

"We all play our part in achieving excellence in everything"

Attendance Policy (Reviewed November 2015)

Statement of intent:

The school aims to work together with parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually.

Parents' responsibilities:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, by letter or in person. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a child-minder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence - subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted. *(See Appendix 1 - first day contact guidelines)*.
- Parents may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason; the school will record such absences as unauthorised. In some cases, this may be retrospective and authorisation may be withdrawn should circumstances arise leading the school to decide that the reason given was not truthful. If this occurs, this will be discussed with the parent.
- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration. Children arriving after should report to the front office and the parent should sign the Late Book. (In the case of older unaccompanied children, the child should follow this procedure).

School responsibilities:

- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.
- Registers will be taken twice daily. Any child arriving after the close of the registration period will be recorded as "late" for that session.
- Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will inspect registers weekly in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems at an early stage. Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Headteacher must be informed. This can be done in person or via a note in the register.
- Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation have been received, the class teacher will inform staff in the office or the Headteacher, who will endeavour to make contact with the parent.
- All absence notes from parents should be dated and initialled by the class teacher and returned to the office with the register, where they will be stored. Only notes regarding absences where there

are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents.

· The Headteacher will regularly collect attendance data and use this during meetings with the Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and the Attendance Officer. Other agencies, such as Social Care, may also be involved.

Persistent absentees:

Persistent absentees are defined as children whose attendance is below 90% and where unsatisfactory reasons are given for absence. However, the procedures outlined below may apply to children whose attendance is above 90% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging, e.g. regular absences on particular days or persistent lateness.

Appendix 1 - First Day Contact Guidelines

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at The Pilgrim Federation of schools is as follows:

1. As soon as the registers are returned to the office, staff check absentees against messages received.
2. For pupil's for whom no message has been received, staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
3. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
4. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. *(NB - if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence, for example, children should stay away from school for 48 hours following sickness and diarrhoea).*
5. Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, a note should be sent.
6. Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

Appendix 2 - requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if children attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance, well before GCSE.

The Government's guidance states that only under **exceptional circumstances** may the Headteacher consider authorising permission for a child to be absent from school for a holiday. This may be for example following a close family bereavement or serious illness, or a forces parent returning from active service.

This policy should be looked at in accordance with the Federation Safeguarding policy.

Appendix 1: Letter to parents/carers regarding attendance percentages

Appendix 2: Purple, Green, Amber and Red attendance letters for parents/carers

Appendix 1

25th November 2015

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to inform you that the government has changed the definition of 'persistent absentee' from children attending 85% of the time or less to children attending 90% of the time or less, regardless of whether it is due to sickness or other absence.

As a result of this, and following Norfolk Council Policy, I will be writing to all parents/carers at the end of each term to inform you of your child's attendance percentage. This way we can celebrate good attendance and flag up any attendance concerns throughout the year rather than waiting until the end of the year to address them.

If the percentage is 100% then the letter will be purple and will recognise an outstanding level of attendance. If it is above 95% it will be green and will recognise a good level of attendance.

If it is below 95% but above 90% then the letter will be amber. It is important at this stage to appreciate that we are working together to avoid 90% or less attendance as, at that point, the County Council Attendance Officers become involved. If this should happen, evidence for absences and evidence of working with the school are vital for proving your commitment to your child's attendance.

If the percentage is below 90% the letter will be red which will mean that any future absences will only be authorised with medical evidence (ie, medical prescription, appointment card) until attendance rises to 90% or above. At this point it is vital to work together to help show significant improvement in attendance to avoid Fast Track meetings with the Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer from the County Council. There is a real danger of parents being prosecuted and incurring fines or penalties if attendance isn't improved quickly once the Fast Track meetings are started.

Some parents/carers may receive an attendance letter before the end of each term. Outstanding attendance is rewarded with certificates presented at whole school assemblies. Our Federation Attendance Policy is available on our website. Alternatively you can ask for a copy at the school offices.

We hope that you will work with us to achieve the highest level of attendance possible for your child.

Yours faithfully

Mary Dolan

Executive Headteacher

Appendix 2

Purple letter

Dear

I am delighted to inform you that is currently at 100% attendance. This is an outstanding level of attendance that will help ensure thathas a successful education.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Miss Mary Dolan

Executive Headteacher

Green letter

Dear

I am pleased to inform you that is currently at % attendance. This is a good level of attendance that will help ensure thathas a successful education.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Miss Mary Dolan

Executive Headteacher

Amber letter

Dear

Your son/daughter is currently at % attendance. I realise that some illness is unavoidable but it is important at this stage to appreciate that we are working together to avoid 90% or less attendance as, at that point, the County Council Attendance Support and Enforcement Officers become involved. If a child has attendance below 90% they are considered as a persistent absentee.

If you wish to discuss the content of this letter then please contact the school. Alternatively you are welcome to contact Angie Barker (Parent Support Advisor) or Zoe Jardine (details below) for further support to improve your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely

Miss Mary Dolan

Executive Headteacher

Zoe Jardine

Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer North

zoe.jardine@norfolk.sch.uk

01263 739053

Angie Barker

Parent Support Adviser

abarker6nrm@nsix.org.uk

01328 710483

Red letter

Dear

Your son/daughter is currently at % attendance and is now considered to be a persistent absentee.

Poor attendance like this may have a serious impact on his/her education and life chances. Any further absences **will** require Medical evidence (ie medical prescription, doctor's appointment card,) in order for school to authorise until the attendance percentage is above 90%. Unauthorised absences can lead to legal intervention from the County. At this point it is vital for us to work together to help show significant improvement in attendance to avoid Fast Track meetings with the Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer from the County Council. There is a real danger of parents being prosecuted and incurring fines or penalties if attendance isn't improved quickly once the Fast Track meetings are started.

If you wish to discuss the content of this letter then please contact the school. Alternatively you are welcome to contact Angie Barker, Parent Support Adviser abarker6nrm@nsix.org.uk 01328 710483, or Zoe Jardine (details below) for further support to improve your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely

Miss Mary Dolan

Executive Headteacher

Copy to:

Zoe Jardine

Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer North

zoe.jardine@norfolk.sch.uk

01263 739053