



Attendance Policy

Evidence of intentions and practice - for the information of
staff, governors, parents, LA, OFSTED and DfE

Prepared by:

Mrs C Woollin

Head

Approved by:

LGB

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At Parkstone Primary School, all staff work collaboratively to encourage every pupil to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their maximum potential. We are determined in encouraging the development of high self-esteem and for our children to take pride and ownership of their learning. In conjunction with this, we will continuously provide a clear framework for parents and staff as well as clear procedures for involving parents and/or external agencies where appropriate. Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils that are registered at our school on the school website. Parkstone encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that **“parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly” (DfE 1999).**

Aims

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 ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen 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.
- Reinforce the notion that every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled and that parents are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- Emphasise the importance to all pupils and their families that maximum attendance at school is vital for achieving their full potential.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare 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 recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Purpose

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, absence means missed learning; without it, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. Parkstone Primary School wants each and every child to have the best possible attendance at school to enable them to reach their full potential. There is a strong link between good school attendance and achieving good results for children. Children 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. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning. Absence may also have an effect on friendships and a child's social and emotional development and national statistics show that young people who are frequently absent from school are more likely to become involved in, or be a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 the Governing Body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning (8.55am) and the afternoon (1:15pm) sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

Our school sees 97% attendance or above as the target for all pupils. Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and September 2013 make clear that Headteachers are not allowed to authorise holidays (or other leave of absence) in term time unless there are very exceptional circumstances. The school upholds these regulations and supports the use of financial penalties and court action where necessary.

Promoting good attendance

For the purposes of this policy and practical reasons within school, weekly attendance will be measured from Monday to Friday. Good attendance will be celebrated on a weekly basis as well as at the end of each half-term, term and year.

- Every Monday, the attendance for each class will be announced in Praise Assembly. Each class will display their attendance for the preceding week in their classroom.
- Parkstone pounds will be awarded weekly in EYFS/KS1 and in KS2: £10 for a class with 100% attendance; if no class has 100%, then £5 is awarded to the class with the highest attendance.
- Classes in each year group will compete for the highest attendance. The winning classes in EYFS – Y3 will have the 'Attendance Bear' for their year group in their class for the whole of the following week and the winning classes in Y4 – Y6 will have the 'Attendance Trophy' in their classroom for the week. In EYFS – Y3, the 'Attendance Bear' will be able to go home for the weekend with a child who has had 100% attendance in the winning week, with names picked at random by the class teacher.
- Every week, children with 100% attendance will be awarded a Marvellous Me 100% Attendance badge.
- Every Friday, any class that has achieved 100% attendance for the preceding week will be given a treat to share amongst all class members.
- Full attendance is one of the five aspects of the Leading Learner system. Each week a Leading Learner star is awarded to every child who has had full attendance, arrived at school on time, shown good behaviour and completed their homework and reading. Stars can be exchanged for prizes in multiples of 5 stars.

- Every half-term an attendance ceremony will be held. Pupils who have achieved 100% attendance receive a certificate.
- Attendance letter home every half-term to inform parents of their child's attendance.

Absence from school

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 8:30am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning or emailing the school office.
- To provide medical evidence where possible, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer. Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:30am.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has not been at school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer (for example through a telephone call or email). Only the school can authorise any absence. 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 not at school without the permission of both parents and the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is not at school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. This includes children who arrive after 9:30am, when registers are closed. These absences will affect the child's overall attendance record which is monitored by the Education Welfare Service and remains on their school file. This also includes absences due to illness/medical reasons, unless medical evidence has been provided by the parent.

Illness/Medical absences

In addition to the points above, if a child is absent due to illness, the school can request medical evidence for the absence. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc. Children with underlying medical conditions which the school is aware of and medical evidence has been provided for will not have to provide evidence each time the child is unwell if it relates to the condition. Children with minor ailments such as earache, sore throat or stomach ache **should still come to school** and parents should inform the class teacher that their child feels unwell in case their symptoms worsen, at which point parents would be contacted and asked to collect the child and take them home. Staff will refer to advice on the NHS and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health websites when making the decision to authorise an absence.

<https://what0-18.nhs.uk/parents/carers/child-unwell-ok-go-nurseryschool>

Absence for Other Reasons

Absences for reasons such as religious observance (up to 2 days per year) or close family bereavement may be authorised by the Headteacher. These requests must be discussed with the school. Absences for close family members' weddings or funerals will be limited to one day's authorised absence, if granted. It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To inform the office, in writing, of the need for leave in circumstances which are known in advance.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

Absence for Hoildays

Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to them. Absence during term time, as a result of term time holiday, interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in school. A minority of parents cause disruption to their children's education by withdrawing them from school during term time for the purpose of a family holiday. Many of these parents mistakenly believe that they have a 10-day holiday 'entitlement'. Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Any family holidays should be booked and taken during the 13 weeks of holidays that all children have each year.

School response

Parkstone Primary School strongly discourages holidays being taken in term time and will not authorise term time holiday, unless in exceptional circumstances. We will make clear to parents/carers the likely educational impact upon their children if extended leave is taken during term time and the reasons for this will be explained to the parents/carers. This explanation should show an understanding of the parents'/carers' perspective. The importance of being at school near and during SATs will also be stressed. If parents/carers decide to take a holiday in term time, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised. **Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by the Education Welfare Service for unauthorised holiday absence during term time. This fine is payable at £60 per child, per parent.**

What Happens When a Child is Absent

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. By 9:30am each morning, office staff will have checked the class registers and have begun contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent but whose absence has not been reported by that parent/carer. Calls to parents/carers will be made by 10:30am.

On the first day of a child's absence, parents are asked to contact the office to give the reason for the absence before 9:30am. This may be done by phone, email, letter or in person. Parents are to contact the school office every other day if their child is absent for more than one day. If a child has a medical or other necessary appointment, parents should contact the office prior to the day of the absence. Evidence of the medical appointment is necessary for the absence to be authorised.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The office staff will then be in contact as soon as possible with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child. If no contact is made with the

parent/carer and there are concerns about the child's well-being, a home visit may take place or contact made with outside agencies.

Should any pupil have been absent for two continuous weeks without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns, then the school may of course make an earlier referral to the Education Welfare Officer, Parent Support or Social Care. Should the child be currently involved with Social Care, the child's social worker will be notified immediately.

Punctuality and lateness

Parents who arrive after the gates and classroom doors are closed must bring their child into school through the school office reception. Parents must sign their child into school using 'Entrysign' giving a reason for the lateness. The child will be marked as 'L' (late) in the register with the reason noted and number of minutes late entered. If a child arrives at school after 9.25am they will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence) and this will affect their attendance percentage, as they were absent at registration. This applies in all cases for being late.

Parents of those children who are regularly late arriving to school will be invited to a meeting with their child's class teacher to investigate reasons for lateness and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance. If punctuality does not improve following this, parents will be invited to make an appointment with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The late record will be monitored weekly by the school's attendance officer and the Educational Welfare Officer when she visits. In the case of repeated lateness an email will be sent home to parents notifying them of this advising them on how many occasions their child has been late and how many minutes of education they have missed due to this. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children are persistently late.

Attendance monitoring

Parkstone Primary School monitors attendance carefully and considers the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting their own priorities for the coming year. The Attendance Lead and Attendance Officer monitor the attendance of children whose attendance is falling below the 97% threshold due to unauthorised absences or a pattern of regular authorised absences and implement strategies to enable attendance to improve.

Through letters, the school website, the school attendance policy document and consultation evenings, parents/carers are reminded about their responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly and the consequences of poor attendance. Parents will be encouraged to understand the full implications for both their children's academic progress and their social development when they miss school.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for bringing any concerns to the attention of the Attendance Lead. If there is concern about a child's absence, teachers will contact the school office immediately. Parkstone Primary School believes that class teachers should have strong relationships with parents and therefore they will be the first to raise any attendance concerns with parents in an informal manner. They are best placed to alert parents to learning missed by children and any other social and emotional consequences of absences.

The Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly and will challenge the school regarding the

attendance of any child whose attendance falls below 97%, even if this is due to authorised absences like illness. The school needs to show that they have followed the “stepping stone” system and put in place strategies to help improve the attendance of any child below 97%.

Reviewing Attendance

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school attendance figures are as high as they should be. The responsibility to authorise requests for absence has been delegated to the Headteacher. Letters will be sent to all parents who request absence and the seriousness of unauthorised absence will be clearly explained. The school will keep accurate attendance records.

A termly attendance report for governors and the SLT will be compiled by the Attendance Team. This will include numbers of and reasons for authorised and unauthorised absences; attendance figures for year groups and key groups with analysis of those figures and actions/review of actions for improving attendance in subsequent terms.

Repeated unauthorised absences (steps in procedures)

The ‘Stepping Stone’ System

The school is following the ‘stepping stone’ system, as recommended by Cambridgeshire County Council. The ‘stepping stone’ system is intended to enable schools and colleges to continuously and consistently monitor and address issues pertaining to poor school attendance. The system offers schools the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a request for a penalty notice may be necessary. The system is based on a four step process which schools can follow when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism.

It is intended to apply to any absence which is unauthorised, but with some modification it might, in certain circumstances, be used to target patterns of absence which are authorised, but which are beginning to cause concern. Schools should, however, decline to continue to authorise such absences once doubts arise as to their legitimacy.

Key Features and Potential Benefits:

- Attendance Lead and Attendance Officer can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern.
- In most cases Letter 1 brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required.
- The system provides a clear record of the school’s own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to request a Penalty notice or involve Education Welfare Service.
- The school can readily identify emerging attendance problems and therefore target support accordingly.
- The school builds up a consistent record of their own attendance interventions and is able to ensure that when they do need to involve the Education Welfare Service, they do this only when their own efforts have proved unsuccessful.

How the ‘Stepping Stone’ Three Step System Works:

1. The school produces a record of attendance every fortnight for all pupils whose attendance has fallen below 97%.
2. These pupils are discussed at fortnightly attendance review meetings, looking for emerging trends and patterns. Families are targeted by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher for additional support. Support from within school is made available if lateness and attendance continues to be an issue.
3. Discussions are held with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on a regular basis in relation to the attendance of any pupil whose attendance has fallen below 97%. During these meetings, the EWO will challenge the school to provide evidence of interventions for any child whose attendance has fallen below 97%. The EWO will also look at all authorised absences including illness and those due to exceptional circumstances at these meetings.

Step 1 – Letter 1

1. After informal discussions with the class teacher, if pupils are identified for the first time with attendance falling below 97%, a copy of Letter 1 (Appendix 1) is sent to the parents/carers and copied to the Education Welfare Officer.
2. Should the pupil's attendance improve, but the improvement fails to be sustained, a further copy of Letter 1 may be sent at a later date.
3. This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the attendance letters folder on the school network. The file name indicating Letter Type, Child's Name and Date. A record of each letter sent is kept on CPOMS.

Step 2 – Telephone Call to Parents/Carers

1. If attendance does not improve, parents/carers will be contacted by phone to advise them of this. They will be reminded about the importance of regular school attendance and any immediate issues will be discussed.
2. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will discuss barriers to the pupils' regular school attendance and identify any possible solutions.
3. A target of 97% attendance over a specified monitoring period will be set and medical evidence will be required for any absences to be recorded using the 'I' code.
4. This call will be documented and parents will receive an email documenting what interventions have been agreed, the 97% attendance target and the monitoring period. Parents/carers will be informed that a penalty notice could be issued if targets are not met (Appendix 2).

Step 3 - Letter Requesting Formal Parent Contract Meeting

1. Following the sending of Letter 1 and the telephone call, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve within an eight week period, or should it fall to a lower level, parents/carers will be sent Letter 2 (Appendix 3). They will be invited to attend a Formal Parent Contract Meeting with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to discuss issues that may be affecting the pupil's attendance and identify how the school can help address this. This meeting will be formally documented (Appendix 4) and parents/carers will be reminded that it is their, "legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually." During the meeting, a minimum attendance target of 97% over an 8 week monitoring period will be set. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will sign this formal agreement and all parents/carers present at the meeting will be asked to sign that they understand and agree to this. A copy of the Education Welfare Service 'School Attendance' leaflet will also be given to parents. A copy of this is available on our school website under "Information for Parents" and "Absence".

2. This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the attendance letters folder on the school network. The file name indicating Step 2, Child's Name and Date. A record of each letter sent is kept on CPOMS.
3. Parents/carers will be requested to contact the school within seven days receipt of the Letter 2 to arrange a date to attend a formal Parent Contract Meeting with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.

Step 4 – Request for Second Parent Contract Meeting or Penalty Notice

1. Following the formal Parent Contract meeting, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve within the agreed 8 week monitoring period, or should it fall to a lower level and no satisfactory explanation for the absences has been provided, then the school may request:
 - a. A further Parent Contract Meeting to discuss extending the monitoring period
 - b. A penalty notice for non-attendance form will be completed and sent to the county's Legal Panel for discussion.
2. The Education Welfare Officer will be informed and may write to parents/carers requesting their attendance at a Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) meeting.

Penalty notices

Penalty notice fines will only be issued in accordance with the terms within the Code of Conduct set out for Hull's Education Welfare Service. They will only be issued in relation to absence from school, which is unauthorised. They may be issued in two circumstances:

1. Unauthorised Absence - Penalty notices will be issued to parents/carers if one of the criteria below is met:
 - a. At least 10 unauthorised sessions over an 8 week period with all absences recorded as unauthorised.
 - b. 90% and below mostly unauthorised over a longer period.

Before issuing a Penalty notice, the school will deploy other strategies to help the family improve attendance rates. Such strategies might include:

- Informal meetings with parents and class teachers
- Support from within school
- First day absence phone calls/emails
- Step 1 – sending Letter 1 to the child's parents/carers to remind them of their legal responsibilities
- Step 2 – Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to call the child's parents/carers and offer the help of other services agencies (eg. Early Help referral) if this has not already been done
- Step 3 – sending Letter 2 requesting formal parent contract meeting and set targets for improvement
- Step 4 – request for a second parent contract meeting or referral to the Education Welfare Service requesting a penalty notice.

2. Unauthorised Term Leave (including holidays) - As described above, any parent/carer who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty notice.