

Castle Primary School ATTENDANCE POLICY

REVIEW DATE: September 2025

PRINCIPLES

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

The school will:

- Promote good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials.
- Ensure that good 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.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the Parents/ Guardians and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, the reason should never be covered up nor should Parents/Carers 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/Carer.

- Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 5 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the Parent/Carer or have general concerns about the absence to Staffordshire Local Authority.
- Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, showing whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or absent.
- If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent each half-day of absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only schools can authorise the absence not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required preferably in writing and on the day of absence.

Any AUTHORISED absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as illness or other unavoidable cause.

UNAUTHORISED absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

This includes:

- **Term time holidays**
- **Days off on birthdays**
- **Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the school day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at school too late (after 9.05 a.m.) to get a mark**
- **Instances where attendance is continuing to fall**
- **Reasons which the school believes are false**
- **Routine dental appointments**

Absence from school may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments, which are in school time. A letter of medical appointment should be provided.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties with attendance should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed.

These Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Staffordshire Local Authority.

PROCEDURES

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Information on attendance and how to report an absence is given to Parents/Carers at the beginning of each school year and to all in year starters.
- Parents are required to telephone and inform school on the morning of the first day of Absence (by 9.05 a.m.) and on each day thereafter.
- If Castle Primary has received no contact by 9.05 a.m. we will telephone Parents/Carers to identify why their child is not in school. This is part of the school's commitment to safeguarding the safety and welfare of children. Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that the school office has a minimum of two emergency contact numbers with which any unexpected/unexplained absence can be checked.
- A procedure exists in school for recording reasons for absence.
- The School Office will inform staff of all notifications of absence.

- A file is kept to record details of children who have to go home during the course of the day.
- Parents and Carers should inform the school office concerning any medical or dental appointments or absence for religious observances that need to be held during school time.
- Pupils arriving after the close of registration (9.05.a.m.) will receive a **Late Mark**. This counts as an **unauthorised** absence.
- Regular late arrival at school, which has not been resolved satisfactorily, will be investigated further. It is important that the school office or Head Teacher are made aware of any mitigating circumstances, as soon as possible.
- Parents/carers of children whose attendance falls below 90% will receive a letter stating that school has a concern over the child's attendance. Parents/carers will be required to provide medical evidence if their child is absent from school due to illness on every occasion until the child's attendance rises. If no evidence is received the absence will be marked as unauthorised even if an absence message has been received.
- If any child has 10 unauthorised absences then the Local Authority will be informed.
- In appropriate circumstances, entering into Parenting Contracts and issuing Penalty Notices will be considered.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED

Term time leave (INCLUDING HOLIDAYS): Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.

10 Sessions of Unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period:

A Penalty Notice may be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absences in a 10 week period.

However, we retain the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the above thresholds.

Per Parent/Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will continue to be issued per parent per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance the fine will be charged at:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of the issue, reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

(Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Second Offence

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at:

£160 if paid within 28 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Third Offence

On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years of the first penalty notice for either a term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. The case may proceed to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of 'Failure to send a child to school' the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.

Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had **10** unauthorised absences or is late **10 times** over a **twelve week period**, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or lateness
- There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent or carer may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a Penalty Notice.
- If there is concern about a child's absence Class Teachers or Teaching Assistants will contact the school office immediately.
- If there is a longer term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Head Teacher by the Class Teacher or Office Clerk who will contact the Parents or Carers.
- The Head Teacher, with the Office Clerk, will analyse the attendance data to identify trends for individual pupils', classes and year groups enabling the school to target efforts. Wherever possible action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance, investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to Local Authority.

- Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the Parent/Carer receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

Information about individual school targets

Our Office Manager will contact Parents/Carers on any day a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation ('first day contact'). By contacting the parent the school also ensures that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. Parents have access to their child's latest attendance by contacting the school office. This includes percentage attendance, recorded reasons for absence and registers taken at the beginning of a morning and afternoon session (these are recorded electronically through the schools' Management Information System).

The school sets attendance targets each year. The Head Teacher and Governors agree these. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

Our school target for attendance for 2024/25 is 97%.

REWARDS FOR GOOD ATTENDANCE

All children who have 100 per cent attendance for the WHOLE academic year will be recognised and awarded at our whole school presentation evening.

Each half term pupils with 100% attendance will be presented with a certificate and a small reward. At the end of each term the pupils with 100% for that WHOLE term will receive a badge in recognition of their achievement and another small reward. This will continue for each of the three terms in the school year.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Office Clerk
Head Teacher

Mrs J Walker
Miss J Mason

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly and on time. All school staff are committed to working with parents to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

RECORDS OF CHILDREN'S ABSENCES

- **LETTERS FROM PARENTS**

Letters giving reasons for absences should be dated and kept inside each Year group's folder of the Class Notes file in the main office.

- **TELEPHONE MESSAGES**

Messages given by someone calling into school etc, should be recorded by teachers on a sheet of paper and kept inside each Year group's folder of the Class Notes file in the main office.

- **CHILDREN GOING HOME DURING THE DAY**

A file is kept to record details of children who have to go home during the course of the day.

MONITORING AND REVIEWING

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance. They will request an annual report from the Head Teacher and also receive an update each term through the Head Teacher's Report to Governors.

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 our attendance figures are meeting the appropriate figures.