



Perdiswell Primary School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Perdiswell Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and on time.

In order to support this, the school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually. The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives Perdiswell Primary School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Aims

1. To achieve Perdiswell Primary School's target attendance percentage of 97% or above.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
3. The Attendance Officer and all staff to understand their roles and responsibilities and promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
5. To maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
6. To ensure a positive and consistent communication between home and school.
7. To implement a system that encourages and rewards good attendance
8. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies.
9. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

School

The Headteacher is also required to maintain two registers:

- an admission register (known as the school roll) which contains a list of all pupils at the School;

- an attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age on the admission register.

This must be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once before the afternoon session. Similarly, the School keeps a register of pupils present on the school site during lunch time, this is needed in the event of an emergency to show which pupils need to be accounted for.

The Headteacher ensures that a clear policy on attendance is in place, which is known to staff, pupils and parents. Class teachers must enforce this policy strictly. If a pupil is absent without explanation when the register is called and submitted, the Attendance Officer will contact the parents the same day wherever possible. Where no reply is received, a letter will be sent warning that unless the absence is explained it will have to be recorded as unauthorised.

When a pupil is missing from class for no apparent reason, the class teacher will immediately inform the Attendance Officer so that the pupil's absence can be further investigated.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness or other unavoidable causes. Parents reporting absence should give the reason and date of return for the child. If this is unknown, regular contact on a daily basis should be kept with the school

For periods of extended absence, the school will seek the advice from the Education Welfare Officer and will only authorise the number of days that have been advised for the illness.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g to buy uniform, to have a hair cut, because it is the child's birthday
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the Headteacher - this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes there can be other reasons as to why children can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage to avoid the situation escalating.

Persistent Absence

The old threshold included children whose attendance fell below 85% and the new threshold has increased to 90% from September 2015.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. All PA cases are automatically known to the Attendance Officer, Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer.

Parents

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary statutory responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. Parents can support their child by:

- Ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually;
- Ensuring regular and appropriate bed times;
- Having uniform and equipment ready the night before;
- Providing a healthy breakfast;
- Making sure children understand that parents do not approve of absence from school;
- Encourage good attendance, making sure that children go to school regularly and arrive on time;
- Take an interest in your child's school work;
- Notify the School if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons. This should be done by informing the school on the first day of absence that the child is going to be away, clearly stating the reason why and if possible, an expected return to school date;
- Report any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Co-operate with the school staff and the Office Manager to make sure their child overcomes his or her attendance problems and receives the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves to ask for a 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 Local Education Authority.

The Attendance Officer will undertake the following role:

- to be the initial point of contact for all parents with queries about attendance;
- monitoring punctuality by checking the names of children who are late;
- conducting first day calls to establish reasons for absence;
- conducting half termly attendance sweeps to identify children whose attendance is falling or below 90% and informing parents by letter if attendance is improved or worse;
- liaising with the Education Welfare Officer;

- keeping in regular contact with families and carers of children;
- working closely with the Headteacher and reporting attendance trends, for all groups of pupils;

When concerns about a pupil's attendance are identified as they are falling below the schools target of 97% then letters will be sent.

- Between 95% and 93% a letter is sent to alert parents to an attendance 'dip'.
- Between 93% and 90% a letter of concern is sent that the level of absence is affecting the pupil's potential progress and parents are invited to a meeting to discuss any support needed to improve attendance.
- If attendance then falls below 90% a letter is sent informing parents that the EWO is now supporting the school's Attendance Officer and a meeting or home visit will be arranged.
- If attendance continues to decline or is not significantly improved, court action may be taken.

Governors

The governing body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register and so it is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the Headteacher manages the day-to-day running of the School and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

Governors will:

- Receive and discuss termly reports about attendance levels in school;
- Regularly review the attendance policy

Education Welfare Officer

As stated earlier in the policy, parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any difficulties together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved, the school may refer the child to our Education Welfare Officer. They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 44.1 and 44.1.a. 6 "If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

EWOs check our registers during their visits to ensure that they are being completed in accordance with the school's policy and to identify any patterns of absence which have not already been notified. The EWO promptly follows up incidents where the staff have identified a persistent attendance problem.

Holidays/Leave of Absence during term-time

Amendments to Education regulations 2103 which came into force from 1st September 2013 state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances do not include family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after unwell family members, baby sitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping etc If parents choose to take their child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted then

it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register. If parents consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then a written request should be made to the Head Teacher.

This should be done by the following:

1. Requesting a Leave of Absence form from the office
2. Completing the form fully, clearly explaining why you consider that the request is exceptional
3. It is also the responsibility of parents to provide the school with proof of why the leave is requested. Proof of the circumstances must be provided when the written request is made.
4. The request will be processed in school within 10 working days and parents will be notified in writing of the decision. Where parents continue with a leave of absence which has not been authorised or a child does not return to school on the date agreed, Local Authority procedures will be adhered to. If the unauthorised absence is 12 sessions or more, then a penalty notice may be issued by the local authority.

Improving Attendance Strategies

Wherever possible the School works alongside the EWO in supporting and implementing attendance initiatives which:

- help children develop the habit of regular attendance;
- reward children for good attendance and punctuality;
- show parents clearly that unjustified absence will be recorded and challenged.

The School has considered initiatives that are most appropriate and always takes into account a pupil's individual circumstances, e.g. setting reward schemes such as certificates, for 100% attendance or effort to attend.

Other helpful initiatives include:

- Implementing first day contact with parents of children who are absent from school without prior knowledge. It is hoped that this sends a clear signal to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up;
- Having the Attendance Officer responsible for first day contact and the Office manager/Headteacher responsible for attendance overall;
- Corridor attendance displays (raising the profile of attendance in class)
- 100% attendance rewards at the end of each term/year for pupils who have full attendance for that term/year;
- Class Attendance of the week certificates;
- Information included in the weekly newsletter.

Lateness

The School actively discourages late arrival of pupils by staff setting a good example and by challenging it whenever it occurs. School starts at 8.55am. Punctuality is very important as lessons start as soon as registers have been taken. It is also very unsettling for children if they cannot enter school through the same gates as their friends, but instead have to come into school through the school office when they are late and then walk into class after everyone else.

The school uses an electronic system for taking registers (SIMS Registers are taken twice a day; once 5 mins after the morning bell and again 5 mins after the beginning of the afternoon session. Late marks (code L) are recorded in registers for children who arrive in school after the register has been taken but before 9.05am for the morning session. Despite being signed in, children arriving after these times will have their attendance recorded as L.

The Office Manager monitors punctuality and may inform parents of the school's concerns. If progress is not made then a referral to the EWO will be made. In extreme cases, punctuality issues can be grounds for legal action being taken against the parents.

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 staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high level as attendance as possible.