



ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve attendance from the Department of Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996;
- The Education Act 2002;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Introduction

The Education Act 1996 requires families to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Supreme Court has determined that 'regular' attendance means that which is "***in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school***" (Isle of Wight Council v Platt) (6th April 2017).

Commitment to Attendance

The staff of The Colleton Primary School is committed, in partnership with families, pupils, governors and the Local Authority, to building schools which provide the best education possible for young people.

Regular attendance is key to achieving this. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. As a school, we will encourage families to ensure that their/our children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. Regular school attendance at The Colleton

Primary School will set pupils up for positive attendance throughout their school life.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there are good reasons for their absence;
- Arrive on time;
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or an appropriate member of staff any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all families will:

- Ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, their legal responsibilities with regard to their child's education and the requirement to ensure their child's attendance at school;
- Ensure their child attends school every day throughout the academic year unless the school has approved the leave of absence;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time and is prepared for the school day;
- Telephone or email the school each day by 9.30am if their child is unable to attend due to illness or any other unavoidable circumstance. Provide a FULL reason for the illness i.e. high temperature, sore throat, vomited, as we need more information than 'poorly' or 'not well' to be recorded as a reason for absence;
- Follow up any phone message with a written explanation for the absence by email, including providing medical evidence when requested;
- Avoid making medical, dental or other appointments during the school day;
- Notify school of any issues that may affect their child's attendance; and
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

School staff will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Ensure Registers are taken promptly by 8.50am and again at 1pm (start of the afternoon session);
- Contact families when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received by 9.30am, to explain the absence
- Send a written request to families where a pupil's absence is unexplained – *see note below on Authorised and Unauthorised Absence*;
- Provide families with their child's percentage % attendance when requested and in end of year reports;

- Work with families when there are concerns over a pupil's lack of regular attendance;
- Will build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school;
- Notify the Education Welfare Service when a pupil fails to attend school regularly or when a pupil has missed 10 school days or more without permission (whether consecutively or not): this being a legal requirement; and
- Where absences persist then a formal referral should be made to the Education Welfare Service which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court;
- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level and identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern;
- Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board;
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and families;
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns;
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence OR has given approval in advance.

Unauthorised absence is when school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence, OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to families, OR when the Headteacher has not approved a families' request for leave of absence.

Families should be aware that it is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise an absence or not. In the case of long term or frequent absences due to illness or a medical condition, supporting medical evidence may be requested. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of a prescription. (Please note that the school is not asking

any family to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost).

Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that children arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. For school pupils and families using the Wraparound morning session, the grounds are open at 8am. All other pupils and families should not arrive before 8.30am. The doors open at 8.40am.

- Registration takes place at 8.50am and any pupil who arrives between 8.50am and 9.15am will be recorded as late to school;
- After 9.15am the lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (This could lead to prosecution by the local authority if the problem persists);
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff and if not resolved will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Families should arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time. Families are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out at the office on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
- When a pupil is being collected from school, families are requested to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their families will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person or contact Social Services.

Leave of Absence - Term time

At The Colleton we believe term time absences should be actively discouraged. Our purpose is to ensure pupils achieve their full potential and there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a family considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for such absence. The law has removed the right for school to grant up to 10 days' leave of absence in special circumstances for the purposes of a family holiday and there is no automatic right to take any leave or holiday in term time. As outlined in the Education

(Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the Headteacher can only grant leave of absence if the circumstances are considered 'exceptional' in which case the pupil's absence will be authorised.

The school holiday dates, INSET days and other important dates are published on the school's website and families are asked to note these when planning holidays and family events.

If there are exceptional reasons for requesting leave of absence during term time, the following procedures will apply:

- The family with whom the pupil normally resides must complete and submit a Leave of Absence form at least one month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office and Website. The Headteacher (or person authorised to do so on the Headteacher's behalf) will consider the application, and will decide whether or not the application can be granted on the basis of 'exceptional' circumstances. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the specific circumstances of the particular application. School will endeavour to respond within 5 working days to the family who submitted the application.
- Where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's absence will be authorised.
- A one-off period of irregular attendance, such as an unauthorised period of leave in term time, can result in a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service and this may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct.
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days (Figures correct as of 30.11.2022).
- If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school contrary to Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The Colleton Primary School collects attendance and absence data daily and weekly from the Registers. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. This collecting of data also enables us to identify those pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern. Should this apply to your child, the Headteacher will contact you to make you aware of the concern. If your child's attendance does not show an improvement you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to agree an Attendance Action Plan.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the families of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The Education Welfare Service

If your child's Attendance Action Plan fails to bring about the required improvement in attendance, we will consider making a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service which works to support schools, families and pupils to promote and ensure good school attendance and punctuality. However, the Service also has a statutory responsibility to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service there are various actions that can be taken to address attendance concerns. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, Penalty Notices may be used to bring about an improvement in a pupil's attendance. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, families will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice. If the absence is due to unauthorised holiday no prior notice needs to be given.

The Fast Track Intervention may also be offered as an early intervention measure designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address school attendance concerns. Fast Track involves engaging families and identifying what improvements and actions need to be achieved over a fixed time frame (usually 8 or 12 weeks).

Families have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly. Where a family fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice will usually be considered appropriate in the following circumstances (these are cited as examples and are not meant to be exhaustive):

- ✓ overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- ✓ family-condoned absences
- ✓ unauthorised holidays in term-time –5 days or more
- ✓ excessive delayed return from authorised extended holidays without prior school agreement – i.e. 2 days
- ✓ persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed) - i.e. 10 occasions in a 10 school week period.

- ✓ less than 80% attendance, the absences being unauthorised; during a 4 school week period
- ✓ a pupil having been excluded from a Wokingham School, being found present in a public place, during school hours, without reasonable justification.

The deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the family understood that permission had not/would not be given) and where this has created unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions (5 days or more), whether consecutively or not, in a 10 school week period, will result in the issuing of a penalty notice.

Non-payment of Penalty Notices:

Non-payment of a Penalty notice, other than those for unauthorised holiday absence, will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice issued for unauthorised holiday absence will result in immediate referral for prosecution for non-school attendance. Where a prosecution does not result following non-payment then the Penalty Notice will be withdrawn under Regulation 9 of the 2007 Regulations.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform The Colleton Primary School in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate is supplied

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to Education Welfare and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a pupil missing education.

Elective Home Education

Families have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows families to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education.

Should families wish to follow this route then this needs to be put in writing to the Head Teacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll.

The school will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to inspect the education put in place at home.

Governors

It is the Governors' legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate attendance at The Colleton Primary School and our figures are presented to the Governing body on a termly basis. The Curriculum Committee has specific responsibility for overseeing attendance matters in our school.

Our Governing Body is also responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance; and
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher/Designated senior lead responsible for attendance

Our Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Identify areas of focus for improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring attendance data, expectations and processes
- Working with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with families to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

Reviewed: November 2022

Ratified: 30th November 2022

Review period: Biennially or earlier if the statutory guidance changes

Responsibility: Full Governing Body