

Attendance Policy

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Amendments

2020 - DS

2018 – NF/DS/HJ/JA

2018 (September) – PT/DS

Attendance Policy

1.0 Principles

1.1 Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

1.2 Our schools will promote excellent attendance through their use of curriculum and learning materials. This is reinforced in our school's Behaviour and other policies. Excellent attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

1.3 Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

1.4 This Attendance Policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. PVAT schools have a duty to refer to the Local Authority any child of compulsory school age who:

- is continuously or persistently absent from school
- has irregular attendance
- is persistently late to attend school
- has an unauthorised leave of absence as detailed in section 6.0.
- has been excluded and is in a public place at any time during school hours in the first five days of exclusion.

1.5 Schools are required to take an Attendance Register twice a day. This shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. PVAT Schools use the Attendance and Absence Codes, in the Attendance Registers, as required by the DfE School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. The cause of each absence is always required.

1.6 Authorised absences are sessions away from school for a good reason such as illness or another unavoidable cause.

1.7 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. It is classified in 2 ways:

a. Unauthorised absence: for any other absence from school which has not been requested and cannot be authorised. See Section 5.0. This may include:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

b. Unauthorised leave of absence: for any absence from school which has been requested but not granted. See Section 6.0

1.8 PVAT schools will never authorise the unilateral withdrawal of pupils by their parents as a result of a parental concern or complaint. Such absences can be damaging to children's education, are unnecessary, do not allow staff to deal with the issue efficiently, and, as a consequence, will be unauthorised.

1.9 PVAT Schools have a safeguarding duty, in respect of all of its pupils, to investigate unexplained absences as per the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance. The school will share relevant data to the Local Authority and other relevant professionals as required.

2.0 Working together

2.1 Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the school in resolving any problems.

2.2 Wherever possible the school will take action to improve a pupil's attendance and address any underlying causes of problems before requesting intervention from the Local Authority.

2.3 Throughout this policy the term 'parent' refers to all adults or carers with either

- Parental Responsibility, or
- Are responsible for the day-to-day care of the pupil.

2.4 Throughout this policy the term school includes VIP Education (formerly known as Attend EDC). They are an independent Education Welfare provider contracted by the school to raise attendance and deal with welfare matters.

3.0 Expected first day of Attendance

3.1 The school will enter pupils on the Admission Register and Attendance Register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will be attending the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

3.2 Should a pupil fail to attend on the agreed or notified date, then the school will establish contact with the parents to ascertain the reason for this.

4.0 Deletions from the School Admission Register

4.1 Deletions from the Admission Register will only occur on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. PVAT Schools will inform the Local Authority of all deletions from the Admission Register as stated in regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, apart from at standard transition points. The relevant form can be found at <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Children-missing-from-education.aspx>

4.2 Should a pupil meet the criteria of being deleted from the Admission Register and their whereabouts are unknown, as stated in the grounds for deleting a pupil from the school Admission Register, section 8 (1)(f) and 8 (1) (h), then the school will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is. See Appendix A Reasonable Joint Enquires for Children Missing from Education. The Local Authority will be informed of the enquiries into the whereabouts of pupils as stated in the above criteria and should the absence threshold be met, PVAT Schools will remove the pupil from the Admission Register. The CTF file will be retained until further advice is provided from the relevant Local Authority.

4.3 Should a PVAT school receive a written notification, by a parent, to home educate their child, the school must inform the Local Authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. The relevant exit form and local authority contact details can be found on <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Elective-home-education/Elective-Home-Education-EHE-Guidance-Notes-for-Parents.aspx>

PVAT Schools will not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding a pupil or because a pupil has a poor attendance record.

5.0 Monitoring of Absence Levels and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 In each PVAT School there is a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has responsibility for Attendance. To ensure that each pupil has the best opportunity to succeed, PVAT schools will monitor and respond to high levels of absence from school. At frequent intervals, the school will review the pupils whose attendance level is less than that of the school's attendance target. Letters may be issued to parents to inform them of their child's high level of absence. If appropriate, pupils may be spoken with directly regarding their attendance.

5.2 The school will support pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. This will involve assisting in resolving any situation which may be having an adverse effect on a pupil's attendance. The school will undertake case work with pupils and their parents, where thought appropriate, to improve the pupil's attendance this may include the use of a Parenting Contract. Casework is completed up to the threshold where statutory action is deemed necessary.

5.3 Where there is persistent unauthorised absence then the school will provide appropriate records to the Local Authority for them to fulfil their statutory functions, should their threshold be met. The Local Authority has the decision on which, if any, response will be issued. These include a Fixed Penalty Notice. Should a Fixed Penalty Notice be issued, the fine is 'per parent/carer and per child', regardless of who applied for the leave. The parent has 3 choices:

1. A set fine if paid within 21 days.
2. An increased fine if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
3. In the case of a non-payment of the fine the Notice will be withdrawn and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1), of the Education Act 1996. If found 'guilty' then this would result in a criminal record for that parent. Current Penalty Notice figures can be found in Appendix A Prosecution under the Education Act 1966 s.4441 This includes:
 - An Education Supervision Order or School Attendance Order on the child
 - A Prosecution under the 1996 Education Act, section 4441 or section 4441 (a).

5.2 Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Local Authority themselves, to ask for help or information. The Local Authority is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their address and contact details can be found locally, or by contacting the school.

6.0 Planned Absences and Unauthorised Leave of Absence

6.1 PVATs Attendance Policy complies fully with Government regulations. Statutory guidelines state "Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances". Requests for leave in exceptional circumstances should be made in advance of the event and in writing with specific details included such as dates and should be addressed to the Headteacher,

or by completion of the school's Leave of Absence Request Form. Should parents have children in one or more of the PVAT Schools and are requesting the same period of leave, this should be declared within the letter or completed form. PVAT Headteachers may confer about their decision about whether a request for leave is to be deemed as an exceptional circumstance. Should a parent not divulge a PVAT School sibling then any decision on whether a leave of absence is to be authorised may be overturned. If a leave of absence is granted, then it will be for a fixed period of time. Should the absence not be granted, but still taken, then it will be classed as unauthorised leave of absence.

6.2 Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

Any period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. The head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by the school to the Local Authority.

6.3 Unauthorised leave of absence presents a risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued. Please note that:

- A parent can receive more than one Fixed Penalty Notice per academic year
- PVAT Schools will provide appropriate records to the Local Authority for them to fulfil their statutory functions should the threshold of unauthorised leave of absence sessions be met.

6.3 If a parent does not apply for leave but we believe that the pupil has been taken on holiday, then we will write to the parent to express our concern. The parent will be expected to provide contrary evidence to be received at school by a specified date. Should the supporting documentation not be provided then the absence will be coded as unauthorised leave of absence and the relevant procedures will be applied.

6.4 Retrospective approval for absence cannot be granted.

6.5 Should a leave of absence be granted, regulations are clear that any lateness in the return to school from the granted period, may be recorded as unauthorised leave of absence.

6.6 Any request for planned absences for a pupil to participate in a sporting or other educational activity, such as a dance or music exam, should be addressed to the Headteacher. Additional documentation, such as the confirmation letter, should also be included.

7.0 General absences

7.1 Parents should inform the school on each day that their child is absent. The parent needs to provide a reason for their child's absence from school. Should a reason not be received for a pupil's absence, then the school will attempt to contact the parent, through first day contacting procedures, to ascertain a reason for the absence.

7.2. Should no reason for absence have been ascertained, the school may complete a home visit to gain the reason for the absence. A home visit may also be completed if: - the school receive any additional contradictory information, - the staff are concerned about the pupil's absence, - the absence is during the last week of a school term, even if contact has been received from parents.

7.3 In the case of an enforced closure or dedicated / subsidised transport difficulties due to exceptional circumstances the "Y" code is used, which is not classed as an absence. This can be applied to pupils for whom getting to school is problematic due to exceptional circumstances even if the school is officially open. Ordinarily, this relates to pupils who live beyond walking distance of the school.

7.4 If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence over a twelve week period, you may be referred to the Local Authority, who may issue a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

8.0 Lateness

8.1 All pupils should be punctual at arriving at PVAT Schools. Each school has an individual starting time.

8.2 Those pupils who arrive after the starting time, but before the end of the Registration Period will be issued with an 'L' code in the Attendance Register. Those arriving after the Registration Period, but before the end of the session will be issued with a 'U' code in the Attendance Register.

8.3 PVAT schools require late arriving pupils to be signed in. The reason for the lateness will need to be provided. Parents may be requested to assist with signing their child into school should they be a late arrival. Parents may be contacted for a reason for their child's lateness should this not have been provided.

8.4 Schools monitor the late arrival of pupils. Persistent lateness will be monitored, and the school may undertake casework with pupils and their parents, to overcome any barriers, to improve punctuality. Ultimately, continued unauthorised lateness, that which is coded as 'U', could result in Statutory Action being taken by the Local Authority. Please refer to section 5.3.

8.5 Pupils arriving late because of school transport lateness will not be marked as late, however pupils need to ensure that they have signed in to school.

8.6 If your child has unauthorised lates 10 times over a twelve week period, you may be referred to the Local Authority, who may issue a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

9.0 Absence for Medical Appointments and Medical Evidence / Documentation

9.1 PVAT Schools request that wherever possible, doctor and dental appointments are made outside the school day. If this is not possible, parents are requested to contact the school and provide the school with a copy of medical evidence, such as the appointment card. No evidence of the appointment may lead to the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Pupils should sign out at the school's dedicated place and must sign in when returning to school following the appointment. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the day without being collected by a responsible adult / an adult identified by the parent as being responsible.

9.2 Schools may request additional medical evidence / documentation if:

- A Pupil has a planned prolonged absence from school
- A pupil has been absent for over 3-5 school days
- A Pupil has a high level of absence and little improvement has been made
- A pupil has a medical appointment during the school day
- A pupil is absent, due to illness at the beginning or the end of a school term.

9.3 Schools will accept this medical evidence in the form of an appointment card or prescription, for example. The medical documentation however must justify the period of absence from the school. If a medical professional states that this is an ongoing issue and sets a date to review the situation, then no further evidence will be required until the date of the review. Parents and pupils will be supported by the school to reengage with school, once the medical evidence / document period has concluded. A full

GP note is not required.

9.4 For pupils who are absent from school due to ongoing health needs and a medical professional has provided the required documentation, the decision about providing schoolwork for completion at home will be made on an individual basis and in consultation with all relevant parties. If it is deemed appropriate, and with the consent of parent, the pupil's details may be forwarded to the Local Authority for consideration to be given as to whether alternative provision is required.

10.0 Other circumstances

10.1 It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts, birthday treats etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement).

10.2 It is unlikely that a PVAT school will agree with any reduction in a pupil's timetable unless additional documentation has been provided which states that this is necessary. Should a reduced or reintegration timetable be agreed then this will be for a set period of time with a review date. Any flexi-school arrangement requests are required to be discussed with the Headteacher.

10.3 The school will notify the Local Authority, at regular intervals, as required by Government Guidance, any pupils who fail to attend school regularly.

10.4 Pupils become of Statutory School Age on the 1st September, 1st January or 1st April after their 5th Birthday. Pupils are no longer of Statutory School Age on the last Friday in June of the Academic Year in which they turn 16 years old. PVAT Schools require an explanation of any absences of pupils not of Statutory School Age. These absences, however, must be coded in the Attendance Register as an authorised absence. Schools monitor the absence levels of non-statutory school age pupils and will support in improving the attendance levels as needed.

11.0 Summary

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time. There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (equivalent to 9.5 days or more absence in a school year) has been shown to compromise pupil attainment. An attendance of 90% is equivalent to missing 19 days or nearly 4 weeks from school in a year. Only 10% of pupils who are persistently absent from school achieve 5 A*-C grades at GCSE.

Impact of absence:

- 90% attendance = 19 days off school
- 85% attendance = 29 days off school (a whole half term!)
- 80% attendance = 38 days off school
- 70% attendance = 57 days off school (a whole term!)

Impact of lateness:

- Over a school year –
- 5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent
- 15 minutes late every day = 10 days absent
- 30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact the school. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

Reasonable Joint Enquiries for Children Missing Education (CME)

The 2016 DFE Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance states that local authorities and schools should agree roles and responsibilities locally in relation to making joint enquiries. Please note the process below is specifically for potential CME cases, which are defined as when the child stops attending without explanation and school have no knowledge of their whereabouts; and are not persistently absent children who would be dealt with under the school's normal attendance procedures.

First 0-10 school days of absence

Actions to be taken by school

In the 0-10 day period schools should:-

- Employ their first day contact processes
- Make contact with known relatives, significant adults
- Make enquiries with classmates of the child (if appropriate)
- Liaise with school(s) attended by siblings.
- Arrange home visit(s) by school staff
- Send letter(s) home
- Check with previous school(s) if appropriate
- Make contact with agencies known to be working with family, including MOD if military family

N.B. If you have any safeguarding concerns about the child you MUST immediately contact First Response

If these actions have been completed and the child has still not been located, the matter should be referred to – www.Educationcoreoffer@staffordshire.gov.uk. This will ensure an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is allocated to establish the reason for the unknown absence and lack of information. This request must include a record of the reasonable enquiries made so far.

Between 10-20 school days

Actions to be taken by EWW

- Undertake unannounced home visit(s)
- Make enquiries in local community e.g. neighbours, community groups.
- Make enquires with other local agencies e.g. Housing, Women's Aid, Police, Children's Services etc.

If the child is not located after the above joint enquiries have been made, and twenty school days (four school weeks) have elapsed, the school has a duty to refer the matter to the CME Team using the referral form found at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation and it is at this point that the child can be removed from roll.