

Five Ways Primary School



Attendance Policy

November 2023

Principles

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

This Policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the well being of children including safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, and support for children with medical needs. *This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Staffordshire Local Authority 'Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices Sept 2017 – Commencing on 1.1.2018' guidance.*

All children should be in school, on time, every day that school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

School Responsibilities

We will promote positive behaviour and attendance through our use of curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance appropriately.

We will work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance and will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team such as the Education Welfare Service where required in order to ensure all children can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance. We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this.

We will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern.

Parents or Carers Responsibilities

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly.
- Inform school straight away if your child cannot attend and give the reason.
- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day
- Ensure the school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance
- Encourage good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including getting enough sleep
- Talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with homework or friendship problems.
- Do not book holidays in term time – this will only be authorised in extremely exceptional circumstances
- Seek advice from your G.P. if you are not sure how long to keep your child off school with an illness

- Ensure school has all your up to date contact details.
- Encourage your child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them. *(All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.)*

The importance of good attendance and its link to attainment :

- The Department of Education has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on chances of succeeding in tests and exams. [February 22nd 2015 Department of Education](#)). The research is based on data from all schools in England going back several years.
- The results are very clear – missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason: illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- **Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker (EWW) from the Local Authority (LA). He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents if deemed necessary. Please refer to website for guidance on penalty fines: please see Code-of-Conduct September 17 and Letter to Parents Absence Policy September 2017.

Parents and children will be supported by school and the Local Support Teams for targeted services to overcome barriers to regular attendance, through a range of intervention strategies. Therefore, Penalty Notices and other sanctions will only be used where parental co-operation with this process is either absent or deemed to be insufficient to resolve the problem. They will be used as a means to support and challenge parents to meet their legal responsibilities and where it is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improved school attendance.

Parents will be made aware of the 'Changes to Penalty Notices for Absence from School– Information for Parents' letter which outlines clearly all matters relating to the attendance of pupils during their school years.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Procedures at Five Ways Primary School

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The school applies the following procedures concerning attendance:

Punctuality

- Parents must ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly, stay at school, arrive on time, properly dressed, clean, not tired and generally in a condition to learn.
- Parents must ensure that their children arrive at school between 8.50 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. for the morning session. Pupils must enter the school building (doors are opened at 8.45 a.m.) and go directly to their classroom where they will be supervised by a member of staff. Pupils arriving after this time must come to the office to be signed in.
- Pupils who arrive into school after 9.00am will be marked as 'late' (L). Once registers are closed (approximately 15 minutes after the official start of the session) pupils will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence (U) for that session, unless there are special circumstances. "Overslept" is not a special circumstance. Registers will be kept open longer during times of inclement weather.
- Those who go home for the lunch break are expected to return between 12.50pm – 1.00pm (KS1) and 1.15pm – 1.25pm (KS2) and come to the office to be signed in. This lunchtime requirement is in the case of evacuation during the lunchtime period. (Fire Procedure)

With pupils who arrive regularly late at school, the school will take the following action:

Level 1

- The class teacher will attempt to see the parent and discuss the matter.

With pupils who arrive late at school 7 times or more in a half term, the school will take the following action:

Level 2

- If, after discussion with the parent, the child continues to arrive late, the school will send out a standard letter to the parent signed by the School Liaison and Support Officer.

Level 3

- If the child continues to be late after following the procedures in Level 1 and Level 2, the school will report the matter to the Education Welfare Service.

Level 4

- At this stage the EWS will decide what further action will best resolve the difficulties. This may be referred to other agencies for specialist input or support, or it may be the decision to proceed with court action.

Penalty Notice for Persistent Lateness

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. **This has now changed to 10 marks**, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

Absence

Parents must inform the school of the reason for a child's absence preferably by 9 a.m. either by telephone, note or email. Telephone messages will be taken at the School Office and the name and class and reason for absence will be noted on the SIMS register and the absence form will be kept in the office. If the child is still absent on the third day, parents are requested to contact the school office with an update.

If, on day one, a child is absent for registration, the teacher will put a note on the SIMS register if they know the reason for absence or if the reason is not known, will place a 'N' by the child's name to inform Admin Staff. The Admin staff will check with a welfare assistant on duty that the child has not arrived and gone straight to class - where they are timetabled to be. If they have not arrived Admin Staff will attempt to contact the parent(s) to ascertain the reason for the absence of their child. The reason will then be recorded on the SIMS register for the registration teacher to see.

Where there is a significant concern, should the School Admin Officer be unable to contact the parents, a home visit by appointed staff may take place to ensure the safety

of the child. Additionally, the Local Authority Education Welfare Service will be contacted and asked to talk with the parents as soon as possible. This is to be authorised by the Headteacher.

Continuous pupil absences of more than two weeks must be reported to the Headteacher who will in turn contact the Education Welfare Service if this is deemed necessary (exception to this is when the absence is covered by a medical certificate).

Absences for medical reasons which are informed by parents are usually “authorised” absences. These may be authorised in retrospect. Should the school consider that the parent’s explanation for a pupil’s absence is not reasonable, the school will mark the above as “unauthorised”. Parents must not keep their children at home to “mind the home” or to look after brother or sister. Parents must not take their children shopping during school hours.

Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given when confirmation has been received from the parent. The pupil must then report to the office upon leaving and a note made by the School Admin Officer of the time and date on the “Notified Absence” sheet. Similarly, when a pupil returns after the appointment, the pupil must report to the office so that a note may be made.

Register checks will be carried out every half term by the Business Manager and the School Liaison and Support Officer.

Where a pupil’s attendance falls below 95%, the school will take the following action:

Level 1

- A standard letter signed by the School Liaison and Support Officer will be given to the parent reminding them of the importance of good attendance.

Level 2

- If the child’s attendance has not improved after half a term and still falls below 95%, then the school will send out a further letter to the parent signed by the School Liaison and Support Officer. At this stage, the parents may be requested to attend a meeting at school with the School Liaison and Support Officer a member of the Senior Leadership Team (usually the Business Manager) to discuss the attendance concern.

Level 3

- If the child’s attendance has not improved after 4 weeks of the previous letter being sent at level 2 and still falls below 95%, then the Headteacher may refer the concern to the Education Welfare Service.

Level 4

- At this stage the Educational Welfare Service will decide what further action will best resolve the difficulties.

Where a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, the school will follow the same action as above but the letter from the headteacher will state that no more absences will be authorised without any medical evidence such as a doctor's appointment card, prescription etc. In all these cases, parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the concerns.

Requesting a Leave of Absence in term time.

- In line with government guidance leave of absence will not be authorised from school without exceptional circumstances. This means that holidays during term time will not ordinarily be authorised. Any parent/carer who feels their child requires time off school for a reason other than illness must make this request in writing to the Headteacher. Any leave of absence will be at the Headteacher's discretion but will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- Any absence that has not been authorised will be classed as unauthorised. Any unauthorised absence may result in a penalty notice being issued to parents by the local authority
- Please refer to website for guidance on penalty fines: please see Code-of-Conduct September 17 and Letter to Parents Absence Policy September 2017.

In brief this means that:

- Parents **CANNOT** demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- Parental requests **MUST** be in writing at least two weeks prior to the intended period of absence. (See Appendix 2)
- Schools **CANNOT** apply blanket policies to approve/reject all applications.
- All requests **MUST** be considered on their own merits.
- Extended periods of absence will be granted **ONLY** in exceptional circumstances.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence belongs to the Headteacher.

Procedure for Leave of Absence Requests

Stage 1

- Parents should complete a leave of absence request form (See Appendix 1) and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the intended period of absence.

Stage 2

- A letter confirming that the request has been authorised/denied will be sent to the parents within one week of receipt of the leave of absence request. If school is aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed appropriate support will be offered to the parents.

- Parents will be made aware during the school prospectus and induction meetings that leave of absences which have not been agreed in advance will lead to the pupil being marked with unauthorised absences and that this may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other action. Please refer to website for guidance on penalty fines: please see Code-of-Conduct September 17 and Letter to Parents Absence Policy September 2017.

Parents and children will be supported by school and the Local Support Teams for targeted services to overcome barriers to regular attendance, through a range of intervention strategies. Therefore, Penalty Notices and other sanctions will only be used where parental co-operation with this process is either absent or deemed to be insufficient to resolve the problem. They will be used as a means to support and challenge parents to meet their legal responsibilities and where it is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improved school attendance.

Admissions Register

School keeps an admission register which records the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school.

All schools (including academies) must keep a record of attendance register entries for at least 3 years and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they ;

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school
- system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority via Entrust at enquiries@entrust-ed.co.uk of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

Attendance data and targets

The school's current attendance target is **97%** for the academic year 2023/24.

Definition of persistent absence

Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils missing around 10% or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period. If a child is deemed to be persistently absent without good reason, the Educational Welfare Worker will be contacted.

Acknowledgement of High Attendance

Ofsted Inspectors use the table below as a general guideline supported by RAISEonline and the school's own data. (Ofsted: Inspecting attendance: guidance, January 2011)

| Attendance | Attendance grade indicator |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Above 96% | High |
| 95.1% - 96% | Above average |
| 94% - 95% | Average |
| Below 94% | Low |

We believe that high attendance should be celebrated. Parents and pupils will be informed of the attendance levels for each Year Group on a monthly basis. This will form part of the Headteachers weekly newsletter to parents and pupils will be informed in Key Stage Assemblies. Parents and pupils will also be informed of the class that has achieved the highest attendance for each month.

Pupils with 100% attendance will be presented with an attendance certificate each term and their names will be published in the 'Inform' magazine.

The people responsible for attendance matters in school are:

- The Headteacher
- The Deputy Headteacher/SENCO
- The Senior Leadership Team inclusive of the Business Manager
- The School Liaison and Support Officer
- Year Leaders
- All Teaching Staff
- The School Admin Office
- The EWW / Education Welfare Service
- The Governors

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Request for Leave During Term Time Form

Policy Adopted: September 2021

Policy Amended: November 2023

Date of Review: November 2024

Signed: *Mrs R E Mander*
(Headteacher)

Signed: *Mr R Burden*
(Chair of Governors)



Request for leave during term time

I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:

My child (full name)Class

For the period from (date) to (date)

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

.....
.....
.....

Signature of parent/carer(s) Print name.....

Date

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not. Please read the information on the back of this form before handing it in.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance.....% Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time(this academic year)

Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is agreed/not agreed for the above pupil to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Rationale to decline request

Signed Headteacher . Date

Notification of decision:

Date letter sent to parent/carer.....