

# Attendance Policy

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# Attendance Policy

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Please read in conjunction with the school's Attendance Procedures.

## 1. Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational potential, a good school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students, and endeavour to provide an environment where they all feel valued and welcome. Parents/carers and students play a part in making our school so successful. Parents/carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital they are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer. High levels of attainment and progress, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

## 2. Aims

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. The Student Planner highlights our expectations of what students and their parents/carers will need to do to ensure good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their progress
- celebrate good attendance in each year group
- reward good or improving attendance
- set attendance targets for the school

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded and analysed accurately.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of students:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

## 4. Recording attendance

Legally, the register must be marked twice daily. This is done once at the start of the school day, 9:00 am, and again for the afternoon session at 1:15 pm.

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher and cause disruption to the lesson for others.

The school day begins with registration at 9:00 am, and all students are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration closes at 9:15 am.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence in line with Department of Education guidance. Students will be recorded as being on site, but legally this will be recorded as an absence for that session (am or pm). Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and may be subject to legal action.

If a student is late due to a medical appointment, their absence will be authorised. Evidence of such an appointment may be asked for. Where possible, medical appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Parents/Carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time-keeping and how this might be achieved. If a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school may issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice in accordance with the guidance set out in this policy.

## 5. What to do if a child is absent

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- Send a note in on the first day the child returns with an explanation of the absence – this must be done even if the parent/carer has already telephoned.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them – this is because we have a duty to ensure a child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- Invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with our attendance officer and/or pastoral leaders if absences persist.

- Refer the matter to the Calderdale Council's Education Welfare Service if absence is unauthorised and falls below 93% (year 7 students).
- Refer the matter to the Calderdale Council's Education Welfare Service if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90% (years 8 to 11).

### Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of being missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to help locate the child.

### Continued or ongoing absence

If a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps significantly affect attainment and progress when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly. If a child has been absent and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact parents/carers to discuss any reasons for this and to offer support in addressing this issue.

## **6. Request for leave of absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013. The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining exceptional circumstances are that they are rare, significant, or unavoidable occasions, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no fixed rules on this, as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday, and in the majority of cases holiday absences in term time will not be authorised.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to make an application in writing in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action as appropriate.

We expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children out of school during school time.

## 7. Types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- Unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent or carer's request.

Reasons for absences being unauthorised would include:

- Parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, retrospectively change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is brought to the attention of the school.

## 8. Education Welfare Service involvement

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

- The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
- The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents/carers are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for students of compulsory school age who are registered at school:

### Final Warning

This is a meeting that should be attended by parents/carers, the child and the school, and will be chaired by the Education Welfare Service. The aim of the meeting is to devise a plan to secure an improved attendance after considering the issues that are impacting on the child's attendance.

### Penalty Notices

These are issued when it is believed that parents/carers are failing to ensure a regular attendance in school. Penalty notices are £120 per parent/carer in

respect of each child. This is reduced to £60 if payment is made within 21 days. In instances where penalty notices are unpaid, a prosecution for the original offence may be undertaken.

#### Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court

Cases are only referred to the Magistrates' Court following final warning or the non-payment of a penalty notice. Prosecutions can result in a fine, not exceeding £2500, or 3 months imprisonment.

If parents/carers pay the Penalty Notice and the child has further unauthorised absences, additional legal action may be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served due to unauthorised holiday, should the child have any future unauthorised absence, this may result in further legal action, such as prosecution.

## **9. Records of attendance**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years.

## **10. Study Leave**

We believe that students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 students during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any students wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so.

The school will work within the legal requirements:

- Study leave should only be granted to Year 11 students and never to those in other year groups.
- It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period.
- It should always be granted sparingly, taking account of an individual student's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study.
- Any student has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent/carer has the right to insist they do so.
- Any session given to students as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (it is not an approved educational activity as it is unsupervised) and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.