

Attendance and Absence Policy



The aim of the Absence and Attendance Policy is to minimise the amount of time lost to absence in term time in order to maximise the education potential of every child. This can be achieved with the support of parents/carers by ensuring that absence in term time is not taken unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Absence for any reason during term time interrupts a child's education and disrupts educational progress. This is important for all children in all years.

Nationally, good attendance is defined as school attendance above 96% and children whose attendance falls below this level will not be able to fulfil their educational potential.

Poor attendance is defined as below 90%. It is our mission to ensure that every student has access to high quality education and the opportunity to engage positively with the school. It is important to us that all children are able to enjoy a feeling of belonging to their class and school community and good attendance only promotes this.

1. General Statement

Under Section 36 of the Education Act 1944 parents/carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive sufficient fulltime education whether by regular school attendance or otherwise. Whilst parents/carers are primarily responsible, the school has the responsibility to support attendance and to investigate unexplained absence properly. Irregular attendance (including lateness) does not constitute grounds for exclusion.

2. Registration and Reporting of Absence

The school will keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils will be marked present or absent. The register will also show whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised by using the appropriate code.

Registration will take place promptly at 8:45am. School Gates will be open from 8:30 am and Classroom doors will be open from 8:35 am.

Children arriving after 8:45am but before 9:15am will be given an 'L' late mark (denoting that the child arrived before the registers closed).

After 9:15am, children will be given a 'U' late mark (denoting that the child arrived after the registers closed) and meaning unauthorised absence.

Parent/carers must notify the school of all absences and an absence may be authorised retrospectively where the school is satisfied as to the explanation offered. This policy will be referenced in information given to new parents/carers (see Appendix 8) and may also be downloaded from the school's website.

3. Absence

Only the school within the context of the law (Section 199 of the Education Act 1993) can approve absence not parents/carers. If the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence (having conducted further investigation) or where no explanation is forthcoming at all, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. In the event of any unauthorised absence, the school will send a letter to the parents/carers enquiring as to the reason/s. Absence will usually be authorised in the case of illness, leave for medical or dental appointments, family bereavement and days of religious observance. The school will request evidence of medical and dental appointments and may ask for evidence to be provided for sustained periods of illness.

4. Persistent Unauthorised Absences

Wynndale Primary School has adopted the Nottinghamshire Local Code of Conduct which has been implemented to ensure that Penalty Notices are applied consistently and fairly across the local authority area.

Once a child has reached 5 days (10 sessions) unauthorised absence over a 10 week rolling period, a warning letter will be issued (see Appendix 1). This letter states that any further absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice to each parent/carer for each child to whom persistent absence applies. If the unauthorised absence persists, or reaches 10 sessions, the Local Authority will issue Penalty Notices to each parent/carer for each child to whom persistent absence applies. In this instance, a letter will be issued advising of this (see Appendix 2). The penalty is £160, reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the 28th day you may be prosecuted at a magistrates court resulting in a fine of up to a £1,000 per parent per child. A second offence (within 3 years) will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days (no reductions). A third offence (within 3 years of the date of issuing the first offence) will result in the case be presented straight to the magistrates court.

5. Holidays During School Term Time

The Headteacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

The definition of exceptional circumstances is as follows:

“An exceptional circumstance is an unforeseen, unexpected event in a person’s / family’s life which could not have been expected or reasonably planned for”.

In order to comply with these regulations, we will not authorise a request for absence in term time for the purpose of taking a holiday. This includes:

- Holidays during term time.
- Day trips or long weekends.
- Children accompanying parent/carers on business trips.
- Weddings.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Parents/carers may still request a withdrawal from learning in term time. Requests should be made as soon as possible, giving at least 6 weeks’ notice in writing using the Withdrawal from Learning request form which is available from school or from the website.

If the school refuses your application and you still withdraw your child from school, the absences will be treated as unauthorised (Appendix 3). If the school has evidence that a parent/carer has removed a child from school for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is 5 days (10 sessions) or more within a 10 week rolling period, then the Local Authority will issue Penalty Notices to each parent/carer for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies. Parents/carers will be informed of this in writing (see Appendix 5).

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as a right. The school will have discretion to authorise exceptional absences for off-site activities and special circumstances (each case will be assessed on an individual basis) and the special position of 'Traveller Families' recognised by Section 199 of the Education Act 1993 will be observed.

As a general principle, the Headteacher will consider each request for a withdrawal from learning individually, taking into account the circumstances, such as:

- The nature of the event for which leave is sought.
- The frequency of the request.
- Whether the parent gave advance notice (a minimum of six weeks).
- The pupil's attainment attendance.
- Possible impact on learning and examinations.
- The children's ability to catch up on missed schooling.

However, the reason would still need to be exceptional. If an absence is unauthorised there is no appeals process.

6. Persistent Lateness

Your child will be considered late for school if they are registered after 8:45am - all pupils need to enter the main reception after this time to receive a present mark.

If your child arrives after 8:45am but before 9:15am, in this instance, an 'L' code will be used to note this in the attendance register. If your child should arrive after 9:15am then this will be classed as unauthorised absence and will be marked with a 'U' in the attendance register.

A Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority if your child is persistently late (after 9:15am and marked with a 'U' code) in excess of 10 sessions over a period of 10 school weeks.

7. Absence for Medical Reasons

Children are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so whether as a result of short-term, long-term or recurring illnesses. But children should not be kept away from school when they are well enough to go to lessons or when they have minor ailments which do not prevent them from taking part in their education. A useful rule of thumb is whether the ailment would keep parents/carers and teachers away from work.

We have an established system in place to enable parents/carers to report their child's absence because of illness. They should phone the school on the morning of their child's absence, giving details of their child's name, class and reason for absence. It is reasonable for the school to ask the nature of the illness, ask the parent/carer the expected length of absence and make arrangements for the parent/carer to call school again if the situation changes. Should you fail to report your child's absence, you will be contacted by telephone by a member of staff to establish the reason for your child's absence.

We have a right to consider whether to accept the parent/carers position with regard to medical absence as there are occasions when parents falsely report absences to the school as medical absence. If the school has concerns that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence accruing, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card or medical certificate. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher whether to authorise absence and they can refuse to authorise absence if, after considering all the available information, they believe that the pupil's absence does not appear to be caused by genuine illness. If the school chooses not to authorise the absence it will notify the parent or carer of this in writing (see Appendix 6).

Unfortunately, there are occasions when a child can suffer from more sustained health problems. If this is the case, the school will contact the medical professionals involved with the child in order to be able to support the child in the most appropriate manner. The school would like the parent/carer to give permission for the medical professionals to be able to speak to the school about the best way to support the child. In these circumstances it is not appropriate for the parent/carer to contact the school every day and a more appropriate frequency of communication will be established with the parent/carer. This bespoke arrangement will be put into place by the Headteacher. It will be monitored on a four weekly basis and reviewed to see if this response is still appropriate.

8. Excluded Pupils

Where a pupil has been temporarily excluded he/she will remain on the school roll. The absence will be treated as authorised. Where a pupil has been permanently excluded, his/her absence will be treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress but, on conclusion of that process, if the permanent exclusion is confirmed, he/she will be struck from the school roll. While the pupil remains on the school roll, the school will recognise the responsibility towards the pupil out of school by setting work.

9. National Pupil Absence Data

The school will provide the following information to the Secretary of State for Education and the Local Authority about levels of authorised and unauthorised absence in respect of pupils in the reporting school year: a) the total number of registered pupils of compulsory school age on the roll for at least one session during the reporting period; b) the number of pupil sessions in that period; c) the number of authorised absences and the number of pupils with at least one or more unauthorised absence; d) the number of unauthorised absences and the number of pupils with at least one unauthorised absence.

10. The school's Attendance Data

The school is set an absence target by the Local Authority and one of the ways we aim to achieve this is by reducing the number of holidays taken in term time.

Appendix 1 – Warning Letter for Unauthorised Absences

Example letter warning of Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence

X Academy

5 April 2023

Mr XXX & Ms XXX
XXX Meadow Lane
Nottingham
NG7 5HP

Dear Mr XXX & Ms XXX

PENALTY NOTICE WARNING

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

The registers at X Academy show that, to date, your child has missed X days (X sessions) of school due to unauthorised absences over the last X weeks.

You, as parent, have legal responsibility under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. As such unless your child's attendance improves you will be referred to the local authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child.

In some circumstances the local authority may decide a prosecution via Magistrates court is more suitable, for instance lengthy or repeated absence periods. This would include circumstances where a parent/care has already had two fines for (child's name) over a 3 year rolling period.

Should your child (Insert name) have any further absences which result in them having 5 days (10 sessions) over a 10 week rolling period we will request that the local authority issue a penalty notice of up to £160 for each child who is absent. The notice can be issued to both parents/carers for each child whose absence meets the Penalty Notice threshold.

Please take immediate steps to ensure your child gets to school on time every day and obtain medical evidence if he/she is too ill to attend. Any other reason for absence should be discussed with the school and it is the school's decision whether to authorise any absence that is not covered by medical evidence.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 2 – Example letter advising parent/carer that school have requested Penalty Notice to be issued for unauthorised absence

Mr xxxxxxx & Ms xxxxxxx
XX Meadow Lane
Nottingham
NG7 5HP

Dear Mr xxxxx & Ms xxxxxx

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

Further to our letter dated (Insert Date) notifying you that your child had incurred unauthorised absence from school and that any further absence may result in a request to the Local authority to issue a Penalty Notice fine.

We are now writing to advise you that because your child (insert name) has had unauthorised absences of 5 days over a 10 week period a request has been made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice to you for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 3 – Example letter warning of Penalty Notice for Holidays taken during term time

Mr XXX & Ms XXX XXX

Dear Mr XXX & Ms XXX

PENALTY NOTICE WARNING

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

I note your application to take out of education for days to go on holiday. Schools are only allowed to agree a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application and do not feel it meets the exceptional circumstances criteria and therefore your request has been declined. Should you decide to remove your child from school on the dates indicated in your application then their absence will be marked in the register as unauthorised.

An unauthorised leave of absence of 5 days or more (over a 10 week rolling period) for the purpose of a family holiday can lead to you being issued with a penalty notice fine of up to £160 for each child who is absent. The fines can be issued to both parents/carers for each child. In some circumstances the local authority may decide a prosecution via Magistrates Court is more suitable, for instance lengthy or repeated leave of absence periods.

If you do remove from school for the period stated in your application, I will request that the Local Authority issues a penalty notice.

Yours sincerely,
Head Teacher

Appendix 4 – Example letter accepting a request for a Withdrawal from Learning for Exceptional Circumstances

Mr XXX & Ms XXX XXX

Dear Mr XXX & Ms XXX

PENALTY NOTICE WARNING

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

I note your application to take out of education for days to go on holiday. Schools are only allowed to agree a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application and feel that in this instance it meets the exceptional circumstances criteria and therefore your request has been approved. The absence will be marked as unauthorized but will not be subject to penalty fining on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,
Head Teacher

Appendix 5 – Example letter informing of Penalty Notice being issued for leave of absence in term time

Mr XXX & Ms XXX XXX

Dear Mr XXX & Ms XXX

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

On (insert date) we wrote to you to explain that we would not authorise (child name) absence from school for days for a holiday. We also informed you that this could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued to you.

I am now writing to advise you that a request has been made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

In some circumstances the local authority may decide a prosecution via Magistrates court is more suitable, for instance lengthy or repeated leave of absence periods.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Appendix 6 – Example letter informing parents that absence due to illness has not been authorised

Mr XXX & Ms XXX XXX

Dear Mr XXX & Ms XXX

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

On (insert date) you reported your child as being absent from school due to illness. After considering all of the available information, I am unable to authorise the absence on this occasion because the absence does not appear to have been caused by genuine illness. This will be considered as an unauthorised leave of absence.

An unauthorised leave of absence of more than 3 days/6 sessions (over a 6 week rolling period) for the purpose of a family holiday can lead to you being issued with a penalty notice fine of up to £120 for each child who is absent. The fines can be issued to both parents/carers for each child.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,
Head Teacher

Appendix 7 - Example letter advising parent that school suspect an unauthorised leave of absence

Our Ref:

Mr xxxxxxx & Ms xxxxxxx
XX Meadow Lane
Nottingham
NG7 5HP

Dear Mr xxxxxl & Ms xxxxxx

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

Between (date) and (date) your child was absent from school. We suspect this was for the purpose of a holiday/family event in term time.

Please contact the school by (date) to provide evidence this was not the case. If reasonable proof is not provided a request will be made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

APPENDIX 8 - Attendance Flyer given to all parents/carers in the school Welcome Pack

There is an expectation that stakeholders – parents/carers, staff, pupils, governors and outside agencies - will work together in many different ways, including ensuring that children attend school unless there are particular circumstances, e.g., illness, an exam, hospital appointment.

It is important for your child's education, life-long learning and life skills that they attend school regularly (unless they are ill) and arrive at school on time.

Attendance

Why should your child be at school?

- Apart from developing skills, knowledge and friendships in a rich learning environment, there is an expectation from the school that when children become part of our school community, they will attend regularly.
- From the term after a child is five years old, there is a statutory requirement for him/her to receive full-time education.

When should your child be at school?

Every day during school term time, except for staff training days, illness or authorised absence

Holidays during Term Time

Holidays within term-time are not permitted due to Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2007, applicable from 1st September 2013.

The Headteacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

In order to comply with these regulations, we will not authorise a request for absence in term time for the purpose of taking a holiday. This includes:

- Holidays during term time.
- Day trips or long weekends.
- Children accompanying parents/carers on business trips.
- Weddings.
- Child/family birthday

This is not an exhaustive list.

Parents/carers may still request a withdrawal from learning in term time. Requests should be made as soon as possible, giving at least 6 weeks' notice in writing using the Withdrawal from Learning request form which is available from school or from the website.

If the school refuses your application and you still withdraw your child from school, the absences will be treated as unauthorised. If the school has evidence that a parent/carer has removed a child from school for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is 5 days (10 sessions) or more in total over a 10 week rolling period, then the Local Authority will issue Penalty Notices to each parent/carer for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies or a Summons for irregular school attendance. Parents/carers will be informed of this in writing (see Appendix 5).

How do we know that your child is at school?

At the beginning of every morning and afternoon session, from pre-school through to year 6, a teacher takes the class register. This legal document is examined every day by the office staff and any absences are noted, with 'pattern' and longer absences being followed up. However, pre-school (Foundation 1) are not compulsory and therefore the procedures for absence do not apply.

What happens when your child is late?

- Lateness causes embarrassment for the child, upset for the class and additional workload in the office.
- The start of the day is 8:45am. School Gates will be open from 8:30 am and Classroom Doors will be open from 8:35 am. If your child arrives after 8:45am but before 9:15am, in this instance an 'L' code will be used to note this in the attendance register. If your child should arrive after 9:15am then this will be classed as unauthorised absence and will be marked with a 'U' in the attendance register.
- All late data is monitored by staff and reported to the Local Authority.
- Should we have a concern about your child's lateness, we will contact you either by telephone or by letter.
- If your child is persistently late (U Code) for 10 sessions or more over a period of 10 school weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority

Absence

When should your child be absent from school?

- If your child is unwell, if your child has not had a clear 48 hour gap from the last bout of sickness or diarrhoea or if your child has been granted written authorised leave from school.

How do we know that your child is not at school?

- This will be reflected in the register, which will show that for a particular period of the day or the whole day, that a pupil is absent.
- If the absence is authorised, the office staff and teachers will be aware and will code the absence as such.
- Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of illness, to let the office staff know that their child will not be at school
- If the school does not receive notification of the child's absence, a member of the office staff will telephone the parent/carer on the first day -of absence for an explanation.

What happens if my child is sent home ill in the morning?

- The afternoon session will be marked with the code for illness
- Parents/carers will not need to send in an explanation note for the afternoon session

Absences that may be Authorised during school term-time

- Any medical appointments, providing that a letter stating the details has been received.
- Illness, providing that a letter has been received by the school stating the reasons why your child was absent during term-time

Unauthorised absence during term time

Any absence which is not considered exceptional by the Head will be unauthorised.

We have the right to consider whether to accept the parents/carers position with regard to medical absence as there are occasions when parents report parentally condoned absence to the school as medical absence. If the school has concerns that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence accruing, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card or medical certificate. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher whether to authorise absence and they can refuse to authorise absence if, after considering all the available information, they believe that the pupil's absence does not appear to be caused by genuine illness. If the school chooses not to authorise the absence it will notify the parent or carer of this in writing. Please refer to the school's Absence and Attendance Policy which is available from the main school office or on the school website.