



Pennyhill Primary School

Attendance policy

At Pennyhill Primary we strongly believe that attendance and punctuality are vital for a child to maximise their potential and create a feeling of belonging in their class/school community. In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values, we will be helping to ensure our children benefit fully from the educational opportunities available to them, to equip them for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as citizens, employees and employers.

We believe that:

- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.
- Prolonged and consistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum ultimately impacting on progress.
- Unnecessary, parentally condoned and Unauthorised Absence should be challenged and both school and parents/carers held responsible for the impact this may have on any pupils full attendance.

We are required to monitor and manage all attendance and absence in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations, to follow the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines in relation to attendance and absence and expect all parents/carers to work with us to ensure all pupils maintain an attendance figure of at least 96% throughout the academic year.

The Government has identified that when any child's Attendance falls below 90% they are classed as a 'Persistent Absentee'. In July 2011 the DfE produced a document 'Reducing Absence – ensuring schools intervene earlier' This document states that; "The poor attendance of a number of pupils can disrupt their own learning and that of other pupils. The children quickly begin to fall behind their peers and often never fully catch up with gaps in their skills or knowledge." There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. Good attendance at school makes a difference to a child's education. If children get into bad habits at primary school then they will continue them at secondary school.

School attendance registers

School attendance registers are legal documents and as such must be kept in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that the attendance register is accurate and up to date (it is an offence in law not to do so). Attendance registers can and are viewed by School staff, parents/carers (for their own child/ren), governors, Local Authority Officers, OfSTED and the Magistrates Court.

All pupils must be registered twice every day, once at the beginning of school in the morning and once in the afternoon. Every half-day Registration mark must show if the pupil was present or absent. All absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised in accordance with the DfE Guidelines.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

Authorised absence is classified as any half day absence from school for which the parent/carer of a child has:

- a) provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence,

b) provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence that can be accepted and/or is allowed for the purposes of authorisation and,

c) that the Headteacher agrees the Pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

Note Absences may be authorised for a medical appointment in school time, but, school may ask parents/carers to ensure their child attends registration, is collected from school and then returned after the appointment in order for the absence to be authorised. The timing of and venue of the appointment may need to be evidenced and discussed with school to agree arrangements.

In the case of emergency, parents/carers should negotiate with the Headteacher on an individual basis. Parents will be advised on the amount of absence that the Headteacher can agree to authorise in each instance. Any extension to the original agreement may not be authorised. If the reason you have provided can allow the Headteacher to authorise the absence no further action can or will be taken.

Unauthorised absence is any half day absence from school for which the parent/carer of the child has;

a) not provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence,

b) provided a reason but that reason is not, or cannot be accepted for the purpose of authorisation and,

c) the Headteacher is unable to agree that the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

Please note that late arrival in the classroom for registration, both in the morning and afternoon, can be recorded as Late and/or Unauthorised Absence for that half day session. (See Registration and Registers below) If no reason for an absence has been provided and/or if the reason provided is not or cannot be accepted for the purposes of authorisation further action can or will be taken.

Registration and registers

Registration happens in the classroom. That a child has arrived on school premises, is on their way to the classroom or has a sibling who has been marked present at registration cannot be accepted for the Registration 'on time' of a child. Morning registration for all children opens at 8.50am and closes at 9.00am. Afternoon registration for children is at different times, for different year groups. Reception to Year 2:- 1.00pm Year 3 to Year 6:- 1.15pm. Currently due to Covid staggered lunchtimes (2021) these times vary depending on the class.

Attendance and illness

Unfortunately, and from time to time children do suffer from illness. When this happens, parents/carers need to make a judgement as to if that illness means the child is prevented from or is unable to attend school. It is very well known that many children can be 'a little under the weather' first thing in the morning and you may decide to keep them at home only for them to recover almost immediately or a little later in the day.

If your child has been unwell in the morning and shows signs of recovery we encourage parents/carers to return their child to school later in the morning or after lunch. Parents/carers are the best people to make this judgement and to decide if their child should

stay at home but you must advise school BEFORE 9am of the circumstances and explain the reason for the absence to avoid that absence being recorded as unauthorised.

We encourage parents to make their decisions knowing that if you bring your child to school and advise us that they may be a little unwell we are happy to monitor their condition and agree with you that should they deteriorate we will call you to let you know and ask you to collect them where necessary. The absence for that half day session will be authorised by the Headteacher and no further action will be taken.

Reasons provided for any absence and the frequency of previous absence/illness can/will determine if that absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. If your child is absent and you do not call the school before 9am the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If your child is absent and you have not contacted school before 9am a member of school staff will attempt to contact you (via the contact details you are required to provide and to keep up to date). If you do not respond to this contact or if the contact details are out of date the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

In some cases of absence and/or lack of contact with parents/carers we may need to make contact with other agencies (i.e. Social Care, the Police, etc.) to meet our safeguarding children responsibilities.

Medication

We want parents/carers to know that in the case of a child being prescribed medicines that this does not automatically mean that the child should be absent from school or that this absence will be authorised.

The school's medical policy allows us to administer medicines, with written consent, which may result in there being no reason or necessity for any absence.

A parent/carer may be asked to provide detail or evidence (sometimes in writing) that supports your view as a parent/carer that their child was 'unfit' to attend school if they have a number of missing marks due to 'illness'. We want parents/carers to be both clear in understanding and to appreciate that, if asked for some further information, detail or evidence, it does not mean that we do not believe you when they say your child is unwell, but, it does provide school with the necessary information and detail which supports the Headteacher's decision to continue to authorise some absence should Governors, the LA and/or OfSTED review or question school's Registration Procedures and/or Attendance figures.

The information provided can then be reviewed to consider if it would allow the Headteacher to continue to authorise the absence. Any information or detail and any documentation provided by a parent/carer in support of their view that their child was 'unfit' to attend school may be recorded or filed in school to support the Headteacher's agreement, or otherwise, to continue to authorise any further absence.

If, when asked for, a parent/carer does not or cannot provide further information, detail or evidence that absence will remain unauthorised. Should illness continue, school will require written proof from a GP to explain why an 'I' code should be used, as opposed to an unauthorised absence.

Long term sickness absence

If a child needs to be hospitalised for 3 days or more we can contact the Hospital Teaching Service so that, if it is medically appropriate/approved and possible they can work with your

child whilst they are not in school. This would be recorded as being educated off site and would be equivalent to an attendance at school. If a child leaves hospital and a return to school is not medically appropriate/approved then we can contact the appropriate unit to seek further support for you and your child. This would be recorded as being educated off site and would be equivalent to an attendance at school.

Leave of absence

Since September 2013 Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise any 'Leave of Absence' (sometimes previously known as 'term time holiday') unless a parent/carer makes an application, in advance, detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' they would want the Headteacher to consider. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 absence may not be authorised unless:

- (a) An application has been made in advance to the proprietor (Headteacher) by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides; and
- (b) The proprietor (Headteacher), or a person authorised by the proprietor, considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

Leave of absence will not be authorised for holidays and family occasions including weddings, birthdays and honeymoons.

The Headteacher may grant one day leave of absence for a family funeral or to enable a child to take an entrance examination for secondary school, these would be considered exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices

Parents/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices should their child take any Leave of Absence if they have not requested this, in writing, to the Headteacher (and/or completed a Leave of Absence Application) detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' they would want the Headteacher to take into consideration in deciding if any Leave of Absence can be agreed and authorised. Parent/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices should any Leave of Absence be taken without any Application/Request being made.

Parents/Carers should ensure that any Request/Application is made in advance 6 weeks of any Leave of Absence to be taken.

Parents/Carers should consider ensuring that they know if any Leave of Absence requested can be authorised by the Headteacher before planning, booking or paying for any part of a Leave of Absence.

Legislation dictates that a Leave of Absence Requests/Application can only be considered if it is from a Parent/Carer with whom the pupil normally lives. Leave of Absence Requests/Applications from a Parent/Carer that a pupil does not normally live with or from any other family member cannot be considered under any circumstances.

Attendance monitoring

All pupils attendance is monitored and reviewed on at least a weekly basis, but in some cases there may be a need or requirement for more frequent monitoring. Below are some triggers that will require further investigation and communications with parents/carers and referral and involvement with other external services.

Pupil Attendance below 96% (Expected Minimum Attendance)

If at any time your child's actual Attendance falls below 96% (the absence might be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both) school will write to you to ask you to improve it.

Pupil Attendance below 96% with no improvement after action above, school will meet with you to discuss this. This meeting will be arranged through one of our Assistant Heads.

Pupil Attendance below 93%

If at any time your child's actual attendance falls below 93% (the absence might be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both) the school will look closely at your child's attendance record. As a result of this one of the following may be used: a letter asking you to improve your child's attendance, a meeting with the Assistant Head to discuss how best you and your child can be supported to improve attendance, a parenting contract.

Pupil Attendance below 90% (Persistent Absence)

If at any time your child's actual attendance falls below 90% (the absence might be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both) school will inform the attendance and prosecution officer. Any 10 half day sessions of Unauthorised Absence (including Unauthorised lateness) will trigger a referral for the issue of Warning Notice. Any further 10 half days of Unauthorised Absence (including Unauthorised lateness) will trigger a referral to attendance and prosecution for issue of Penalty Notice

Last reviewed on: April 2021