



Pinfold Street
Primary School



Policy for Attendance and Punctuality

Including COVID Addendum for staggered timings

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Introduction

Pinfold Street Primary is committed to protect the rights of all children to education as stipulated in article 27 of the united charter of the rights of the child.

Our school Attendance and Punctuality Policy is designed to give clear information in respect of our Attendance Management processes to parents, children, school staff, governors and the wider community.

This policy sets out our ambition for our children and recognises that there is a strong correlation between any absence and underachievement. It also recognises that good punctuality is essential for a child to start the school day prepared for learning.

We have developed the policy with our children, parents, staff and Governors and it is line with statutory guidance and expectations of Walsall Children's Services. The Policy provides information about recognition and sanctions.

We will focus on reducing persistent absence, unauthorised absence and we will challenge unsatisfactory reasons given for all absences.

Our school will be a welcoming learning environment and our teaching staff are dedicated to help the children achieve the best they can.

In order to achieve the best outcomes for children it is expected that all our children will attend school every day on time. We believe that excellent attendance is paramount to raising standards and is fundamental to whole school improvement.

We expect our Governors, staff, parents and children to adhere to the framework of this policy.

1.0 The Aims of this Policy

- Improve Overall Attendance
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for pupils, parents, staff and Governors
- To define agreed roles and responsibilities in carrying out specific tasks
- To provide support, advice and guidance to families
- To develop a systematic approach for reporting the school's absence information
- To develop a system of Reward & Sanction
- To promote multi-agency partnerships to address the needs of children with complexities related to irregular attendance
- To bring in line policies and procedures to reflect the diverse needs of the wider community

2.0 Drivers – Local and National

Raising standards for children and young people are driven by legislation, national policy and the local agenda. Education establishments are subject to expectation, regulation and inspection to ensure standards continue to rise. Schools are constantly challenged to maintain standards and

improve attainment. Our school will follow the principles and expectations as set out in the following documents.

- OFSTED Inspection Framework 2019
- Keeping Pupil Registers June 2008
- Reducing Holiday Absence October 2017 (Walsall Children's Services)
- Persistent Absence as defined by the DfE 2015
- Endorsement by C&YP Scrutiny Panel of their investigations into school absence
- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1986, 2004
- Walsall Children and Young Person's Priorities

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Lead School Governor

The Lead Governor for School Attendance will ask for a report each term outlining the following

- PA Report outlining the number of children on trajectory to become PA
- OA report with comparisons to the same period in the previous Academic Year.
- UA report with comparisons to the same period in the previous Academic Year.
- Number of Children who are chronically ill and level of support offered for these children

The Lead Governor for Attendance will be satisfied there is contact between the school and home in respect of all absences and that the elements and aims of the policy are being followed. The name of the Lead Governor for Attendance for 2020-2021 is TBC.

3.2 Parent/Carer Role

Please note that anyone who has care of a child on a daily basis is defined as a "carer" and has the same responsibility in Education Law to that of parents with parental responsibility which includes the duty to ensure that the child attends the school at which they are on roll regularly and failure to do so could result in formal legal action. The term "parents" in this document also refers to people who have care of a child but do not have parental responsibility.

Parents must contact the school on the first day of any absence to explain the reason ('poorly' or 'illness' will not be accepted) for the absence and the expected date of return. This can be done in person, by telephone call or message left on absence line. Parents should understand that in law, it is the school who decides whether the absence is going to be authorised or not. Schools will base this judgement on the reason provided for the absence and/or the level of absence. Medical evidence may be requested prior to making a decision on whether to authorise the absence especially where the overall attendance is at or approaching the persistent absence threshold of 90%. Where absence is unauthorised more formal action may be considered including the use of legal action in the magistrates court or the issuing of a penalty notice.

Parents are encouraged to ensure their child attends school regularly* (session the school is open, unless the headteacher has authorised the child to be absent) and any emerging issues should be advised to the school at the earliest opportunity to enable action to be taken to address the problems and prevent longer term issues. ****Regular attendance at school means attending every single session the school is open, unless the head teacher has authorised the child to be absent.***

Parents must inform the school with a reason for any absence.

Parents must make sure their child/ren arrive at school on time, in proper school uniform and with any equipment they need for the day.

3.3 Head Teacher

The Head teacher will ensure the absence management process is in line with legislation and regulation and will also ensure registers are maintained accurately in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006 and any subsequent amendments.

The Head Teacher will continue to raise education standards for children by encouraging regular school attendance and punctuality.

3.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers will ensure their registers are maintained in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) England regulations 2006 – this is a legal requirement. Class Teachers will ensure any information appertaining to a child's punctuality or attendance is communicated to the Attendance Officer(Miss Kennedy) or Attendance Lead(Mrs Wilkinson) at the earliest opportunity. This will avoid unnecessary telephone contact with families or cause them undue concern.

3.5 Attendance Officer Internal

The Attendance Officer in school will ensure registers are updated with the appropriate attendance and absence codes. They will also provide absence reports from the Education Management System (SIMS) at the request of the Head Teacher. The Attendance Clerk will liaise with Class Teachers, the Attendance Lead and the Head Teacher to report any emerging patterns of absence or when a child is absent without a good reason.

3.6 Attendance Officer External

The named External Attendance Officer (Instill-Excellence LTD) for the school works within a commissioned time framework and will support the school to manage their attendance. The Officer will normally visit every three weeks for a referral meeting with School Attendance Clerk. The Officers will carry out daily unannounced home visits to families who have not provided school with a reason for absence that day or the child has not been seen for three days or more. The Attendance Officers and the school will identify children who are Persistently Absent (PA) or at risk of becoming PA each term and will actively target those children for early intervention.

3.7 Education Welfare Officer

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will liaise with school regularly for referrals in respect of formal warnings and legal action for irregular school attendance. The EWO will be responsible for all prosecutions and Penalty Notices for irregular attendance.

4.0 Communication

We will communicate any changes or updated information to families and the community in the following ways. We welcome feedback from our families and Governors.

- Newsletter
- Website
- Annual reports
- Meetings
- Letters
- Telephone (to address individual matters when needed)

- Text Messages

4.1 Home School Agreement

Our school will invite parents to sign a Home School Agreement whereby they are informed of expectations for excellent attendance.

4.2 What our Children have said about absence

Children understand that missed time also means missed learning. For some children this is significant and it can be difficult to “catch up” afterwards. For other children, friendship groups may change during their absence and this can have an emotional impact on them when they return. Children know the school has high expectations of attendance and this is communicated through recognition boards.

5.0 Our School Attendance Management Process

5.1 Daily

- All class registers will be marked accurately either using the present code or the N code
- All daily absences will be scrutinised for reason and notification
- Reasons for absence will be screened to establish whether absence is authorised or not
- Parents will be contacted or visited when the reason for absence is not satisfactory or unknown
- Home visits by our attendance team will be made if no contact can be made via telephone
- Parents will be advised if the absence is to be recorded as unauthorised
- Pupils arriving late will be recorded as such in the register

5.2 Weekly

Reception to Year 6

- All absences will be scrutinised for identification of repeat periods of absence or emerging patterns of absence
- Pupils having less than 93% Attendance will receive a Warning Letter issued by the Head Teacher.
- Parents will be invited into school for a meeting with Head Teacher if no improvement is made.
- Education Welfare Service will commence formal action on behalf of the Local Authority where attendance is below 90%, the pupil is of compulsory school age, the majority of

absence is unauthorised unless medical evidence can be provided and parents have not responded to action taken to improve the attendance.

5.3 Half Term

- Letters sent to children on trajectory to becoming Persistent Absentees.
- Identification of children who need multi-agency involvement to support concerns or complexities which include absence or punctuality concerns.
- Implementation of multi-agency involvement to support concerns or complexities of individual cases where there are absence or punctuality concerns.

5.4 End of Term - Autumn & Spring

- Report to head teacher and Lead Governor showing
 - No. of pupils on trajectory to becoming PA
 - Overall absence compared to same period in the previous Academic Year
 - Unauthorised absence compared to the same period in the previous Academic Year
 - No. of referrals to EWS
- Identification of pupils 'at risk' of PA and referral to the Attendance Officer
- With Attendance Officer, scrutinise pupils' attendance to identify those to progress to EWO
- Ensure pupils with chronic medical conditions are properly supported
- Refresh Attendance Action Plans with the Attendance Officers to identify pupils 'at risk' of becoming PA

5.5 End of Year – July

- End of year report to Head Teacher and Governors
 - 3 year trend for OA and PA
 - Comparisons for National and Local OA & PA
 - Progress to targets
 - EWS involvement
 - Précis of intervention from other agencies
 - Impact of intervention
 - Holiday absence level and comparisons
 - Rewards and sanctions detailed

6.0 Types of Absence

6.1 Arriving at school late

The times of our school day are as follows

Morning Session: 8.55am to 12.00pm (R and KS1); 8.55am to 12.15 pm (KS2).

Afternoon Session: 1.00pm to 3.15pm (R); 1.00pm to 3.20pm (KS 1) 1.15pm to 3.20pm (KS2)

Morning Registration closes at 9.00am

Afternoon Registration closes at 1.05pm (R and KS1); 1.20pm (KS2)

If a child arrives at school after registration has opened at 8.55am or 1.00/1.15pm but before the register has closed at 9.30am, then he or she will be recorded as **LATE** using the L code. If they arrive after 9.30am or 1.20pm then they will be recorded as **unauthorised absent** using the U registration code.

A 'late gate' system is in operation from 9.00am until 9.15am on the main playground. Parents must report their child/s arrival and the reason for lateness to the members of staff on duty. After 9.15am all late arrivals should report to the main school office.

6.2 Unauthorised Absence (UA)

All absence will have an appropriate code in accordance with DfE Guidance Absence and Attendance Codes. If there has been no reason provided for the absence or an unsatisfactory reason has been provided then the school can only record absence as UNAUTHORISED. It is the decision of the school and NOT the parent which determines whether absence is authorised or not. It is unauthorised absence which may lead to formal legal action.

Examples of Unauthorised Absence could be:

- Family Birthday
- Holidays not agreed
- Shopping
- Hair cuts
- Buying shoes or uniform
- Emerging patterns of any absence until satisfactory reason has been sought
- Illness of another family member
- Illness & bereavement of grandparents and extended family members although this will be considered on merit.
- Trips

6.3 Authorised Absence (AA)

Absence can be recorded as authorised when a school has been satisfied there is a satisfactory reason for the absence. It is only recorded as authorised if it is something affecting the child's ability to attend school.

Leave of Absence - Holidays

Our school operates a **zero tolerance** policy in line with the local authority. Parents need to apply for leave of absence **in writing to the Head Teacher in advance**, outlining the following:

- First date and last date of holiday absence
- Name, address and date of birth of the child
- Full names and date of birth of parents
- Names of siblings at other Walsall Schools
- Reasons for such a request
- Details of proposed outward bound & incoming flight details

6.4 At Pinfold Street, only exceptional circumstances will be considered for authorised leave of absence. The Head Teacher will consider the request after scrutinising the circumstances as explained by the parent/carer in writing. Parents will be informed in writing of the decision as to whether the leave of absence is authorised or not.

6.5 There is no automatic right for any absence. The child's education will be paramount and absence will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances. The school and governing body are committed to raising standards and therefore the educational needs of the child will be critical in the decision making process. In line with statutory guidance, parents should not expect holiday absence to be granted.

6.6 The school follows the principles as set out in Walsall Children's Services Guidance for 'Tackling Holiday Absence'.

6.7 Persistent Absence (PA)

Any absence whether unauthorised or not will impact on Persistent Absence. The school will identify pupils who are 'at risk' of becoming PA each term and will report to the Head Teacher at the end of each term the names of our children who are at risk. The school will then track these children through the year to ensure the risk of them becoming PA at the end of half term 5 is reduced.

6.8 The school will report all cases of PA pupils to the Head Teacher and Governors. PA pupils or those at risk of becoming PA will be referred to the Attendance Officer (Local Authority) each term.

7.0 Rewards and Sanctions

7.1 Rewards

Our school will use appropriate recognition for pupils who have excellent / improved attendance.

7.2 Sanctions

The following sanctions will be applied in respect of irregular attendance

- School Letter –Attendance falls below 95% from the attendance clerk.
- School letter – Attendance at 93%, from the Head Teacher.
- School Letter - Parent Meeting if attendance continues to fall.
- Parent Contract
- Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (if below 90%)
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service for Legal Intervention
- Prosecution for Irregular Attendance – Section 444, (1) Education Act 1996 or the issuing of a penalty notice under sub-section (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

The following sanctions will be applied in respect of persistent lateness:

- School letter – 4 late arrivals in one half term
- School letter - Parent meeting arranged if no improvement.
- Referral made to Education Welfare Service.

Prosecution for Irregular Attendance – Section 444, (1) (A) Education Act 1996

To secure a conviction for this offence, the prosecutor needs to show that the parent had knowledge of the child's absence. This means that all the attempts to improve the attendance made by the school and the local authority will be given in evidence and taken into consideration along with the parent's responses to any intervention. It is therefore crucial that parents do co-operate with work agreed to help them with improving the attendance.

On conviction, each parent can be fined up to £2,500 and or imprisoned for up to 3 months. If they fail to attend court a warrant for their arrest may be issued. A pre sentence report is required. The sentence can be suspended for up to 2 years. Other disposals including tagging, requirement to attend parenting courses etc. may also be imposed. A Conditional Discharge means that the offence is proved but that no penalty is being imposed at that time; it does not equate to being proved innocent of the offence. If any further offences are committed within the period stated, this offence will be reconsidered and may affect sentencing.

Penalty Notices and Walsall Code of Practice

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 adds two new sections (444A and 444B), after section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduce Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444 and enable a parent to discharge potential liability for conviction and for that offence by paying a penalty.

Section 3 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives powers to Local Authorities, Head Teachers or other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent is capable but unwilling to secure school attendance. These powers came into force on 27th February 2004.

Under existing legislation, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absence is not authorised by the school.

The Penalty is £60.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period then the Local Authority must prosecute or withdraw the notice. Payment of the Penalty notice is made to and retained by the Local Authority. Prosecution will be in respect of statutory action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. There is no provision to accept part payments over any period of time; notices must be paid in full.

8.0 Quality Assurance

We will maintain a high standard for recording and reporting absence. We will support children and families to achieve positive outcomes by engaging with school staff and other supporting services and agencies. We will report to Governors about the following

- Number of pupils on trajectory to becoming PA
- Overall Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Progress to Absence Target
- Our attendance monitoring process through the School SEF
- Align our processes to the Ofsted Framework for managing school attendance
- Number of vulnerable children accessing other service or agency involvement

COVID 19 Addendum

This addendum is to be used in conjunction with and alongside our full Attendance Policy. The rationale behind its creation is to ensure that the children and staff at Pinfold Street Primary School can attend safely, with additional safety measures in place, in line with the school's COVID-19 Risk Assessment policy.

Due to social distancing and one way systems, we will be unable to continue with our normal drop off and collection times. The following new timings are temporarily in place:

- Morning drop off is between 8:45am and 9:10 am. After this time your child will be marked as late
- Collection times are as follows – Reception and KS1 only(3pm), KS1 and KS2 families(3.10pm) and KS2 only(3.20pm)

Where children are unable to attend school due to COVID related reasons, remote learning will be offered(Online via Seesaw or with a physical workpack) and their attendance code will be allocated in line with Government guidance. A child's attendance will not be penalised if they have to self isolate due to being a contact of a positive case.

Where specific families have concerns/anxieties regarding their child attending school during a pandemic the COVID-19 Risk Assessment will be shared and options offered and put in place to help support the family.

Where families have difficulties physically getting their child to attend school due to shielding etc. the Attendance Officer and Lead will work alongside the family to offer a range of solutions to resolve this issue and ultimately get the child into school when it is safe to do so.

The attendance Officer and Lead will seek further guidance from Walsall Public Health, the Walsall attendance team and Instill-Excellence LTD, regarding any individual family situations to ensure that the very best support can be offered to every child.