



Pensilva Primary School

Attendance Policy

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| Date of Adoption | 11th September 2023 |
| Review Date | Autumn 2025 |

Chronology

| Date | Action |
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| 01/09/23 | Policy written by MD (headteacher) |
| 11/09/23 | Approved by Full Governing Body |
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Signed:

Introduction

At Pensilva, we believe that regular attendance at school enables children to maximise their potential and sets positive habits that are essential as children grow into responsible citizens.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning. As a school, we strive to make the school a welcoming and safe environment for all children. Our curriculum is designed to inspire children and develop a lifelong love of learning.

Attendance for all children is monitored, with the school seeking to work together with parents to make a difference and ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We encourage children to attend, and put in place appropriate procedures to support this.

Poor attendance will seriously affect a child's:

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new learning and to learn alongside others

The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child; children are entitled to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes puts pupils at risk. The school share the attendance percentage with parents at the end of each term and more frequently where there are concerns.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding matter so that we know all children are safe. If parents do not contact the school, the school will endeavour to contact the parent and establish the whereabouts of the child and reason for absence.

Illness

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. For each day that the child is absent, contact with the school office should be made unless otherwise agreed with the school during initial contact.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register which is held in SIMS. As part of our safeguarding procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

If a child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school.

Medical Appointments

If a child needs to attend a medical appointment, we will expect every effort to be made to arrange the medical appointments outside school hours and will require confirmation of

the appointment in the form of an appointment card, letter or electronic notification.

When it is unavoidable for a child to be out of school for a medical reason, it is expected that the child will attend school prior to the appointment and then be returned to school directly after the appointment.

Lateness

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.45 and 8.55am, and go directly to class where the class teacher will provide activities to prepare children for the day's learning. The register, including meal requirements, will be taken during this time. The register will close at 8.55am.

All pupils who arrive after 8.55am must report to the school office where they will sign in and provide a reason for the lateness using the school's sign in system. Meal requirements should be reported to either the school secretary or another member of staff as soon as possible.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') This national code counts as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents during parents' evenings and may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for possible legal action. Frequent or regular lateness can provide grounds for prosecution or the issue of a Penalty Notice.

The Role of the School Staff

Working with the Educational Welfare Officer, the Head Teacher has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Pupils are marked as either present, absent or late.

Pupil attendance is closely monitored by school administration staff in order to highlight and take action where the attendance of individual children is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the school attendance team to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date by entering appropriate national attendance codes into the register
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence and a reason obtained
- Where it is not possible to make contact, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is recorded as unauthorised

Levels of Attendance

At Pensilva Primary School, an acceptable level of attendance is 96% or above. This will help all aspects of a child's progress and life in school. This will give children the best possible opportunity to excel in learning outcomes and also supports a positive work ethic.

Attendance of 94% - 95% is a focus for improvement. The aim is to improve beyond this rate of attendance. The school will work with parents to continue to promote full attendance to move to 96%+. Below average attendance constitutes 90 - 93%. This level of absence will affect attainment and progress at school. The school will contact parents directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance.

Attendance that is below 90% is considered to be unacceptable. This level of absence is a cause for serious concern. It will significantly affect attainment and progress and is disruptive to

children's learning. Written communication and meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. If improvement is not quickly achieved, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and appropriate action will be taken by the EWO at this stage.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school will discuss the issue with the parents, clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

Children Missing Education

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Head Teacher must be informed in writing. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that the offer of a school place has been taken up. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced will not be removed from the school roll. Cases such as these are reported to the Education Welfare Officer for further investigation. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer, for example, if a child has been unwell and the parent contacts the school to explain the absence.

In the case of planned absence such as a hospital appointment, the 'Request for Absence' form must be completed in order to request authorisation. This must be agreed and signed by the Head Teacher prior to the absence in order for the absence to be recorded as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Head Teacher. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences that have never been properly requested or explained.
- Unauthorised holidays.

Authorising Absence

Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable. The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and, if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between

the parent and school. The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Parental illness (alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted)
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons and appointments not supported by a medical appointment card
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Visit of a relative to the family home

Action In Relation To Poor Attendance and Lateness

For all children, the school monitors absence and lateness and has a stepped approach to taking action. This includes monitoring overall attendance, trends in attendance and reasons provided for attendance. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. The headteacher and administration staff will use discretion and consider each case carefully.

Steps include:

- Where there has been no contact from parents, the school will endeavour to contact parents/carers to establish a reason for absence. Reasons for absence are recorded and retained by the school.
- Discussion with EWO to identify pupils with attendance below 95%, monitoring trends in pupil attendance and lateness
- Letter to parents outlining concerns regarding pupil attendance
- Request from school for parent/carer to meet with school staff
- Initiate the process, if appropriate, to access support from other agencies
- Referral to EWO

Where there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance following intervention by the school, and there are at least 12 sessions (6 days) absence in a term, the school will consider a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, whose actions may include:

- Home visits
- Multi agency meetings
- Sign posting to supportive agencies e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Social Services and Family Group Conference Service.

Penalty Notices for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued by the EWO Service in accordance with the Local Authority guidelines and may be issued in the following circumstances:

- Truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Being present in a public place without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Leave of Absence/Holiday Absence

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. However, the Head Teacher does have the discretion to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' include:

- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
- For Looked After Children to spend time with family or carers and the request is supported by the child's social worker.
- For current and active service personnel where the request is supported by a senior officer from the service, confirming that leave can be taken at no other time.

Applications for exceptional Leave of Absence where dates are known ahead, **MUST** be made at least four weeks in advance of the requested date.

Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits in line with the criteria outlined above. The decision is final and once the decision to not authorise the leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the EWO Service for possible legal action.

Individual incentives

Where positive impact is required for particular children who may struggle to achieve good attendance, all staff in contact with the child must take extra care to welcome the child each morning, praise punctual attendance and acknowledge the effort the child has made. Individual sticker rewards are sometimes employed as an additional incentive where appropriate, however, as a school, we also endeavour to develop the sense of internal, intrinsic motivation and pride, and help children to understand the firm building blocks for life that are being laid through good attendance. It is also appropriate to recognise the effort the parent has made to secure the child's attendance.