

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by Curriculum and Standard Committee: **January 2022**

Review Date: **January 2023**

At Kennet Valley C of E VA Primary School, we understand that 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 adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavor to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake; strategies to improve attendance and rewards and benefits of good attendance. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

Aims

- To raise attendance
- To improve punctuality
- To raise levels of attainment and achievement
- To encourage a love of learning both in children and their parents/carers

Expectations and Responsibilities

We believe that the foundation for good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents, and the child. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for managing concerns or issues which may lead to non-attendance.

- To maximise attendance rates of all pupils as one of their key responsibilities
- To support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance.
- To identify and address promptly any issue which may lead to non-attendance or irregular attendance.
- To make sure parents understand the school's graduated response to non-attendance by clearly communicating the school's policy and the school's intention to work with parents to resolve issues before they become problematic. At the outset of intervention by the school, the parent should be given a formal written notification explaining the actions that may be taken including the consequences of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance. In particular that the case could result in a penalty notice and/or court proceedings.
- To be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent. This should be reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed. For example, schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding

written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school and work sensitively and proactively with parents to ensure a consistent approach to attendance management,

- To produce a whole school attendance policy that is clear about improving attendance for all pupils which is consistently applied.
- To ensure that parents/carers are made aware that any authorisation for a leave of absence in term time will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, in line with the law, and where a leave of absence in term time is not agreed, or no application has been made, or the pupil does not return on the agreed date, that absence will be unauthorised, and the parent/carer may incur a penalty notice.

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school.

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and in a “condition to learn”
- To encourage their child to appreciate the importance of attending school regularly
- To take an active interest in their child’s school work, reinforcing the school’s policy on homework, behaviour, attitude to work, etc. and attending parents’ evenings wherever possible
- To work in partnership with the school and the Local Authority to resolve any non-attendance issues
- **To notify the school if their child is absent by 9.15am on the first day of absence, providing an explanation**
- To avoid, wherever possible, making medical/dental appointments during school hours
- To be aware of the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence and particularly to note school and Local Authority policy in relation to holidays taken during school time
- To use the absence request form provided by the school to request authorisation in advance of any absence

New Pupils Joining a School - Expected First Day of Attendance

Pupils join the school roll from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend and must be listed in both the admission and attendance registers from that day. If a pupil has accepted a place at the school and fails to attend on the agreed date, school must follow up the absence to ensure that the pupil does not lose their place and that any safeguarding and missing from education concerns are addressed.

Wiltshire Local Authority has a responsibility:

- To promote excellent attendance in all Wiltshire schools
- To provide a Service Level Agreement, by the Education Welfare Service, with several consultation visits
- To work in close partnership with the school, the Education Welfare Officer visiting termly and more often if needed, for Pastoral Support meetings

Marking the Attendance Register

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer’s legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child’s regular attendance at school may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for prosecution in the magistrates’ court.

To avoid this happening, we will collaborate with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

- Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the headteacher.
- Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those **absences** which the headteacher has not agreed.

Each register must, by law, be marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session

Registers should be marked in ink

Registers must distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences, as termly and annual data are collected by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

Lateness or Absences

Each teacher must be responsible for following up lateness and absences in the following way:

Consistent Lateness -

- Talking to parent/carer and to the pupil – this will be to offer help and support, not to criticise

Absence from school -

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school office every day that a child is absent from school. If they do not contact the school by 9.15am then the admin officer will call the parents/carers by 9.45am

Our school attendance target is 98%.

This means that we are expecting each pupil to have 100% attendance. Pupils who miss just 3 days of school in a school year will contribute to the school not achieving the attendance target set by the governing board

Legally the school register must be taken twice a day. The register is taken at 8.55am (morning registration time) and once during the afternoon session at 12.55pm. The registers will remain open for 5 minutes. Pupils arriving before registers close will be marked as late (L). Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised absent. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be considered if any legal action is taken.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:

- A pupil's attendance falls below 95%,
- A pupil has more than 4 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
- A pupil has more than 5 recorded lates in a term
- A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

Parents are asked to:

Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should contact school before the start of the school day.

Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school

Please arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment and tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival.

Only request leave of absence/holiday in term time if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable, and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell unless not doing so will breach guidance and legislation relating to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Head Teacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (**after** the close of registration)
- Truancy
- Death of a pet

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent, and the parent/carer has not advised that the child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The attendance manager will initially phone parents within 30 minutes of registers closing. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers, then we will contact nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

Collecting your child from school

We ask that all parents/carers ensure that they are able to collect their children from school on time. School finishes at 3.10pm. If parents are unable to collect their child as usual, then they will need to communicate the alternative arrangements they have made with the school. We will not release children in these circumstances to anyone who we have not been advised of.

Monitoring attendance

Fortnightly monitoring of the registers will be made by the Headteacher, to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning. The Attendance Manager will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or

an attendance meeting with the Attendance **Manager. However**, if the pattern continues the school may make a referral to the Local Authority for interventions that may include penalty notices and court action.

Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

In accordance with Department for Education guidance, leave of absence from school including for holidays in term-time, may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.

Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require 2 weeks' notice unless the absence is related to an emergency. We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised. Requests will be considered by the headteacher, and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed. Any pupil who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school. Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Where an unauthorised leave of absence is taken, parents may be issued with a penalty notice. This will be in the sum of £120 per parent/carer for each child but is reduced to £60 per parent/carer for each child if paid within 21 days of issue.

Consequences of persistent absence

At Kennet Valley C of E VA Primary School, we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns. If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer you to the local authority.

The Education Welfare Service has a range of actions available which include:

- 1) The parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice, which carries a fine of £120, per parent, per child. This is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- 2) The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.
- 3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child. If not approved or no satisfactory explanation has been given. They include such things as holidays, shopping, persistent illness without a doctor's note, birthday treats, unable to find school uniform, lateness after registration has closed with no valid reason.

Absence Request Form

Taking your child out of school during term time may harm your child's academic progress.

Schools may agree up to 10 days holiday absence in exceptional circumstances with consideration being given to pupil's attendance, attainment, and public examinations. Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority after a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore, please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence.