


THE
C  **MPASS**
PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS

Attendance Policy
Summer 2018



Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and we endeavour to provide an environment in which all pupils feel valued, safe and welcome. Parents and children play an important part in making our schools successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children, whilst realising that for some of our children with complex needs, attendance levels may vary according to some of the wide ranging physiological barriers to learning that they encounter. Every opportunity will be used to convey to children and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. 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, all depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate good attendance

Roles and responsibilities

The senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance, and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The senior leadership team will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- ensure that all children are registered accurately
- promote good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- support children with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of children

- attend every day unless they are too ill to do so
- arrive in school on time, recognising of course where it is beyond the control of those children who are reliant on school transport.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the class teacher any unavoidable planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, and again for the afternoon session.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the school day. If your child is late they can miss vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and in addition feel uncomfortable or embarrassed.

Our schools follow the guidance set out by the Department for Education which suggests that registers should be closed a maximum of 30 minutes after the start of the school day.

- all lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence
- if a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be managed in the same way as poor attendance**.

What to do if my child is absent

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child’s safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist and this is deemed appropriate
- refer the matter to the local authority attendance advisory officer if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%
- if the child is subject to a child protection plan the procedures set out for day two unexplained absence will be implemented immediately.

Second day absence

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, on the second day of absence, we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and undertaking home visits. Where the school is unable to undertake a home visit we will contact the police to request they undertake a welfare check. This action will be taken on day one if the child has complex needs or is subject to a child protection plan.

Ten days’ absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

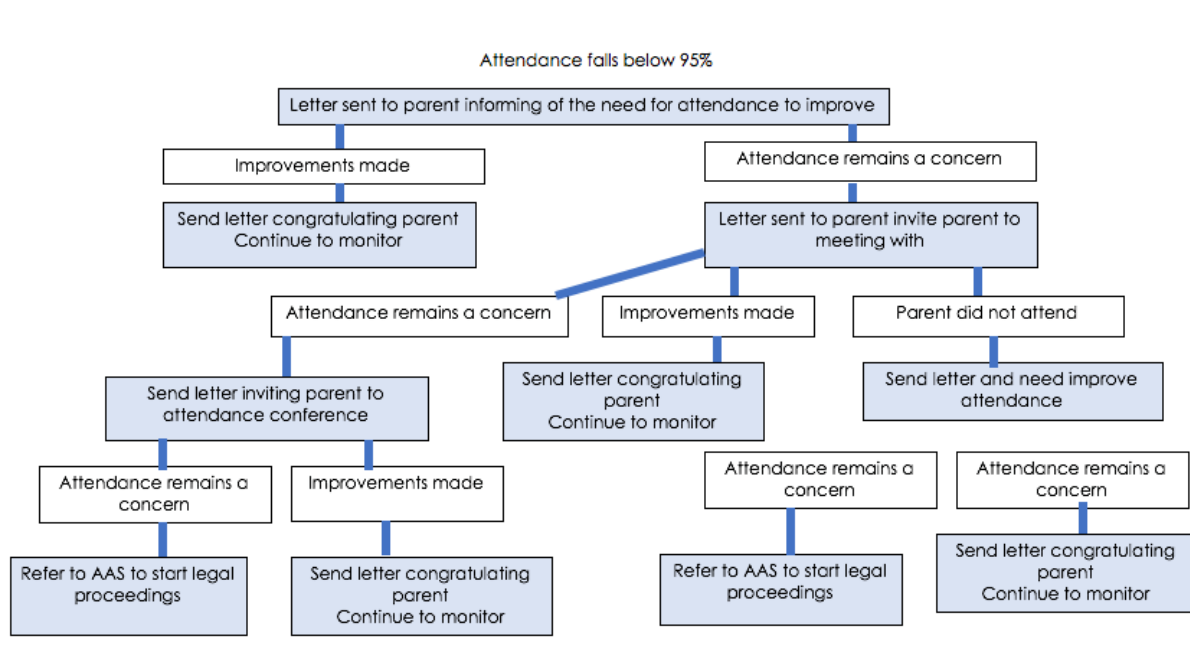
Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a *persistent absentee*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

We are fully aware that some of our children may have acute health conditions which, despite the best efforts of parents and carers, lead to significant ongoing periods of absence. We will work closely with parents to ensure we develop support systems that enable each child to attend school as often as physically possible. Children should never be excluded from school or activities on medical grounds unless they are acutely unwell or hospitalised. If acutely unwell children will access hospital schools supported by their home school as appropriate. We will maintain close links with children and their families during any sustained periods of absence to ensure continuity of relationships and provision. Children in recovery can be supported by a flexible return to schooling which is manageable for them.

Families of children with acute physical and medical conditions that lead to pervasive absence will not follow the same systems and procedures laid out in this policy.

Diagram of action if attendance falls below 95%



Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday, and in the majority of cases holidays will not be authorised.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence, and we expect parents to support their children's education and the school in not taking children out during school time.

If a child has 20 consecutive days of unauthorised absence the school will contact the local authority to inform them that the child is being removed from their role.

Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings, holidays;
 - absences which have not been explained.

A leave of absence will not be approved under any circumstance if it involves travel to places which are not recommended by the Foreign Office.

School can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell, but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for non-attendance or lateness and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

The local authority will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and improvements are not being made. Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken.

Attendance and Punctuality in the Early Years

Establishing good habits from the start will help your child to settle more quickly and build good habits for later life. Coming to school on time, every day helps to develop confidence.

Research has shown that, even at the earliest age, children with poor attendance and punctuality are at a disadvantage later in life. They generally find it harder to make and maintain friendships, they achieve less and they often suffer from poor self-esteem. Even if your child only has a part time Nursery place, regular attendance is vitally important.

Further information

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

- give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known
- if pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided
- if a child fails to return after a period of 20 days unauthorised absence they will be reported to the local authority as a child missing in education and removed from the school role

Home Education

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from school in favour of home education. Parents must inform the school of their decision to home educate in writing. Once the school receives this notification they will then inform the local authority and take the child off of their role. It is important that the decision to home educate is discussed and considered carefully. Talk to the school about any difficulties your child may be having; once your child has been taken off role their place will be allocated and may not be available to your child if you change your mind at a later date.

Children who are permanently excluded or with long term medical conditions that prevent school attendance

If a child receives a fixed-term exclusion this will be recorded as an E. If the exclusion is for a period of 6 days or more, the local authority has a duty to provide education for the child. If the exclusion is permanent it is the local authorities duty to provide education for the child. The school has a duty to inform the local authority of all exclusions.

If a medical condition prevents a child of statutory school age from attending school for 15 days or more (consecutive or cumulative), it is the duty of the local authority to liaise with medical practitioners to ensure appropriate education is available for the child. The school will inform the local authority of the absence.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies

Attendance governor

The attendance governor for this school is: