

Attendance Policy

Information for Parents

Purley CE Primary School

Date of policy: June 2008

Review Cycle: 3 years

Reviewed By: Curriculum & Pupil Welfare Committee

Approved By: Head Teacher

Last Reviewed: Summer 2016

Next review date: Summer 2019



The Governors at Purley CE Primary School are committed, in partnership with parents, pupils, staff and Local Authority to actively promote the aims of the school, and recognise that children must attend school regularly if they are to make the best of the opportunities they have to learn and make best progress. Our school acknowledges that each family's circumstances are different and works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that deter them from attending school

We expect that all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that the children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day. Morning registration ends at 9:00 a.m. If a pupil arrives after the registration period, he/she will be marked in as Late (L). After 9:30 this becomes an unauthorised absence (U).
- Ensure that they contact the school whenever the child is unable to attend school
- Contact the school on the first day of the child's absence and send a note on their return to school explaining their absence
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep a child away from school

We expect school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences
- Encourage good attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment, provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- Parents are given feedback on the level of their child's attendance on their Annual report, or earlier should there be a concern.

What should I do if my child is unwell?

Children should not come to school if they are obviously unwell. You must telephone the school soon as you know your child will not be attending that day. The voicemail operates out of hours. You are expected to give the reason for absence, and indicate if it is likely your child will be absent longer than one day.

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On your child's return, you must send a written note, giving the reason for absence. If attendance falls below 90%, the school will require medical evidence for absence e.g. a prescription hospital appointment card (Appendix 1)

Absence for genuine illness is always authorised.

How long should my child stay home if they are ill?

We have regularly updated detailed information from the Health Authority regarding absence periods related to illnesses. This gives information about the length of time children should remain home once symptoms are clearing. Should your child be ill with a 'named' illness and you would like to know when they may return to school, please do ring the school and we shall be able to tell you. This will be very helpful, as often children are able to return to school sooner than you may think, provided they are well in themselves, as the infectious periods of illnesses vary greatly.

If children have vomiting and/or diarrhoea, they must stay home from school for 48 hours after the last episode. This is to ensure children are free from infection, and are well enough to attend school. We frequently have children who have been sick at school one day and sent home, returned the next day, only to be sent home again: often there are then a number of other children infected, and sometimes staff.

We need to make sure that we avoid any 'epidemics' if we possibly can, so this rule is strictly enforced.

I need to take my child to the dentist/doctor. What do I do about them coming to school?

Most routine appointments can be made outside of school hours. Sometimes you need to see a doctor more urgently, so be guided by what they say as to whether your child comes to school afterwards.

If your child is absent due to attending a medical or dental appointment, please let us know in writing.

What does 'unauthorised absence' mean?

Unauthorised absence is when a pupil is absent from school when they should have been in school, or school have not been given a reason for the absence.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. To do this, she needs to know that the reason the child was away is actually a legitimate reason not to come to school. Illness, for example, or attending family funeral, are legitimate reasons for a child to be absent, and are authorised absences.

Having time off for no real reason is unauthorised absence. Absences for buying new shoes, being fitted for a bridesmaid dress, staying home because a brother or sister is ill, or having to help with a baby, are examples of absences that are not legitimate.

Sometimes parents do not inform us of the reason for their child's absence. Without a reason given, the Headteacher cannot authorise absence, so this remains unauthorised.

If we do not receive a phone call or a letter, we always follow this up with a letter asking why a child was away, in case you have just forgotten to let us know the reason. If there is no reply, a copy of the letter is sent through the post or someone rings you to ask the reason for your child's absence – if there is no genuine reason provided, or no reply, then this absence remains as unauthorised.

Obviously children who wilfully truant have their absence recorded as unauthorised.

What happens if my child has several unauthorised absences?

Regular unauthorised absences are brought to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer, who may contact you to discuss the reasons for these absences and explore any help that could be given to ensure your child attends school regularly.

Continued unauthorised absence will lead to a Penalty Warning Notice being sent. You may be asked to attend a meeting at school with the Headteacher, Education Welfare Officer and a Governor, for you to explain the reasons for your child's continued absences, and to discuss the impact this has had on your child's education. This is a formal meeting, which is minuted. These minutes are sent to the Principal Education Welfare Officer, who decides whether to pass them to the Legal Department. It is the Legal Department's decision whether to issue a financial penalty for unlawful absence from school.

REQUESTS FOR HOLIDAY ABSENCE

The Sept 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Exceptional circumstances will be interpreted as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

In some cases a parent's employer might restrict holidays to a certain time-period. In these circumstances the Headteacher may ask for written confirmation from the employer. The Headteacher will also look carefully at the child's previous attendance records and should he or she have concerns, for example should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Headteacher will authorise any further absence.

Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The West Berkshire Penalty Notices Code of Conduct states that a Penalty Notice can be issued if there are 10 or more half day unauthorised sessions in a 10 school week period. (i.e. 5 school days). This is applicable where the parent has taken the child out of school for a planned leave of absence e.g. holiday but this has not been authorised by the school. The unauthorised sessions of absence may or may not be on a consecutive basis. This is in line with Section 444A of the Education Act 1996. (Appendix 2)

If you believe you do have a genuine reason, then ask for a Holiday Absence Request Form from Reception **before booking the holiday**, complete this giving as much information about your circumstances as you can, and return it to the Headteacher via Reception.

Who authorises absence?

Absence for family holidays may only be authorised by the Headteacher, with reference to West Berkshire regulations, which have been adopted in full by the Governors of Purley CE Primary School.

These regulations are that:

- Long weekends are not considered holiday, and will not normally be authorised.
- The cost of holidays, or a family's financial situation, is not a consideration when authorising holiday leave of absence. This includes holidays paid for by other family members such as Grandparents. Parents are expected to ensure other family members are aware of these regulations.
- The child's attendance at school during the preceding twelve weeks must be at least 95%. This means that requests in the Autumn Term will take attendance in the previous Summer Term into account. A child with 95% attendance will have had approximately half a day a week away from school in a two week period. Higher rates of absence are considered to be below average: a family holiday will contribute significantly to a child's absence rate.
- Working parents must ensure they book their leave well in advance to ensure they can take a break outside of term time. Please be aware that, if the reason given for requesting term time absence is related to work circumstances, this information may be checked by West Berkshire. This is to ensure that employers take into account the needs of parents when allocating annual leave. Parents are expected to ensure that other family members are aware of the term dates if they are likely to be booking a family holiday.
- Parents who are self employed must also ensure they organise family holidays outside of term time. The regulations apply equally to all parents.

Please note that no holiday absences will be authorised under any circumstances during times when internal assessments and tests or external SATs tests or revision are being undertaken.

If you are unsure of these dates, please ring to check

What will happen if holiday absence is not authorised?

In reality, there are few circumstances in which absence for a holiday will be authorised

The Headteacher will return your form within a week, with the section at the end relating to authorisation completed and signed. If the absence is not authorised, a letter will follow, giving contact details of our Education Welfare Officer, together with West Berkshire's Penalty Warning Notice.

Please note it is the Headteacher who gives authorisation for absence, not the Education Welfare Officer.

At this point, you must decide if the holiday is still to be booked – the expectation is that it is not, and that you book a holiday during the twelve weeks of the year outside of school term dates, booking well ahead.

If you choose to take your children on holiday in term time, you could be liable to being issued with a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days, per parent, per child.

What happens if we just go on holiday without completing a form?

If families go away on holiday without completing a Holiday Absence Request Form this also counts as unauthorised absence, and will be treated accordingly. You will be asked to attend a meeting on your return to discuss the circumstances of your child's absence.

What if I say my child is ill to avoid a fine?

If a child has been absent and a parent sends a letter saying they have been unwell and it is thought this is not true, this will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and you may have to attend a meeting at school to explain the absence.

What if I make up a reason that I think will convince the Headteacher to authorise absence?

In the same way, should the information given on a Holiday Absence Request Form be incorrect, any authorisation will immediately be withdrawn. Examples of this include attending a wedding or visiting sick relatives, spending time with a parent not living with the child, which turn out to be untrue.

It is completely unacceptable to involve a child in such a lie: this causes immense stress for the child concerned, who of course knows it is wrong to not tell the truth.

The end result is that a Warning is issued as before, and you will be required to come to a meeting and explain the real reason for the absence.

What if one of these reasons is actually genuine?

Should there be a genuine reason to request absence, such as family illness, or the wedding of a close relative, please do discuss this with the Headteacher honestly, as perhaps such absence may be able to be authorised if a child's attendance is normally excellent. It is not acceptable to use the illness of a relative for a lengthy holiday – if lengthy absence is necessary, alternative arrangements must be made for your child to continue to be educated. This may mean attending another school, possibly abroad, and providing proof of this on your return.

Where can I find out more about the West Berkshire Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices?

This is the guidance that schools must follow, before a Penalty Notice may be issued to the parents of a child who attends a West Berkshire School. A copy of this can be found on www.westberks.gov.uk

Exactly when can a Penalty Notice be given in West Berkshire?

- When a pupil has missed 20 half day sessions from school within a ten school week period, and these absences are unauthorised

Or

- When a pupil has missed ten half day sessions from school within a ten school week period, and these absences are unauthorised and due to holiday

What happens to my child's attendance records when they change schools?

Attendance records, along with information about any Penalty Warning Notices etc form part of your child's formal records. These are passed on to secondary school, or to another primary school should your child change schools before the end of their primary education.

A pupil will not be removed from this school's roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupils will be leaving this school and starting the next
- The address of the new school

All schools are expected to follow the same regulations with regard to their policy for attendance.

LATENESS

The school doors open at 8.50am and the school day begins with registration at 9.00am. Children who arrive after 9.00am are late, and must come into school through the Main Entrance into Reception. They must sign in at the office and get their register marked. Parents must provide a reason for lateness. If the child is not accompanied, parents will be informed of their child's lateness by letter, and asked to provide a reason.

Continued lateness may lead to the Education Welfare Officer contacting you to discuss the reasons for this.

Children who arrive after 9:30 am are considered absent, and recorded in the register with the reason for this accordingly.

Agreed by Governors – 15th May 2014

APPENDIX 1

Dear XXXXXXXXX

RE: Attendance - XXXXXXXXXXXX

I am writing to you because I am concerned over XXXXXX attendance and punctuality. Unfortunately XXXXXXXX attendance of XXXXX% falls significantly below the school's benchmark of 95%. I have attached a printout of the attendance which also show 29 occasions where XXXXXX has been late. As there is a significant number due to illness, the school needs evidence that XXXXXXXX is receiving medical support. Evidence could include prescriptions that your child has received or hospital/doctor appointment cards.

It is really important that XXXX is in school and on time. A recent pupil progress meeting predicts that XXXXX should achieve a level 2C for both Maths and English at the end of the next academic year. A 2C is slightly below what he should achieve and we have based our prediction on 100% attendance. XXXXX has an Individual Education Plan and therefore needs every assistance the school can provide for him and I would appreciate your efforts to significantly reduce the lateness and attendance issue.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

c.c. class teacher

* APPENDIX 2

Date

*Name

*Address

*Address

*Address

*Address

Dear *

Re: Application for Planned Leave of Absence during Term Time

*(Pupil's Name)

*Date of Birth

Thank you for your request/letter* (delete as appropriate) dated *(insert date). I write to advise that I am unable to approve your request to take *(pupil's name) out of school for planned Leave of Absence. Should you choose to take *(pupil's name) out of school the absence will be marked as unauthorised and you may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The West Berkshire Penalty Notices Code of Conduct states that a Penalty Notice can be issued if 10 or more half day unauthorised sessions in a 10 school week period. (i.e. 5 school days). This is applicable where the parent has taken the child out of school for a planned leave of absence e.g. holiday but this has not been authorised by the school. The unauthorised sessions of absence may or may not be on a consecutive basis. This is in line with Section 444A of the Education Act 1996.

Enclosed is an information leaflet on Penalty Notices.

If you wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

*(Name of Head)

Headteacher