:				
School:					

Request for Absence Details		
Start date of requested absence		Total Number of Days
End date of requested absence		
Intended return to school date		
Reason for absence request which indicates exceptional circumstances (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)		
Name of parent / carer (print)		
Signature		
Date		

For School Use		
<p>N.B. Due to the changes in amendments to School Attendance Regulations Head Teachers may not grant ANY leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. From September 2013 parents will be fined if they choose to take their child out of school for more than 10 days unauthorised absence over a rolling 12 month period.</p> <p><i>Exceptional circumstances will be extremely rare.</i></p>		
Absence approved?	YES	NO
Signature of Head Teacher		
Date		



Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School

Advice to Parents and Carers

Children and Adults Services 2013

- ***Parental responsibility for regular school attendance***

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003) introduced penalty notices as an alternative to the prosecution of parents under section 444 of The Education Act for failure to ensure their child's regular school attendance.

As the paying of a Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution for failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school, it does not require an appearance in Court. If the Penalty Notice is paid in full on time, then you will not be prosecuted for the offence period the penalty notice relates to.

- ***When are Fixed Penalty Notices Issued?***

Durham Local Authority considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps).
- Inappropriate parentally-condoned absence.
- Unauthorised holidays in term time or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed).
- To assist Key Stage 4 pupils to re-engage in the final term.

If your child has been absent without the school's permission (unauthorised absence) for at least 10 days in any period up to a maximum of 12 rolling school weeks, then a Penalty Notice will be considered.

The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions. Attendance is of such importance to all of us however the Authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing a child's schooling.

The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice for truancy will be whether it can be effective in helping to get the pupil back into school or alternative provision. A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances where a parent / parents / carer is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance, but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

- *How are they issued?*

By post to your home.

- *Is a Warning Given?*

Yes, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued, which will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to affect an improvement. In that time your child must have no unauthorised absences from school.

In the event of a further referral in the same rolling year a Penalty Notice may be issued with immediate effect. The warning period does not apply to penalty notices issued as a result of holidays in term time.

- *Is there an appeal process?*

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, therefore it is important that you alert the Local Authority to any representations you wish to make at your earliest convenience.

- *What are the costs?*

Payment within 21 days of receipt of a Notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this, but within 28 days.

- *How do I pay?*

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with Penalty Notices.

- *What happens if I do not pay?*

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrate's Court for the original offence of failure to ensure your child's regular attendance by your child.

If proven, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending upon circumstances. You may also incur additional court costs which increases the total amount you must then pay.

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