

Pickering Community Infant and Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed by the Full Governing Body December 2016

Signature of Chair Next review July 2019

Regular attendance and punctuality is an essential prerequisite of effective learning. It ensures continuity of learning and gives children the best chance of academic success. School encourages good attendance through making the school day and learning enjoyable. We aim to encourage a positive attitude to school to nurture learning in all children. Children need to feel that their contribution in school is valued and all staff care about them as individuals. Parents have the responsibility to ensure that children attend punctually, regularly and stay at school. The staff and governors aim to ensure that procedures for monitoring absences are thorough and rigorous.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

As a school we

- ensure all registers are completed promptly and accurately in line with government and LA guidelines
- apply our policy to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits from an early age
- support parents in promoting regular and punctual attendance of their children
- work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- aim to respond promptly to any issues which may lead to non-attendance and deal with them following school guidelines
- keep records of absences, including reasons for absence in order to record authorised/ unauthorised absences
- monitor attendance records regularly and communicate concerns with the Education Social Worker (ESW) or the prevention team
- communicate the monitoring of lateness and absence to the full governing body through the annual attendance report
- provide absence figures to parents in pupils' annual reports
- provide a positive school environment, making the children's' time at school interesting and worthwhile
- consider requests for absence individually, taking account of the needs of our school community, following government and LA guidelines
- provide a staggered re-integration programme for children who have had long term absences

Definitions

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence will generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments. Parents are encouraged, where possible, to arrange these after school or in school holidays. However, where this is not possible, the school will require notification prior to the absence, including a copy of the appointment card or letter. When a child is absent for a medical appointment it is expected that they will return to school immediately following the appointment.
- days of religious observance
- exclusion
- family bereavement
- involvement in a public performance
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence will **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, birthday)
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)

Attendance Procedures

Parents are legally obliged that unless there is illness or some other acceptable reason for absence, children should attend school for each session during the prescribed school days of the academic year. Parents must ensure that children are supervised on the school site at all times before staff collect children at the start of the school day from the playground in Key Stage One or by opening the door to invite children and parents into school in Nursery and Reception. The doors open for Reception, Year One and Year Two at 8.50am and are closed at 9am, shortly after which registers are taken. The doors for Nursery open at 8.45am for morning sessions and 12.30pm for afternoon sessions with the register taken shortly after each.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 9am the only way to get into school is via the school office. If a child arrives late and the register is still open they will be marked as late, but counted as present for that session. If a child arrives after the register has closed, provided a satisfactory explanation is provided in the 'late book', the child will be marked as an authorised absence.

Lateness will be monitored by the Head Teacher and appropriate action taken to support families in getting to school on time. *Please note that this is based on the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 and could be used as evidence against parents if legal action were to be considered by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.*

First Day

As a vigilant and caring school we apply first-day response to absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a text message initially and then a follow up telephone call where necessary.

Illness/sickness absence

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the first day, in person, by telephone or email. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure.

To minimise the unnecessary spread of infection from sickness and diarrhoea bugs, the 48 hour rule of absence applies, ie, a child must not return to school until 48 hours after their last case of sickness or diarrhoea.

Absences for part of the day

From time to time, pupils show symptoms of illness at school. School will contact parents or other family members if a child needs to go home. School asks that parents ensure that we have up to date contact names and telephone numbers for this purpose.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Department for Education requires Local Authorities to implement government regulations regarding the taking of Leave of Absence in term-time, which came into force on the 1st September 2013. The new law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Head teachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional. Therefore Head teachers will only be able to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and this will still be at the discretion of the Headteacher. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right.

The Education Regulations state that applications must be made in advance by a parent/carer with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each leave application is considered individually by the school taking into account any factors presented by the family. Application forms are available from your child's school. Head teachers will also welcome early discussion with you around potential applications.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

This is not an exhaustive list and the Head teacher must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Leave is only acceptable against exceptional circumstances and should not be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school.

Where the head teacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is, however, final.

Please note that the ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Where a child is taken out of school for the purpose of leave of absence in term time without the permission of the school, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and as such may result in a Penalty Notice. Penalties are applied by the Local Authority and as such are not at the discretion of the head teacher. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, the matter may be taken to prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Amendments to 2007 Penalty Notice regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1st September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices in line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecution if the fine is not paid.

It must be noted that taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt your child's educational progress.

Persistent absence

As a school, we expect attendance of at least 95%. Absence below this will be investigated through phone calls or by a letter to parents. The Education Social Worker may be contacted if absence continues or support may be offered through the Prevention Team, with parental consent.

Recording and use of Absence Data

Data is collected and subsequently collated. Attendance figures are published for individual pupils in their school report and/or at the end of each term. Where pupils' attendance causes concern the parameters and procedures as shown in the Pupils Punctuality and Attendance Policy Statement will be followed (Appendix A) and shared with Educational Social Workers. Attendance information is passed on when pupils transfer to other schools.

In the event of School Closure

Due to unforeseen, extreme circumstances and, during winter months it occasionally becomes necessary to close the school, due to adverse weather conditions. If this closure takes place at the start of the day it will be broadcast on BBC Radio York, Minster FM and Yorkshire Coast Radio. If the weather or other conditions mean that a decision is taken to close school during the school day parents and guardians an announcement will equally be made via radio and a text will be sent asking parents to collect their children as soon as possible. Parents will be telephoned if text messages are not delivered. The school staff will remain on the premises until all children have been collected.