Attendance Policy 2026

Castle Primary School

Approved by: Sally Dakin	**Date: 27th January 2026**
Last reviewed on: January 2026	
Next review due by: January 2027	

Policy Statement

At Castle Primary School, we give clear guidance for staff, pupils and parents about the importance of regular, punctual school attendance and this reflects the caring nature of the school. The School acknowledges that it is vital for all pupils to attend regularly, be punctual and therefore maximise the benefits of the education we provide. A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, but they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which parents and school must seek to avoid. We promote good attendance in partnership between home and school to ensure a positive attitude to education and its long-term benefits.

The Law on School Attendance and Right to a Full-Time Education

- The school will comply with the latest DFE guidance will adopt an attendance policy which references the latest DFE guidance 'Working Together to Improve Attendance'.

  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf This will be adapted from The Key support tool.

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.
- Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.
- This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between

regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms, including crime (the proportion of children that had been cautioned or sentenced for any offence that had ever been persistently absent was 81% and for serious violence offence was 85%) ***Working together to improve school attendance, DFE, August 2024.***

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the School's aims for maintaining a high level of regular attendance and punctuality and also the important administrative steps to be taken to monitor and record levels of attendance.

2. Aims

- To encourage pupils to see the importance of regular, punctual attendance.
- To develop a manageable and regular means of monitoring attendance, including follow up procedures where attendance or punctuality gives cause for concern.
- To foster and develop a positive attitude amongst parents, pupils and staff to regular, punctual attendance.

3. Procedures

It is essential that registration procedures be followed rigorously if the school is to monitor attendance and punctuality.

The following procedures are implemented:

- Morning register is called promptly as close to 8.50am as possible. Any pupils not present by 9.00 am, are to be marked absent, (N). The parents/carers of these children will then be contacted by admin, initially by telephone.
- By 9.00 am, all ARBOR registers are closed by class staff. Any pupils who arrive after this time must sign in at the front office. Admin staff will update the registers with the late code (L) if pupils arrive before the official close of morning registers at 9.15am. After close of registration, late arrivals will be marked as unauthorised (U) in the appropriate registers before the end of the morning session.
- Afternoon register is called at 12:45 pm in EYFS and KS1 and 1pm in KS2. and closed on ARBOR.
- Any pupils who leave the premises during the school day, after being registered present, must be signed out via the office.

4. Registers

Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days (380 sessions) of the academic year. Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents that may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They may also contribute to pupils' end of term reports and to records of achievement. For these reasons registers are completed electronically. If a child is absent, parents should contact school on the first day of absence to inform the school that he/she is unwell or has an appointment. Further contact should be made if a child is to be absent for more than one day. Notes should be added to ARBOR by the admin staff only. For children with persistent illness absence, a request for medical evidence will be sent, and parents expected to show evidence of doctor's appointments or prescribed medication. Unless

evidence is provided, the absence will be unauthorised. For children with longer term medical issues, reviews will take place with the attendance lead. It is not acceptable for children to be kept off school for reasons other than illness/medical, or in exceptional circumstances.

5. First Day Contact & Procedures to address concerns

As part of raising and maintaining awareness of the importance of regular school attendance the school has adopted a policy of contacting the family on the first day of a pupil's unexplained absence.

How the system operates:

- *8.40am: Doors open*
- *8.50am: Register called*
- *9.00am: Register closed in ARBOR. Latecomers sign in at the Office (L). Parents contact the school if pupils unwell or have a medical appointment.*
- *9.15am: Official Registers Close: Pupils arriving after this time are Unauthorised (U) Admin updates registers on ARBOR*
- *9.30 a.m. Admin contacts the family of any pupils with unexplained absence, by text or a phone call – both will be logged on ARBOR. If a family cannot be contacted the Headteacher is made aware, to decide on further action.*

Any unexplained absence telephone calls, letters and responses will be recorded on CPOMs. The parent will be contacted requesting information regarding the absence. Attendance is tracked to ensure timely and robust interventions when attendance emerges as a concern. In addition, parents whose children who have regular days absence (e.g. regular Fridays off) will be contacted and invited into school by the attendance lead. A structured conversation, with the outcome being to improve attendance will take place and parents will be reminded about the importance of pupils attending school regularly. This will be logged on CPOMs and any relevant support will be offered and, if appropriate, a referral to the Family Support Worker. A follow up review meeting will be arranged.

If attendance drops below 94%, our attendance lead, Mrs Chesters, will make a call to the parents. This will be to try to understand why the attendance has fallen, and if there is anything that the school can do to support the child in getting in school, on time, every day. This will be followed up with a letter.

If attendance drops below 90%, (authorised or unauthorised), your child will be classed as persistently absent, a letter will be sent to confirm this. Parents may be invited to attend an attendance meeting with the attendance lead to discuss what we can do, together, to improve attendance. An action plan will be put into place to ensure an improvement is manageable.

If attendance does not improve after an action plan is created, another meeting will be arranged via letter to review the strategies and to discuss potential fines and prosecutions.

Our approach to improving a pupil's attendance is a supportive one, based on a strong partnership between home and school. Pupil voice will always be listened to, and barriers to attendance will be explored and removed, where possible.

Weekly attendance figures are produced for each class and these are shared with pupils, with the winning class receiving a 5-minute reward to be decided upon as a class.

Termly attendance figures, including SEND, EHCP and Disadvantaged groups are carefully tracked by the attendance lead. These figures feed into an SLT meeting at the start of each month, with any support offered, or required, discussed. Data is shared with Governors at each meeting, via the Head Teacher Report.

Family Holidays During Term Time

The Department for Education has made amendments to the 2006 regulations for Pupil Registration. These amendments remove all entitlement to family holidays and extended leave, as well as the previous statutory threshold of ten school days. This means that there is no authorised absence for holidays during term time. At Castle Primary School, 'Exceptional circumstances' are considered, this includes leave of absence when parents return from the Armed Forces. The Headteacher will use their discretion.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued for unauthorised holidays, in line with expectations set out by the Department for Education, when parents take their children out of school during term time. From 19th August 2024, the cost of the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) has increased. The fine for school absence penalty notices across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. If you do not pay the fine you may be prosecuted in court.

If a parent receives a second penalty notice for the same child within any three-year period, the charge will be a flat rate of £160; there will be no reduction if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count. A parent cannot receive more than two penalty notices for the same child within any three-year period. This is because it is clear that previous penalty notices have not worked. Once this limit has been reached, another action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count in this limit.

Lateness

Doors open at 8.40am and school begins promptly at 8.50 a.m. All pupils are expected to be in school for registration by this time. Gates are locked at 8.55am and any child arriving later this should enter school via the main entrance, report to the school office and sign themselves in the late book giving the reason for lateness. The child will then go to their classroom.
Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action will be taken, and parents will be invited to attend a meeting to address lateness.

Pupil Reward System

Pupils are encouraged and expected to attend school 100% of the time, aiming to never miss a minute of learning. Each week, the class with the highest percentage attendance are rewarded with a 5-minute reward of their choosing. Individualised incentive schemes are also used to improve attendance and punctuality for individuals and specific families for whom this is a challenge.

What can parents do to help?

- Read the '**DfE guidance for Parents'** which can be found HERE.
- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is away.
- Arrange appointments outside of school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is absolutely necessary.