

Attendance and Absence Policy

Palterton Primary School believes that good attendance is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life.
We aim to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parents, local community and the Education Social Work Service can work in partnership. The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

Staff will encourage good attendance and liaise with home and other agencies when this is appropriate. Good attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such by the school. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

We aim to:-

- Promote good attendance as the norm expectation
- Demonstrate that good attendance is valued by the school
- Motivate the children to attend school through endeavour to provide high quality experiences in and out of the classroom for all our pupils
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties
- To raise pupil awareness of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance
- To maintain good communication with parents in relation to their child's attendance
- To maintain effective working relationships with the Education Social Work Service
- Recognise and support the key role of all staff in promoting and maintaining good attendance

Attendance Legislation

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from the term after they turn five. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday in June in school year that they reach sixteen.

The issue of a penalty notice under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act may be considered in cases where a pupil is absent from one of the academies and the absence is unauthorised.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the 1st term after their 5th birthday, so:

- children who turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March will be of compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term after 31st March;
- children who turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August will be of compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term after 31st August;
- children who turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December will be of compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term after 31st December.

Rewards and Incentives

- Individual children are sent a letter in the post to celebrate their 100% attendance each term – 3 times a year.

- Every Half Term a cup is presented via assembly to the class with the highest attendance in school that week. This also gives an opportunity to reinforce and promote punctual arrival at school. This class are awarded the 'Cool cats' for attendance and have a class cat mascot along with the trophy in their room.

- Individual 100% attendance for the whole year is rewarded with a voucher such as a £5 book voucher. This is sent to homes in recognition of the achievement but not celebrated in school to avoid stigma or children with genuine reasons to have been absent feeling they have been sanctioned.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Senior Leaders and Governing body

- Monitor attendance patterns of the whole school.
- To liaise with P4YP Early Help where appropriate.
- To use data to identify poor attendees, groups of poor attendees (available on RMIntegris) especially those meeting the criteria for being classed as persistent absentees – analysis of this will help to identify any trends or issues and may trigger monitoring/attendance letters.
- To set whole school targets for attendance.
- To ensure that all staff (including supply) are aware and implement the policy.

The Headteacher will –

- Meet with poor attendees, parents and if appropriate, set individual attendance targets.
- Send letters each term to parents of those children who are falling on or below 91% to inform them of the detrimental effect to their child's education. If attendance does not improve, it will be followed up by a further letter. If attendance does not improve after the letters, then a meeting is requested by the Headteacher to meet with the parents.

- Ask families to bring medical evidence of any absences eg. Doctor's appointment card.
- Meet with named Community and Families Governor each term to review the data and impact of the policy.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Class Teacher

- Accurately and punctually complete attendance registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon.
- To promote an ethos within the classroom that is supportive and encouraging of regular attendance.
- To liaise with the Headteacher over concerns of absence or of more than two broken weeks out of any five.
- To liaise with 1st day response person (office) for immediate home contact and follow up

Roles and Responsibilities of parent/carer

- Making sure children are punctual to school and attend well
- Ensuring holidays are taken out of term time
- Contacting the school by 9.00 should their child be absent due to illness

Reporting Pupil Absence

All children are likely to be absent or late for school at some time. However, persistent poor attendance and/or punctuality is disruptive to the individual, their peers and their learning and may be an early warning of other difficulties. All planned appointments for children to attend the dentist or doctor should be made outside of the school day.

When a pupil is absent from school parents must notify school no later than 9:00am on each day of absence either via telephone, or by leaving a message.

The reported absence message may be an answering phone service and as such a message can be left at any time. If a message is left it should include in order:

- Pupil's name
- Reason for absence
- Anticipated return date

Parents must call each day during the child's absence period.

This should be followed up in all cases with a note to the Attendance Administrator or Teacher stipulating the reason for absence

Roles and Responsibilities of the Office Manager

- Check, chase up absence notes to clarify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- If no reason for absence received by registers closing at 9:25am contact parents to ask why the child is absent.
- Print a daily evacuation report and update registers on the RM Integris system.
- Distribute any letters generated by monitoring attendance within the school. Eg the on/below 91% letters which are sent out termly
- Send notification and documentation to the local authority when absences are not authorised.
- Update any additions brought to his/her attention by the class teacher/form tutor etc.
- Produce attendance reports termly, annually for reports home to parents and ad hoc when required.
- Produce figures for attendance statistics required by the DfE/LEA .

Requirements

- It is a legal requirement for class registers to be kept for a minimum of 3 years.

Lateness

Late attendance is recorded daily and is monitored informally on a weekly basis. Staff or Governors answer the door to late arrivals in order to establish the reason for lateness and to see if there is a role for school in finding a solution. Persistent lateness is recorded half termly. Parents are contacted in relation to any persistent lateness to request more punctual attendance. If these persist then a letter is sent out. If these continue to persist following the letter, then we will offer a support meeting to parents. Late arrivals are recorded as unauthorised absences and these could result in a fine.

Holiday/Leave Requests

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education. We strongly urge parents to avoid taking family holidays during term-time as school can only approve leave in 'exceptional circumstances'.

- In September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, uncles there are exceptional circumstances.
- Any requests should be on an official school absence request form handed into the school office for consideration prior to any holiday/leave arrangements being made.
- You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised.

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2013. These amendments as described below came into force on 1 September 2013.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2013.

Absence during term-time

Derbyshire County Council state that:

On 6 April 2017 the Supreme Court appeal, in relation to the Platt v Isle of Wight case, determined that under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 attending school 'regularly' means:

"In accordance with the rules prescribed by the school"

From 1 September 2017, if requested, we will consider the issue of a penalty notice for any period of holiday absence which has not been authorised by the headteacher regardless of a child's wider school attendance.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed “Application for leave of absence during term time“. These may be obtained from the school office. Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to „exceptional circumstances“. Parent will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

AS OF 1ST SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60. IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS. If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 used to allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances. Amendments to

the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. These changes do not mean that an application for leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday cannot be granted by the headteacher. The headteacher has the discretion to grant leave if he/she believes that there are exceptional circumstances. The dictionary definition of exceptional is “unusual” or “rare”. Each case will be looked at on its individual merits; although it will be “exceptional” to authorise leave of absence, there may be circumstances where it would be right and reasonable to do so.

Circumstances that may not be considered exceptional are:

• Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements.

• Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term.

• Birthday of pupil or family member.

If leave of absence is granted for the purpose of a family holiday registration code H should be used.

If leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday is not granted and then taken, registration code G should be used which could result in a penalty notice being issued if requested by the headteacher. Other leave of absence that is granted should be recorded as C in the attendance register. Leave not granted, but taken, should be recorded O.

Parents requesting leave of absence for exceptional circumstances must make the request in writing at least two weeks before the anticipated start date. Best practice would be that the headteacher responds in writing to each parent by name with his/her decision as soon as is practicable. Leave of absence cannot be approved retrospectively. See example letters 1 and 2. If a penalty notice is not paid the local authority must consider initiating legal proceedings against the parent/carer, for the original offence of unauthorised absence from school. Section 444, Education Act 1996. In making the decision the local authority should consider the Attorney General‟s Guidelines for Crown Prosecutors. The local authority will take into account the number of unauthorised sessions and any mitigating factors where it would not be in the public interest to proceed with legal action. Parents who remove their child from the school for the purpose of a family holiday without seeking prior approval can be issued with a penalty notice. If the headteacher has compelling evidence that absences were for the purpose of a family holiday, registration code G should be used. Retrospective approval cannot be given.

Persistent Absence

When a pupil is identified as a potential persistent absentee the Attendance Office/Manager will follow the following procedure:

1. When a pupil is identified as having 90-92% attendance, initial contact will be made by the Attendance Manager/Officer with the parent/carer. Targets will be set to improve attendance.
2. The pupil's attendance will be monitored closely, but if no improvements are made and attendance continues to drop then other forms of action will be taken.

In cases of persistent absence (deemed as that below 90%) the following procedure will be followed:

1. When a pupil is identified as having below 90% attendance (Persistent Absentee) a letter will be sent out to the parent/carer by the Attendance Officer. This is to highlight the situation and parents will be invited into the school to discuss the matter.
2. If a pupil's attendance rate does not improve and a pupil is identified as a Persistent Absence (PA), a second contact letter will be sent by the Attendance Officer to the parent/carer. This will ascertain the nature of any issues of which we ought to be aware and necessary support implemented as required. Targets will be set to improve attendance.

Where pupils are meeting or exceeding their target we will make every effort to recognise and reward improvements in attendance.

Requests for Elective Home Education (EHE)

The school believes that the best education for all pupils is that provided by the school and in the school. If a parent contacts the school stating that they wish to remove their child from the school in order to facilitate EHE, then the school will take the following steps:

1. Facilitate a face to face meeting with the parent making the request, failing this a phone call as a minimum from which notes are taken and copies provided to the parent
2. The School will state that they do not believe that this request is in the best interests of the pupils
3. Endeavour to persuade the parent to change their mind
4. Use the standard Local Authority paperwork to be sent to the EHE team, clearly highlighting any safeguarding concerns and notifying the LA that the school does not believe that this request is in the best interests of the pupil
5. The pupil remains on the school roll and is expected to attend the school at all times until the LA confirms they have undertaken their own checks and approved the EHE request
6. That if a pupil leaves the school roll for approved EHE, a letter is sent to the parent confirming this chance and re-enforcing the school view that this change is not in the best interests of the pupil and the date on which the roll change was made

Staged Approach To the Management of Whole School Attendance

Stage	Trigger	Outcome
1	Attendance falls below the School's Attendance target & the pupil's attendance is a concern	Letter 1 will be sent to the parents/carers: • Expressing concerns about attendance in the school. • Informing the parent/carers of current attendance level. • Reminding parents/carers of their legal responsibility & the nature of "persistent absence". • Welcoming the parents/carers to arrange contact with the school if they wish to discuss attendance further. • Attendance is monitored.
2	Parents have received a letter 1 & attendance remains a concern	Letter 2 will be sent to parents/carers: • Informing parents/carers of on-going concern about their child's attendance. • The school invites parents/carers into school to meet with the headteacher. • Reminding parents/carers of their legal responsibility & the nature of "persistent absence". • Formally notifying parents/carers that that their child's attendance is being monitored for a period of time.
3	Parents have received a letter 1 & 2 & attendance continues to be cause for concern	Letter 3 will be sent to parents: • Notifying the parents/carers that the school intends to take further action. • Headteacher/Attendance Officer authorises letter to parents/carers and referral to Family Support Services at the Local Authority.
	During the monitoring period	A letter of Praise will be sent to parents: • To inform parents/carers of the positive measures being taken to help improve their child's attendance. • Notifying the parents/carers that the school will continue to monitor attendance to ensure sustained improvement.

Letter re punctuality

DATE

Dear Parent/ Carer,

I am writing to let you know that we have some concerns about **[name]**'s punctuality in relation to school attendance. Since **[month]** he has been late to school on **[number]** occasions. Being late so frequently means that **[name]** is missing valuable learning time and is in danger of falling behind.

We value punctuality for a number of reasons: it ensures that lessons start on the most positive footing, it avoids classroom disruption and it minimises wasted time for both students and teaching staff. No less importantly, it is an issue that many companies will consider when interviewing candidates for employment or training.

We would always prefer to work in partnership with you in order to support **[name]** in improving **his/her** attendance record. I would be grateful if you could contact me as soon as possible so that we can arrange to have a positive, problem-solving conversation about **[name]**'s issues with punctuality.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ros Horsley
Headteacher

Letter 1 – attendance between 90-95%

DATE

Dear Parent/ Carer,

We regularly monitor the attendance of our pupils. Any pupil whose attendance falls below 90% (which is equivalent to one day off school every two weeks) is discussed with the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer. Where attendance falls below 90% there is a significant impact on learning – and children with poor attendance **do not** make as much progress as similar children with good attendance. It is a parental responsibility to ensure good attendance.

NAME attendance is 93.42%. Please see the attached sheet for dates.

As your child's attendance is below 95% I would like you to be aware that NAME's attendance falls below our target.
Our target for attendance is 95.5% (which is equivalent to less than one day off every four weeks). If your child's attendance falls below 90% it will be monitored by Mrs Whittaker, the School Office Manager.

If the school can support in any way to prevent it falling below the 90% threshold please get in touch

I would appreciate your support in this matter to benefit your child's education.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ros Horsley
Headteacher

Letter 2 = attendance below 90%

DATE

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Attendance Panel Meetings

We regularly monitor the attendance of our pupils. Any pupil whose attendance falls below 90% at the end of the year (which is equivalent to one day off school every two weeks) is discussed with the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer. Where attendance falls below 90% there is a significant impact on learning – and children with poor attendance **do not** make as much progress as similar children with good attendance. It is a parental responsibility to ensure good attendance.

The current attendance data shows that your child may fall below this by the end of the year.

NAME attendance is 88.15%

Our target for attendance is 95.5% (which is equivalent to less than one day off every four weeks). **Persistent absence** is when a child's overall **absence** equates to 15 per cent or more of their possible sessions, his is a level set by the Government as it indicates a significant impact on your child's education now and in the future.

If there is a particular reason or area that you need support with in getting your child to school on time please contact me to discuss this. Please contact school to make an appointment.
Otherwise if your child(ren)'s attendance does not improve it must be stated that the school will ask for the Local Authority to issue penalty notices which can be very costly to you as a family, even if paid promptly. A number of penalty notices have been issued this school year. Mrs Whittaker, the School Office Manager will monitor attendance with me again at the end of the term.

I would appreciate your support in this matter to benefit your child's education.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ros Horsley
Headteacher