

Parklands Community Primary School

Attendance Policy

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Reviewed by:	Michelle Earnshaw

Rationale

Every child has a right to education and parents are legally responsible for making sure that their child/children, once enrolled at a school, attend/s regularly and punctually. Regular attendance at school is the single most important factor in a child/children making appropriate progress and achieving success. Regular and punctual attendance means doing well academically, developing better relationships with other children and positive behaviour. It also sets up good habits for when young people enter into work and life.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more interesting
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Attendance during one school year	Equates to days absent	Number of weeks absent approximately	Number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	45 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	95 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	145 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	190 lessons
75%	48 days	10 weeks	240 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks	285 lessons
65%	67 days	13.5 weeks	335 lessons

1) Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately, analysed and attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Parents will be regularly sent attendance letters linked to cumulative attendance for their child from the start of the academic year, or from when they were enrolled at the school. The letters will cover:

- concerns about absence, unauthorised absence or punctuality.
- Invitations to join a workshop to strategize or find solutions to any problems
- Invitation to come and discuss attendance with a member of the team
- Formal notices regarding unauthorised absence

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all children are registered accurately.
- Promote good attendance with children at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure a child attends school every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments, making appointments after school and in the holidays

2) Recording Attendance

Attendance registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and sent to the office for checking by 9:15am. The office staff contact the parents/carers of any child who has an unexplained absence before the end of the session. All absences are treated as unauthorised unless or until the school agrees on a satisfactory explanation.

3) Lateness / Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. If your child is late they can miss learning time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 9:00am and **all children are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration is at 8.55 am and it closes at 9.15am.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with West Sussex County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a child is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. <u>Please be advised that, where possible, doctor and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.</u>

Children who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other children. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents, guardians or carers of children who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or West Sussex County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with West Sussex County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail)
Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and / or significantly late, the school is obliged to share concerns with other agencies.

4) What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence
A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:
- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Keep in touch with the school daily throughout the period of absence unless another arrangement is made with you by the school

If your child is absent we will:
- Telephone or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer or Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the West Sussex County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

Third day Absence
If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by West Sussex County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, which may include making enquiries to known friends or wider family. In addition, members of the Senior Leadership Team may make a home visit.

Ten days' absence
We have a legal duty to report the absence of any child who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the

named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number.

Continued or ongoing absence
If your child's absence falls below 93% and they are reported for further absence due to illness, a medical note will be required.
If your child misses 10% (19 days/ 38 sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will arrange for the Attendance Officer to also meet with parents.

5) Understanding Types of Absence

Children are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence**: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **Unauthorised absence**: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
    - Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
    - Family holiday
    - Truancy before or during the school day
    - Absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

6) Penalty Notices and other Legal Measures

Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures
In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

West Sussex County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 20 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting Contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting Orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence, the school must enforce West Sussex County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The *Code of conduct* is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from: https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/6138/fpn_code_of_conduct.pdf

The *Code of conduct* states that schools or West Sussex County Council may issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- Absent for 40 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 12 month period – these do not need to be consecutive
- Persistently late (coded U) after the register has closed
- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold has been met

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/ carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued.

For each case of unauthorised absence the school or West Sussex County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid West Sussex County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to West Sussex County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit West Sussex County Council's website at:
https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/6967/fpn_leaflet_0216.pdf

7) Frequently Asked Questions:

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?
Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best discussed between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, parents should never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to keep them home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Speak to the school immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons and it is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?
Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in uniform and have their book-bag and PE kit. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!
For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

In what exceptional circumstances will my child's absence be authorised?

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence.
It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. If agreed, then any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport
Parents can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families
Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

8) Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.