

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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**Date approved:**

**Review date:**

## Introduction

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. In the event of regular unauthorised absences, a penalty notice may be issued by the Educational Welfare Department. An offence is not, however, committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- The student was absent with agreement of the school;
- The student was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belongs.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents/carers. The fact that a parent has offered a note (or phone call, or personal contact) in explanation does not in itself oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. **If, after investigation, doubt remains then the absence must be treated as unauthorised.**

## Reporting Absences

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible – this should be done via a telephone call to the school office. Parental contact on the first day of absence should be the normal expectation. If the school has not been notified of the absence by 9.30am then a text or phone call requesting an explanation will be made.

## Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, students are marked present or absent. Registers must show whether an absence of a student is **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

Accurate registration and the preservation of security of registers are the responsibility of the Headteacher. Registers may be needed as evidence in court where parents/carers are being prosecuted for school attendance offences and inappropriate authorisation of absences could compromise proceedings.

Registers will usually be maintained and completed in Integris. These should be completed within ten minutes of the beginning of morning or afternoon sessions. Should manuscript registers be necessary they must be kept in ink and any corrections made in a way that the original entry, and the correction, are clearly distinguishable.

In the event of the need for paper registers, please use the following guidance:

- Class lists will be printed and sent to classrooms;
- Children present should be shown with a forward slash for the morning and a back slash for the afternoon in ink;
- Children absent should be shown with a circle;
- Children who arrive late should be shown by writing an L within the circle.

## **Lateness**

It is important for children to arrive at school on time as lateness is detrimental to their learning and the learning of others. Register will be taken on the school bus at 8.50am each day. If your child misses the school bus, then please ensure that you bring them to school by 9.20am at the latest for the start of the school day. Children who arrive at school by 9.20am will not be marked as late.

If your child arrives at school after 9.20am in the morning, then they will be marked as late. Likewise, afternoon registration takes place at 12.45pm so any child arriving after this time will be marked as late. Lateness is monitored closely and persistent lateness is followed up with parents/carers.

## **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments**

If a school is satisfied that a student is absent as a result of illness, the absence must be treated as authorised. If a child is off for 5 or more days due to illness, then medical evidence must be provided. Without evidence the absence will be unauthorised.

A parent/carer should phone the school to inform the school office on the first day of absence for illness. A note should be supplied upon return. If no note is received, one reminder will be sent. If no note is forthcoming within a week following the reminder, the absence is likely to be categorised as unauthorised.

All letters explaining absence should be passed to the office. These will be entered onto the system. In the event of no reason for absence being given or received on the first day of absence, a telephone call will be made to the family. If this should be unsuccessful, it will be followed by a letter.

Advance notice of medical/dental appointments should be given wherever possible, preferably in writing. Students leaving/returning to the premises in session time must report to the school office where such movements are recorded for safety reasons. Where possible medical appointments should be made out of school time.

## **Educational Welfare Service**

Local Authorities are charged in law with enforcing school attendance where students of compulsory school age are concerned. It is important that LAs are informed of attendance problems. Education Welfare Officers (EWO) should be consulted where schools are experiencing difficulty in determining whether absences are justified, and in cases of persistent absence in children of compulsory school age.

## **Penalty Notices**

Penalty Notices for absence from school can be issued by the Local Authority Attendance and Behaviour Service. The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps;
- Parentally-condoned absences;
- Unauthorised holidays in term time;
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays.

Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent/carer is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

## **Family Holidays During Term Time and Exceptional Circumstances**

The Governors recognise that student absence during term time can seriously disrupt a child's continuity of learning. Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw students of compulsory school age from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance.

When application is made for authorised absence during term time, the Headteacher gives consideration to:

- The age of the child;
- The nature of the proposed absence;
- The timing of the proposed absence;
- The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years. Absence will not be authorised where attendance is lower than 96% or where the absence would take attendance below 96%;
- The child's academic progress.

### Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances

- I. To request an absence due to family bereavement.
- II. To attend the wedding of a close relative (taking place abroad).
- III. To attend a special religious/cultural festival.
- IV. If a parent, due to the nature of their work, cannot possibly take time off during the

regular school holidays, then this might constitute an exceptional circumstance. This will need to be evidenced by a letter from the employer. Factors indicated above will still be taken into account.

To have a week's winter or summer holiday in school time, because the cost is cheaper during term time, **does not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

**All requests for leave during term time should be made in writing and addressed to the Headteacher.** The Headteacher will consider the request, and respond in writing, either refusing or granting authorised leave.