

Pinvin Federation

Safeguarding – Attendance Policy

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Date of next review	Summer Term 2020

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Principles

For a child to achieve their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and staff share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital all children attend school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good school attendance. The School displays a positive and pro-active ethos that places high value on attendance and punctuality, as well as valuing its partnership with parents/carers to promote good attendance. This policy advocate's close working relationships with all stakeholders to provide a cohesive approach to tackling attendance, whilst supporting individual pupil needs.

Aims

- To encourage all pupils to attain excellent attendance.
- To continue to strive for the best possible attendance in cases where excellent attendance is not always possible because of circumstances, such as medical conditions.
- To eliminate as far as possible absence from school.
- To maintain accurate attendance data with all absence followed up.

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Roles and responsibilities

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. This member of staff will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. He/she will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents and carers the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep these to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Head teacher as defined in law.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it annually
- Agree targets for attendance at School
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Head teacher regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring or school profiling exercise
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is a cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively

EWO Service Level Agreement

In Partnership with school staff will:

- Follow the Attendance and Registration Procedures
- Monitor attendance of all pupils ensuring Attendance Monitoring Procedures are followed
- Where appropriate meet with parents to discuss attendance and work together to improve attendance
- Promote good attendance within school the school community e.g. attendance assemblies
- To meet regularly with the school staff to discuss attendance and advise appropriately

Staff - Class Based

- To ensure that all pupils are registered accurately in a timely manner twice daily
- To follow the Federation Attendance and Registration Procedures
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the attendance officer on matters of absence 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
- Discuss attendance where a concern at meetings with parents and carers including Parent Consultations

Parents

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility (section 7 Education Act 1996) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. A 'parent' is defined in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and is defined as follows;

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that the child lives with and is looked after by that person, irrespective of what their relationship is).

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Parents will:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- notify the school daily if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child’s safety, as well as administrative reasons
- request authorisation for all ‘leave of absence’ including holidays
- provide evidence of medical or other appointments in school hours
- work with the school and any other external agencies to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence
- attend meetings as required in relation to their child’s attendance

Pupils

- Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school 8.30 - 8.50am
- If late, pupils must sign in at the school office
- If pupils are required to leave the premises during the school day they must sign in and out at the school office. (This is for their safety as well as administrative purposes)
- Pupils, parents and carers should inform their class teacher if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, long-term medical issues etc.
- Pupils should understand that only ‘real’ illnesses can be a reason for absence.

Taking the register

Registers are treated as legal documents – indeed they may be used as evidence in court cases. For this reason they are retained for a minimum of three years.

- The legal register is held on our SIMS (Management Information System)
- The register will be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session
- Once the school has been officially notified of the reason for the absence, the appropriate registration code will be inserted by the teachers, if known or the school office
- The register must clearly differentiate between whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised by the school
- It is the policy of the school that no absences are unaccounted for
- Detailed registration procedures can be found in Attendance and Registration Procedure Handbook

Punctuality and Lateness

The School actively discourages late arrival by challenging it whenever it occurs

- A child will be registered late in the morning if they arrive after 9:05am, the scheduled start of the day. The ‘Late’ will be recorded on our electronic management system
- Our level of contact will be increased if lateness continues. 12 lates coded as U (unauthorised absence) could result in a fine.
- Arrival after the close of register will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with the Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated absent lates (U code) are unauthorised absences and may be subject to legal action. Parents of pupils 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 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 12 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 12 week period, the school may ask Worcestershire County Council to issue parents with a fixed penalty notice.

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Understanding Types of Absences

Authorised Absence

- Authorised absence is absence with permission from the Headteacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided, e.g. ill health
- Even when pupils are engaged in Approved Educational Activity off-site, they must not be marked as present, as good Health and Safety practice requires that the school needs to know who is on the premises in the case of a fire drill or real emergency
- The school may authorise absence in the following circumstances

Unauthorised Absence

- Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the authorised representative of the School. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.
- The school will not authorise absence in the following circumstances
- No explanation is offered by the parent/guardian
The explanation offered is unsatisfactory eg shopping, birthday, minding the house etc
- Leave of absence which is taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or is in excess of the time agreed by the school
- Special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries
- Minding siblings
- Parent/Carer or sibling illness
- Family holidays taken in term time
- Missing the school bus, in certain circumstances

- Unauthorised absence from school is considered truancy. This can take the form of absence from school for complete days, lateness. Each of these is as serious as the other, but the strategies for effecting change may need to be different
- When parents are unaware of such absences there may be significant danger to the young person's safety as it is likely that their whereabouts are unknown by a responsible adult
- Unfortunately, there may be occasions when truancy is condoned by parents. If such collusion occurs it is the duty of the school to work with the pupil and family to change their attitudes

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

- Persistent Absentees are pupils whose attendance falls below 90%
- When a child becomes at risk of becoming PA (attendance falls to 93%) further support will be offered by the school
- Whilst discretion may be deployed (e.g. in cases of long term illness), Pinvin Federation will refer children whose attendance is below 90% to the EWO for further support. At this point a penalty notice may be issued

Temporary Schools Closures

If school has to close due to severe weather conditions, problems with amenities such as water or heating, fire, structural damage or in-service training, no attendance registers are needed. This will be coded appropriately.

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Reporting Absence

First Day Response

A child not arriving at school where the parents have not informed the school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- On the first day of absence parents are expected to contact the school, by telephone, leaving a message on the absence line or sending an email before 9am
- The parent reporting the absence should give the reason for the absence and the expected date of return
- If the date of the return is unknown, regular contact on a daily basis should be kept with the school; if the school receives no contact, a member of staff will follow up. This may include conducting home visits to check on the welfare of a child/ren

If your child is absent and we have not been provided with a reason, we will:

- telephone you on the first day of absence, this continues every day whilst the child is absent – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. Failure to make contact could result in a "Safe and Well" visit.
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our EWO/Headteacher if your child's attendance is a concern

Six days unauthorised absence

After twelve sessions (6 school days) of unauthorised absence we may issue a fixed penalty notice.

Ten days absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who has 10 consecutive days absence to the local authority.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST IN TERM TIME

Leave of absence taken during term time will not be authorised except in exceptional cases. Leave of absence requests should be made by completing an absence request form (available from the school office) 6 weeks before the date of the absence. The Headteacher, in partnership with the Governing Body, will assess each request individually, following, Federation Policy, National and Local guidance, and issue a response in writing. Emergency requests for leave will be considered individually. Please contact the School Office to discuss further.

A fixed penalty notice will be issued for unauthorised holiday taken during term time.

Please contact our Attendance Officer if you wish to discuss this further.

External Appointments within School Hours

The school recognises that there are occasions when pupils need to go out of school for an appointment (e.g. doctor, dentist, optician, etc.). If at all possible, all appointments should be made outside of school hours or during the lunch break.

- If an appointment is during the school day, a request for the absence to be authorised should be made at least 24 hours before the appointment to allow for authorisation to be considered
- A whole day of absence is not permitted for routine appointments

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- The request can be made verbally or in writing to the school Attendance Officer
- Evidence for the appointment may need to be provided (e.g. appointment card/hospital letter)
- We acknowledge that there are occasions when requests cannot always be made in advance as appointments at doctors and dentists, etc., can sometimes be made on the actual day. Where this is the case, required evidence must still be provided when the child returns to the school or the absence may not be authorised.
- We must have evidence of which pupils are on the school's premises and in our care, therefore when a pupil leaves the school to attend an appointment during the school day, he/she must sign out on the electronic signing in/out system in Reception
- When the pupil returns during the school day they are also required to sign back in
- We require all pupils leaving for an appointment to be collected by a parent, carer or other adult notified to us by the parent in person. We will not allow a child to leave alone. (Being told that a parent or carer is going to wait in the car park, etc., is not sufficient for our safeguarding procedures)

Education of Pupils with Medical Needs

In response to the guidance – Access to Education for Children & Young People with Medical Needs, DfES 0732/2001 – Pinvin Federation recognises its responsibilities 'for all pupils unable to attend school for medical reasons. Young persons should be able to access education without stigma or exclusion.' The school's aim is to ensure pupils have access to as much education as their medical condition allows.

- Pupils covered by this may:
 - Be recovering from an illness or injury, keeping the pupil away from school during recovery
 - Have a long term or recurring illness
 - Have an illness or clinically defined mental health disorder which causes them to be absent for a period in excess of 15 days, where medical opinion states they are still unable to access mainstream school
 - School may request guidance from GP/Consultant regarding individual pupil's medical conditions

The SENCo will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that Medical Needs Referral Forms (Request for Involvement and Request for Medical Information forms) are completed and passed to the relevant agencies as quickly as possible.
- Ensuring that the pupil receives the appropriate support to access learning
- Ensure a One Page Profile is written, if appropriate.
- Arrange for the relevant member of staff to meet with any Medical professionals to plan appropriate work
 - The school will also be responsible for requesting special arrangements where necessary.

Monitoring and Protocols for dealing with Absences

- The Attendance Administrator will monitor absences via electronic registers on a weekly basis
- If a pupil's attendance falls below our school target of 96%, procedures will be activated
- If the attendance rate continues to deteriorate, the school will begin to follow the protocol for subsequent trigger points
- All actions will be recorded electronically by the appropriate person depending on the level of trigger point

Attendance and the Law

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 Places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and pupils under the age of 18.

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Section 7 of The Education Act 1996 requires parents to secure the education of their children of compulsory school age. The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

- a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and
- b) to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

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Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school and are not attending regularly:

- Penalty Notices: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 Magistrates Court Action under Sec 444 (1) and (1a) of the Education Act 1996 Penalty Notices Worcestershire Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices states that where a child has had 12 unauthorised absences in a 12 school week period, the school may request a penalty notice be issued. The code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures that the powers for this legal sanction are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.
- Penalty Notices can be issued when
 - a pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

Legal Action taken under Section 444 (1) and (1a) Education Act 1996

Where the school has tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absences but the measures taken have been unsuccessful. If there is either no improvement in the attendance nor satisfactory evidence provided for the absences following their intervention, then it is likely legal action at Magistrates Court will be initiated.

Sanctions available to the court are as follows;

- a fine of up to £2,500
- a conditional discharge – you will be given a set amount of time in which to improve your child's attendance. Should you fail the Council may bring a further prosecution against you and, if found guilty, you will be sentenced for both offences
- an absolute discharge – the case is proved but you will not be subject to a penalty, although you will receive a conviction
- a community order such as unpaid work, curfew or tagging
- imprisonment - for up to three months