

Attendance Policy 2015/16

“Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Government expects:

- *Schools and Local Authorities to*
 - *Reduce absence including persistent absence*
 - *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled*
 - *Act early to address any patterns of absence*
- *Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early and ensure that all pupils are punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly”*

(Department for Education – Advice on School Attendance (www.education.gov.uk) July 2012)

The Head Teachers and Governing Bodies of local schools take very seriously their responsibilities for pupils’ attendance. Together they have agreed the following Attendance Policy. The main body of the policy has been formally agreed by the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies of the following schools:

- Amblecote Primary School
- Gig Mill Primary School
- St. James’s C of E Primary School
- The Ridge Primary School

What the law says about School Attendance:

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1966 says: *“If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his/her parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted”.*

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September-July). Any exceptions to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the Head Teacher.

This policy is informed by DFE. Circular 11/91 “The Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006” and “Education Act 1996 section 444, the “School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence,” DEF 1994 – Paragraph 21, page 4 which reminds us that: “Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call, written letter) in relation to a particular absence does not, by itself, oblige the school to accept it”.

There is an expectation that over the course of an academic year, a child’s attendance will be 96% or more. Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the Government as persistent absence.

Parents / Carers must:

Ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by ensuring their child attends school unless there is a reason for the absence which has been approved by the school. **Medical appointments must be made out of school time wherever possible.**

If a parent or carer considers their child has an illness which may warrant them remaining at home then they must:

Consider first of all whether they feel that their child would still be able to take part in the majority, if not all, of the school's activities. In this case, they should still send their child to school. Should the child become unwell during the day and/or if the school feels that they are no longer able to participate in school activities, the school will contact parents to collect their child.

If parents feel that their child cannot take part in the school's activities and would be better remaining at home then they must contact the school as soon as possible on the first and any subsequent days of absence before 9:30 am. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of this policy. The person ringing will be asked to identify themselves and clearly give the reason for the absence. This information will be recorded.

If a child has a medical appointment then parents/carers must:

Contact the school prior to the appointment to ask for approved arrangements for the child to be collected/returned to school as close to the appointment time as possible. If the school has concerns about the child's attendance, a copy of the appointment time/letter may be requested.

If parents/carers know their child will be late for school they must:

Contact the school as soon as possible to tell them that the child will arrive late and make every effort to get the child to school as soon as possible.

If parents/carers are having difficulty getting their child to attend school they must:

Notify the school immediately (school office, class teacher, Head Teacher) about the concerns. The school will make every effort to meet with parents and attempt to rectify the problem.

The School must:

- Keep regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance registers. These are completed at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session, using a coding system approved by the DfE and Local Authority. For each child, for each session, there will be a code relating to present or absent. The absent code will either be authorised or unauthorised. (See 'Use of Attendance Codes')
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and other INSET days when a pupil is not expected to attend school
- Notify the parents of any immediate school closure e.g. due to bad weather
- Respond to requests for attendance data from the Education Investigation Service, Local Authority, Department for Education, OFSTED
- Present attendance data regularly to the Governing Body and parents

- Notify parents as early as possible where their child's attendance is a cause for concern
- Notify the Education Investigation Service of individual children whose attendance is a cause for concern

The Pupil must:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day

Use of Attendance Codes

A series of codes are used for each child and for each school session. The codes are used by all schools so that reasons for absence can be easily and universally monitored. Each code will mean that the absence has been authorised or unauthorised.

The Head Teacher may decide to use a code that authorises a child's absence due to:

- Exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head Teacher
- Day of religious observance – officially set aside by the religious body to which the family belong
- Medical/dental appointment – pupils should be absent only for a reasonable amount of time that is necessary for them to attend the appointment
- Genuine illness or stay in hospital and/or consequent recuperation at home following medical treatment
- Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause e.g. exceptionally bad weather coupled with the inability to arrive in school safely e.g. wheelchair users
- Compassionate grounds is restricted to immediate family members.
- Exclusion – a temporary or fixed term exclusion will be recorded with code 'E', a permanent exclusion will be treated as authorised absence until the child is removed from the school register

The following will be coded as 'present'

- Education off-site e.g. visit
- Education off-site at another setting e.g. exams or dual registered pupils
- Approved sporting activity
- CAMHS/Counselling/LAC

Unauthorised codes are used where it is felt that the reason given does not justify the absence or where no reason for the absence is given, the absence will be unauthorised.

Leave of Absence

Any request for 'leave' must be put in writing stating exceptional circumstances. This must be received by the Head Teacher no later than **15 school days before** the proposed leave is due to take place. In making an application for leave, the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides must make the case that their child will need to be treated differently from the norm. Each request must meet specific 'exceptional circumstances' which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year, or to occur regularly throughout a child's school life.

Holiday/Any other Absence

Leave taken without a formal request being made to the Head Teacher will remain unauthorised even if the parent enters a request on returning from the leave.

Lateness

The school opens at 8.45am so that the school day begins with the children ready to work in the classroom at 8.55 am and the afternoon session begins at 1.15 pm. A child who arrives after this time but before the registers closes will be marked 'late' and must sign in at the office. Registers close 30 minutes after the start of the morning session and 5 minutes after the start of the afternoon session. Children arriving after the close of the registers are coded as 'unauthorised late'.

A child who is persistently late (five times within the academic year) may lose the privilege to be coded as 'late' and will instead be marked as 'unauthorised late'. The Head Teacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing.

Absence due to Illness

Children who are genuinely poorly are not expected to attend school and an authorised code will be used. However, where the child's repeated absence due to illness is becoming a concern and reaches 7 days in any school year the school may request evidence to inform a decision to authorise any further absence. The Head Teacher may ask the parent to provide information to demonstrate that the child is too unwell to return/attend school e.g. prescriptions, appointment cards/letters.

The Head Teacher may decide to remove the right to the authorised absence due to illness and record any absence as 'unauthorised'. The Head Teacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing. In order to avoid this, it is essential that parents inform the school of any health concerns that may be affecting their child's ability to attend school regularly.

School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools are also required to have an additional 5 days that are used for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement and schools endeavour to schedule these to minimise inconvenience to parents and carers.

The Head Teacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, the school may have to close. The Head Teacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head Teacher must close part or all of the school.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Head Teacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. If the Head Teacher decides to close part or all of the school, then the register for those pupils affected is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

Penalty Notices

- 1) Parents/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices if a pupil who has been excluded contravenes the details set out in the Exclusion Letter as to their whereabouts during school hours throughout the duration of that Exclusion.
- 2) Parents/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices should their child take any Leave of Absence if they have not requested this, in writing, to the Head teacher (and/or completed a Leave of Absence Application) detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' they would want the Head teacher to take into consideration in deciding if any Leave of Absence can be agreed.

Parents/Carers should ensure that the Request/Application is made in advance (15 school days) of any Leave of Absence to be taken.

Should any Leave of Absence be taken without an Application/Request having been made Parents/Carers may still be issued with Penalty Notices.

Parents/carers are advised to Request/Apply for a Leave of Absence before planning, booking or paying for any part of a Leave of Absence.

Legislation dictates that a Leave of Absence Requests/Application can only be considered from a Parent/Carer with whom the pupil normally lives.

Leave of Absence Requests/Applications from a Parent/Carer that a pupil does not normally live with cannot be considered under any circumstances.

Education Investigation Service (EIS)

The Education Investigation Service (EIS) is responsible for ensuring that parents meet their legal obligations in respect of their child's education and to identify levels of support that a family may need in assisting them to ensure that their child receives a suitable education. The Head Teacher and Governing Body of each school have a responsibility to inform the EIS when a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern and to support the EIS in the actions that they may take.

When it is found that parents fail to meet their responsibilities, the EIS has the legal power to take one or more of the following approaches:

- **Formal Warning Notice**– clarifies the legal responsibility of the parent and puts them 'On Notice' for a period of 12 calendar months that any further unauthorised absence may lead to Legal Action against them.
- **Fixed Penalty Notice** – may be issued for example if, your child has unauthorised absences, including taking unauthorised leave of absence in term time, or if the child is continually late for school. The fine is £60.00 paid by *each* adult with parental responsibility for each child. If you have not paid the fine within 21 days then the fine increases to £120.00 which must be paid within 28 days. Non payment will lead to Prosecution. There is no option to pay in instalments, the fine cannot be reduced if you are in receipt of benefits and there is no right of appeal. Fines are paid to the Local Authority
- **Prosecution** – The EIS can prosecute parents if they fail to ensure that their child attends school. The amount fined can be up to £1000.00. If convicted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent may be fined up to £2500.00 and/or 51 weeks imprisonment

- **Parenting Order** – this may be made by the court where a parent has been found guilty of an offence relating to school attendance, this requires each adult with parental responsibility to co-operate with conditions attached to the order to assist them in managing their child's overall behaviour and attendance.
- **Education Supervision Order** – where responsibility is shared between the Local Authority (EIS) and the parent
- **School Attendance Order** – Parents are required to register their child at the school named in the order, failure to do so will result in further action being taken

All proceedings are taken in relation to each parent and each child not attending school, for example, two parents with two children not attending will have to answer four offences.

For more information please go to <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/learning-school/parental-support/dudley-education-investigation-service/> or contact the Education Investigation Service:

Investigation Service:
Education Investigation Service
Westox House
1 Trinity Road
Dudley
West Midlands
DY1 1JQ
01384 814317

Chairs Action: 1.9.15

Date agreed by Full Governing Body:

The policy will come into effect from: Tuesday 1st September 2015

Date of Review: July 2016

