

PERRYFIELDS INFANTS SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY



Helping each other to learn and grow

Perryfields Infant School is committed to providing a rich and diverse educational experience to all its pupils. If pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. Any issues that impede full attendance will be identified as swiftly as possible.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Perryfields Infant School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all pupils registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Pupils who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Pupils who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. The Department for education has published data on their website that clearly shows this link between attendance and attainment (see appendix 1). For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve full attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seem to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Missing Education and Child Employment Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognised achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The school attendance register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes which identify why the pupil was absent from school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide whether or not the absence is justified and, if so, should ensure that the most appropriate authorised absence code is entered into the attendance register.

The Education Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (provided the Essex Code of conduct criteria has been met).

If a pupil is absent without a leave request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in line with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child/ £60 if paid within 21 days). Parents/carers who choose not to pay the fine(s) within relevant timeframes could face further legal action.

In compliance with section 436A of the Education Act 1996, the school will, after making appropriate checks, report any pupil who is believed to be 'missing from education' to the Local Authority. Such referrals should be made to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service by no later than the tenth day of absence. The Local Authority has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

All requests for leave of absence must be made in advance, in writing to the Headteacher.

Absence for the following reasons could be authorised where parents have followed the appropriate procedure: -

- sickness (telephone call on first day of absence)
- unavoidable medical/dental appointment (written notification to Headteacher)
- days of religious observance (written request to Headteacher)
- exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement (written request to Headteacher)
- service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside of term-time
- transport arranged by the Local Authority has failed to arrive where the child lives beyond statutory walking distance.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

Any other request for absence (e.g. family holiday) will not be authorised.

PROCEDURES

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Missing Education and Child Employment Services any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the LA and the DFE where requested.

- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

ROLES RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

As agreed in the home-school agreement: -

SCHOOL

- At Perryfields Infant School an electronic registration system is used and the data is automatically loaded onto the attendance data base. Pupils are expected to be in the playground ready to enter school at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after 9.00 a.m. must go straight to the school reception where parents/carers will be asked to sign their children into school. This is so we have a clear record of who is on the school premises. Should a child arrive after 9.05 a.m. a late mark will be written in the register. After noon registers are marked between 1.05 p.m. and 1.10 p.m. for the afternoon session. Should a child arrive after 1.10 p.m. a late mark will be given;
- Parents who fail to contact the school to report their child as absent will receive contact via a telephone call (first day contact call);
- Where a child is persistently late the school will write to the parent/carer confirming the start time of school and request that they ensure that their child arrives in good time for the start of the school day;
- The Headteacher is responsible for attendance issues and will check the registers on a regular basis to identify any attendance/punctuality issues;
- The Administrative Assistant is responsible for analysing the registers and reporting any concerns to the Headteacher;
- The Class Teacher is responsible for taking the register daily, once for the morning session and once for the afternoon session.
- Upon receipt of the electronic registers the Administrative Assistant will ensure that the correct absence code has been entered against any pupil who is not present or late;
- The Administrative Assistant is responsible for ensuring that registers are kept safely and are available for inspection;
- Where school staff hold concerns relating to the safety or whereabouts of a child who has failed to arrive at school, such concerns will be raised with relevant safeguarding services;
- Requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis and only leave due to exceptional circumstances will be authorised by the headteacher. All requests must be applied for on a school 'Leave of Absence' application form (see appendix 2) together with a supporting letter, with sufficient notice to enable a response to be provided;
- Where attendance levels are causing concern, school staff will contact parents to arrange a meeting to identify the reasons for absence (School Attendance Meeting). Parents may be required to provide medical evidence where illness absence is considered high;
- In cases where unauthorised absences continue to be recorded, school will consider making a referral to the Missing Education and Child Employment service;
- Arrangements for re-integration will be discussed following periods of extended absence, to ensure that appropriate support is in place to enable the pupil to reengage with their education. This Individual Re-integration Programme will include all members of school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the child as possible.

PARENTS/CARERS

- Parents are expected to make contact with the school on each day that their child is absent;
- Parents must ensure that:
 - if their child is experiencing difficulties in school which may lead to absence, they contact school staff to discuss concerns and find a resolution which prevents absences;
 - when school staff request medical evidence, such as appointment cards, appointment texts (to cover absences incurred as a result of attending GP or dentist appointments)

- or prescribed medication (to cover whole days of absence as a result of diagnosed illness) that such evidence is provided without delay to enable absences to be authorised;
- whenever possible all medical and dental appointments to be made after school or near the end of the day;
- where a parent experiences difficulties obtaining medical evidence, school nursing services may be able to liaise with the relevant GP/medical practitioner to secure this evidence on behalf of the school. Parents will need to provide permission for information to be shared in this way;
- failure on the part of the parent to provide such medical evidence may result in absences being recorded as unauthorised which may lead to a referral to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service.
- Parents must only request leave if there are exceptional circumstances as family holidays will NOT be authorised under any circumstances;
- Expectation to work with school to resolve any attendance issues.

PUPILS

- To start to take responsibility for good attendance and wanting to get to school on time appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Teaching children the life skills needed to be school ready every day.

REGISTRATION

At Perryfields Infant School an electronic registration system is used and is automatically loaded onto the attendance data base.

- All the school doors open at 8.55am until 9.00am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.
- Children arriving after 9.00am must go straight to the school reception where parents/carers will be asked to sign their children into school. This is so we have a clear record of who is on the school premises.
- Should a child arrive after 9.05am a late mark will be written in the register.
- Registers are marked between 1:05 p.m. and 1:10 p.m. for the afternoon session. Should a child arrive after 1:10 p.m. for the afternoon session, a late mark will be given.
- All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents.
- The register is a legal document and must be marked accurately, recording pupils' attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised. A certified extract of the register can be used in legal proceedings against parents/carers for failing to ensure their child's attendance.

LATENESS

Once the doors are closed at 9.00am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupils who come into school this way from 9.05am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspects, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for the parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on each day that their child is absent. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence and have been unable to contact the parent then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code o).

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parents, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unable to explain why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children are very ill there are times when they shouldn't be at school. Parents are asked to read 'A parent's guide – common childhood illnesses' and 'Infection Control Information for Parents' which can both be located on the schools website. If parents/carers are unsure whether their child is too poorly for school we ask parents to either phone the school for advice or to bring their child into school. As a school we always err on the side of caution and would always contact the parent/carer if we felt a child was too poorly.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to invite them to a meeting and ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

When children have an illness that means that they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The Government has an expectation that all children must attend school every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important for pupils to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In Perryfields Infant School we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a pupil's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Missing Education and Child Employment Services (MECES).

The Missing Education and Child Employment Services will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

SignedChair of Governors

Dated

Appendix 1 – Attendance –cause for concern sheet
Appendix 2 - Leave of Absence Form