



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Principles

It is a legal requirement for children to attend school. From 1 September 2013 legislation prohibits any school from authorising leave of absence for holidays except in exceptional circumstances. Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013.

It is therefore illegal to take children out of school for holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to any leave of absence for a holiday during term time. Schools are in session for 38 weeks per year, so there are opportunities to take children on holiday during the remaining 14 weeks.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. It also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The School day

We expect your child to be in school every day of the school term, unless they are too ill to attend or have a medical appointment. The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. We recommend that all children are on site by **8.55** so that they do not feel rushed and can settle before coming into class.

Registers are marked by **9.15 am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and therefore the education of others. This can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Refer the matter to the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

Holidays in term time:

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

CRITERIA FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

It is not possible to define exceptional circumstances, but 'exceptional' may be interpreted in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another and it will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request, examples of what might be considered as such are:

1. Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the organisation.
2. Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
3. Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided, from qualified professionals, such as a doctor.

The cost, convenience or availability of a holiday can not be taken into consideration.

PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR A PLANNED ABSENCE

You will initially need to discuss the planned absence with the head teacher.

Applications for leave of absence for holiday should always be made at least 6 weeks in advance in writing explaining your situation and the reasons why you wish to take your child/children out during term time, outlining the exceptional circumstances to explain why the absence must be taken during term time should be clearly state. An Application Form can be obtained from the school reception. They should be returned to reception.

The governing body sub-committee will decide whether the leave of absence can be authorised and will contact the parent via the head teacher to inform them of the outcome.

Even where there are exceptional circumstances, no holidays requests will be granted:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS).
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

CONSEQUENCES OF TAKING AN UNAUTHORISED HOLIDAY

Parents who choose to take an unauthorised holiday must accept that this will have an adverse effect on their child's educational achievement. If a request is declined and a parent still goes ahead with their holiday/day off the child/children will be given an unauthorised absence and it will have to be reported to the Education Welfare Department. The school may therefore ask the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty fine where an unauthorised holiday has been taken. Details of fixed penalty fines are included as Appendix 2. The fixed penalty fine is collected and kept by the Local Authority, not the school.

Understanding types of absence:

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 any absence is always required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence may lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can

be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your 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 usually make things worse.

Persistent absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral. Any PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan and are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:-

- Report to parents annually on your child's attendance and punctuality rate;
- Celebrate good attendance by awarding certificates in achievement assemblies;
- Report to governors termly on attendance rates.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Class teachers on a day to day basis

Mrs Mary Stevens Head teacher

Summary

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 that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix 2

Herefordshire Education Welfare Service Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

From September 2012 the education welfare service will be making important changes to the code of conduct regarding unauthorised holidays taken during term time.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential in ensuring that all children maximise their educational opportunities and future life choices.

Failing to secure a pupil's regular attendance is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Where a family requests a term-time holiday, the decision will be made by the Head Teacher whether or not to authorise the request.

In event of an unauthorised holiday being taken during term time, it is expected that school will make every effort to warn the parents that they may receive a PENALTY NOTICE if the holiday is taken.

The education welfare service advises schools that information regarding holiday requests should be made clear in the school's attendance policy.

If an unauthorised holiday is taken during term time, the school can make a referral to the education welfare service and a Penalty Notice may be issued as a result:

- each parent may be issued with a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent from school as a result of unauthorised holiday;
- a maximum of two Penalty Notices may be issued per parent, per child in a 12 month period, as deemed appropriate by the education welfare service;
- the legal definition of a parent is contained in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and refers to any adult who is a natural parent, someone with parental responsibility or someone who cares for a child;
- the penalty notice is a fine of £60 payable within 21 days of its date of issue. If this payment is not received in full the amount payable will double to £120 payable in full within a further 14 days;
- if the Penalty Notice is paid, no further action will be taken for that offence period. However, if no payment is made or if there are further unauthorised absences, the education welfare service may take further legal action, which may result in court proceedings.