



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

(key information/summary of changes – please see our website for the full policy)

An updated Attendance & Punctuality Policy was approved by our Governing Board in March 2018, following an extensive interim period whilst schools awaited the outcome of several court cases between Local Authorities and parents. Following these rulings, the legalities surrounding attendance and punctuality have been reviewed and updated, requiring updates to our policy. Given that there are significant changes, we have summarised these below, to help parents/carers understand what has changed, and enable compliance from September 2018.

It is important to note that, legally, ANY unauthorised leave (regardless of previous/current attendance figures) can be subject to a penalty notice/fine. However, as a school, we will still consider previous/current attendance when deciding whether or not to issue a penalty notice/fine.

Philosophy and Rationale

The most recent government guidance states that **central to raising standards and ensuring children fulfil their potential and benefit fully from their education, is regular school attendance.**

All schools are expected to promote excellent attendance and reduce absence.

Parents/carers are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

Any period of absence will affect learning and progress.

Illness

If your child will not be attending school due to illness, you must notify the school, leaving a message on the school's answer machine.

If a child is not in school, and no message has been left explaining the reason for this, the school will telephone the parent/carer, making verbal contact with parents by 10.30am on the first day of absence, to ascertain the reason for absence.

Where large numbers of children are absent from school and it would be difficult to contact all parents/carers verbally by 10.30am, a text message or e-mail may be sent in an attempt to ascertain and/or clarify the reason for the absence.

Punctuality

Children should arrive in school between 8.45am and 8.55am.

Any children arriving late (after 8.55am) should enter the school through the main office, accompanied by their parent/carer. They must report to the office staff (who will note their arrival) and sign their child/ren into school. An 'L' (late) code will be entered on the register if a child enters school via the main office.

The registers are taken in classes by 9:00am. The registers officially close at 9:05am. Any child arriving after this time, who has not been signed in at the office between 8.55am and 9.05am, will be marked absent for the session.

A reason for the lateness will then need to be provided and a decision made by the school to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence. If unauthorised the 'U' code will be used.

If a child reaches 10 'U' absences over a 12 week period due to lateness, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Leave of Absence

There is no rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays. Legally, from 1st January 2018, any period of unauthorised leave that does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, must be unauthorised. In addition, this may result in a parent/carer receiving a penalty notice/fine.

Exceptional circumstance include:

- Forced leave (where a parent/carer is in the military service)
- Religious observance (a maximum of two days' absence is allowed for religious observance)
- Death of close family member
- Other agreed exceptional circumstances (considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher)

If a parent/carer wishes to request a period of leave they are required to complete a leave of absence request form. If the request does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances it will be unauthorised and noted in the register.

We will consider a Penalty Notice after 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence, if attendance is less than 95% over a 12 month period (unless low attendance is due to long term illness). These unauthorised absences do not have to relate to consecutive days.

Penalty Notices, if issued, are issued per parent/carer, per child.

Persistent absentees

Persistent absence is attendance which falls below 90%.

Children falling below 95% attendance will be monitored as to whether their attendance improves or deteriorates. The aim is to avoid a child falling into the Persistent Absence category.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% a letter will be sent to the parents/carers of the child, informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to improve attendance.

If this does not prove successful, schools may use statutory powers to enforce the parents/carers responsibility regarding their child's school attendance. Penalty Notices can be issued or court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Penalty Notices / Fines

A penalty notice leads to the initiation of a fine, initially of £60 per parent/carer, per child. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the Local Authority will prosecute the parents/carers under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to a hearing in the Magistrates Court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000 per parent/carer. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.