

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

“ATTENDANCE MATTERS”



Date of issue :

Date of review :

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The education Welfare Officer (EWO) is someone who regularly comes into schools to look at children's overall attendance. The EWO will address such matters as unauthorised absence, holidays during term time, illness and punctuality as well as other attendance and welfare concerns.

As part of the school's strategy to improve attendance we may enlist the help of an Education Welfare Officer to monitor and address our attendance. Should the Education welfare officer identify a child whose attendance is a concern, they will write to the parents to highlight to them their child's attendance and if necessary, arrange a school meeting or home visit to address the issues which may be preventing their child from attending school regularly; this is with a view to offering support and solutions to bring about change.

The Law

The Education act 1996 states " If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parents are guilty of an offence".

Based on the above act, parents can be issued with a Penalty Notice or prosecuted through the Magistrates Court.

- A Penalty Notice stands at £60 rising to £120 if not paid within 21 days.
- A prosecution can result in a fine of up to £2500 and or 3 months imprisonment.

Registration

Our registration is taken twice a day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon; this counts as two attendances / sessions for the school day.

We allow children on the grounds from 8.15am and not before, unless they are attending Breakfast Club.

- The morning register is taken by 8.30am and children arriving after 8.50 will receive a later mark. A child arriving after 9.05am will receive an unauthorised absence for that session.
- The afternoon register is taken by 1.00pm and any child arriving after this will be marked as late or if after 1.30pm, unauthorised unless pre-agreed.

Absence

When a child is absent from school, the absence is recorded by the school as either authorised or unauthorised ; parents cannot authorise their child's absence.

First day calling.

We expect parents to contact the office on the first morning of their child's absence and leave a message detailing the reason for the absence.

If we have not been contacted then the school will initiate contact through a text message to parents in order to ascertain the reason for the absence. It is therefore vital that parents continually update the school on any changes to their contact details.

If we are unable to reach parents or other named adults by the end of the first day of absence, we will record the absence on CPOMS and the matter will be assessed by the headteacher or deputy headteacher the following day.

If contact is unsuccessful on the morning of the second day of absence, we may take steps to conduct a home visit or enlist the help of an Education Welfare Officer.

If contact remain unsuccessful either we or the Education Welfare Officer will seek the help of the Police or Social Services for a "Safe and Well" check on the grounds of Safeguarding.

We expect parents to contact the school on the first morning of their child's illness, giving an explanation and an expected return date.

We would not expect a child to be kept off school for a minor ailment or a slight cold.

We may request parent's to provide evidence such as stamped appointment cards, prescription to support their child's absence, this is in order for us to code the absence correctly.

Repeated absence from school may result in parents being asked to attend a meeting in school to discuss the situation. Thereafter should absence persist then we would involve the Education Welfare Officer.

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised. We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments

should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. The Headteacher will make decisions as to whether an absence is authorised or not. Notification of absence is essential and enables the Headteacher to make considered decisions when authorising absences. It is the Headteacher's prerogative to request that the parent(s) certificate short-term illnesses and to request a doctor's notification in the case of long-term illness.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Unauthorised absences are those where:

No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)

- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as unauthorised:

- Holiday
- Minding the house
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. We ask parent(s) to notify the school well in advance (preferably 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made. The Governments guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.

WE ADVISE PARENTS NOT TO BOOK HOLIDAYS BEFORE MAKING A REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Parents who disregard the school's decision to decline their request for leave of absence place themselves at risk of being issued with a Penalty notice.

Each parent will be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21-day period. Failure to pay within this timescale will result in the fines being doubled to £120 which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued.

If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full 28 day period, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

St Peter's Attendance monitoring system.

- **Letter 1** – This letter is a clear reminder that, regardless of reason, your child's attendance is now below 95% and causing concern. It is written formally and is part of the evidence trail to ensure that school has followed a process. We know that most children will not need Letter 2 as absence is due to illness.
- **Letter 2** As above but the absence is not improving and is now causing concern. Parents will be provided with attendance information.
- **Letter 3** – This letter shows that your child's attendance has now fallen below 90% and absence is becoming/is persistent – there may be numerous reasons for this. It invites you to meet with me (Mrs Holt). This is an informal meeting so that we can go through your child's attendance record together. My experience of these meetings is that parents tell me about their child's illness or other reasons for their absence. Once I have had this face to face discussion, we talk about monitoring attendance in the immediate future and set attendance targets. This is individual for each case. Meeting together allows us to talk through the reasons for absence and for the school to offer support if required. It is easier to do this than continue to write letters.
- **Letter 3** – This letter is sent after a scheduled meeting, laying out the attendance targets of 90%+ required over a set monitoring period. If attendance continues to fall over this monitoring period, is mainly unauthorised and goes below 90%, school will refer to the Local Authority Education Welfare Team which may lead to a penalty notice and/or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. In these final instances, actions are out of the school's influence.