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# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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## **Types of Absence**

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

## **Authorised Absence**

Authorised absence is where PHS has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- family bereavement;
- Meetings with CYPS, Psychologists, mental health appointments
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis);

## **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

## **Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

## **Approved Educational Activity**

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

## **Registers**

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. PHS expects parents/carers to ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.45- 9.00 am and again at 12.35pm. The morning register closes at 9.30 so pupils arriving between 8.55 and 9.30 will be marked with an L indicating they are late for school. However pupils arriving after the

register has closed will be registered with a U showing they are present in school but were late enough to affect their learning.

In considering attendance levels, the form register is of paramount importance.

Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters.

Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half-)termly and yearly basis;
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees;
- facilitate and encourage early intervention;
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy;
- report attendance matters to parents/carers.

### **First Day Response**

As a vigilant and caring school we apply first-day response to pupil absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a telephone call.

PHS will always encourage and reward good attendance, certificates, medals and rewards are used as incentives in termly award ceremonies.

### **Punctuality**

In addressing punctuality at Parkside House School we:

- have clear procedures - registers close at 9.30 am and 1.30 pm;
- publicise this policy in School and communicate it to parents/carers/carers;
- balance any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality;
- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons;
- follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

**It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality. The Governing Body set attendance targets annually and are kept informed on attendance figures.**

## **Leave of Absence**

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance in writing and any request can only be authorised where School accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to explain the circumstances. Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation penalty notices will be issued where the trigger of 5 days is met.

Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to School on the agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation: The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013).

### **Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised:**

- during the first term, when a pupil is just starting at school, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- during an assessment/test period
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence;

## **Penalty Notices**

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents/carers 15 days to bring about an improvement. In that time the child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised holidays warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

## **Absence for religious reasons**

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C' and record on the sheet the circumstances).