



St. Vincent's RC Primary School

Attendance Policy

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Policy Owner (Name/Position)	Mrs. M. Brooks, Headteacher
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Review of Policy

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Review undertaken by	Mrs Mary Brooks
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Document Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Title	Date of Approval	Version Number
Mrs. M. Brooks	Head Teacher	9.10.24	2
Mrs. L. Coluccio	Chair of Governors	9.10.24	2

Statement of Intent and General Policy

Regular attendance at school is essential to promote the education of all pupils – good attendance directly impacts on pupils' achievement. As children grow and prepare for their next stages of education and employment, they need to see good attendance and punctuality as essential qualities valued by others and employers. This is an important time for children to establish good habits early on. Staff seek to inspire every child with a passion for learning which will demonstrate to them that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late. The school has a strict policy on attendance and punctuality; this is due to the well documented evidence on the correlation between good attendance and pupil achievement (Department for Education). The school has a target attendance figure of 96%; all children are expected to achieve this target and thus contribute to the overall attainment of these targets. The school will take appropriate action where pupils fall below this target in order to promote the aims of this policy.

Objectives

- To maximise the attendance of all our children.
- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulties
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely with and make full use of the support from the Education Welfare Service, School Health and multi-agency teams.

What is expected of parents?

- To keep their child's absence to a minimum.
- To provide a reason for any period of absence, before the absence or on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that their child arrives on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- To enter the school grounds and to supervise their child until the classroom doors open. Children should be in class no later than 8.40am when the classroom doors close.
- To work closely with the school and the Education Welfare Officer to resolve any issues that may affect a child's attendance.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with attendance during important times such as assessment weeks and SATs tests.
- To support their child and recognise successes and achievements.
- To keep school updated should contact numbers or address details change.
- To acknowledge and promote the importance of good attendance.

Parents and carers are asked to contact the school office on the first morning of absence and no later than 9.15 am. Absence can be reported by phone call, email or in person at the school office with details of the child's name and class, who is reporting the absence and the reason for the absence. Please be as detailed as possible with the reason so the school is aware of any potentially contagious infections within the school. We will assume that a child remains ill on the following day; there is no requirement to call the office again until the third day of absence. Failure to provide a reason for absence can result in unauthorised absence, home visits and penalty notice referrals. Where there is genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness, school will request medical evidence to support illness. In the case of absence falling below 90%, we may also request medical evidence if we feel it is having an adverse effect on a child's attendance and attainment. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, emails, screenshots etc. rather than doctors' notes.

What is expected of school?

- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance.
- To commit to robust procedures that enable school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention.
- To consistently record absence within the guidance of the 1996 Education Act.
- To develop a range of strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism.
- To promote and reward good attendance.
- To educate families on the direct impact of attendance and punctuality on learning.
- To encourage good communication links between school and families.
- To refer to the Education Welfare Service for increased intervention and work with Education Welfare Officers, exhausting all avenues for support and prevent court proceedings where possible.
- To support and advise families whose attendance and punctuality give cause for concern

Authorised Absence

These include sickness, hospital appointments, dental appointments and religious holidays (maximum 2 days in one school year for religious holidays). Where possible, medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside of the school day or during school holidays. Where this is not possible, it is expected that pupils only miss part of the day and that an appointment card or letter is brought into the school office so the absence can be authorised. Appointments which involve missing a registration period (either am or pm) will be marked as 'M' regardless of the time returning to school. Absence code 'M' is an authorised absence and is considered as an absence when calculating attendance percentages. Where exceptional health conditions exist such as operations and recovery, isolation, mental health and safety risks, the Headteacher and Attendance Coordinator will consult with the school Education Welfare Officer and other agencies to ensure alternative provision such as home tuition is put in place with an authorised agency.

Unauthorised Absence

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for our children to maximise their educational opportunities. In 2013, the Education Regulations removed references to family holidays and extended leave. The amendments made clear that **head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. 'Exceptional circumstances' can be described as rare, significant, unavoidable, short and that the absence could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.** Reasons for exceptional circumstances should be put in writing to the Headteacher for consideration by the Governing Body and no more than 5 days will be authorised. This absence will be marked as a 'C' code. **Family holidays during term time are classed as unauthorised absence and will be marked as a 'G' code.** Other unauthorised absences include shopping, visiting relatives, buying shoes, going for a haircut, parent(s)/siblings unwell and any unsatisfactory or no reason provided for absence will be marked as an 'O' code. School supports the view that every day in school makes a difference and discourages parents from taking children unnecessarily out of school. If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the parent or carer to clarify the reason for absence, the absence will be marked as 'O' which is unauthorised. If a reason is supplied at a later date, it is at the discretion of the school as to whether the mark is amended. Following the first day of absence, reporting procedure ensures the safety and wellbeing of all of our pupils. **Unauthorised absence will be followed up with home visits carried out, in particular prior to and at the end of school holiday periods and where there are linked sibling absences.** Medical evidence can be requested for absence of more than 3 days at either end of a school holiday. Should a child be referred to the Education Welfare Officer, or if attendance is below 90%, sickness absence may be marked as unauthorised until medical evidence is provided. All unauthorised absence may be subject to a penalty notice (see Penalty Notice section below). Unauthorised absence of 20 days or more can result in a child being removed from the school roll.

Penalty Notices

Following the *Isle of Wight v Platt* case in 2016, penalty notices for leave in term time were suspended until a decision was made by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court overturned the decision made by the High Court so the Education Welfare Service has reinstated the issue of fines for holidays in term time.

The government (Department for Education) has introduced a new national framework for penalty notices which parent/carers must pay if they take a child out of school during term time. The changes will come into effect for fines issued after 19 August 2024.

How are parents fined?

If parents/carers take a child, or children, out of school for an unauthorised absence, each parent will be issued with a penalty notice fine, for each absent child.

For example: two siblings absent for leave during term time would mean that each parent will receive two separate fines.

What will happen the first time?

The first time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or unauthorised absence the amount will be £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

The amount is reduced to £80 per parent, per child if the fine is paid within 21 days.

What will happen a second time? (within three years)

If parents/carers take a child, or children out of school for a second time a penalty notice will be issued for £160 per parent, per child and paid within 28 days. There is no reduction for prompt payment.

How many days does the government count as an unauthorised absence?

Penalty notice fines will be issued for term time leave or unauthorised absence of five or more days (10 sessions), in a 10 week school period.

What happens if parents don't pay the fine?

If parents/carers do not pay the fine within the timescales, the council may refer the case to the Magistrates Court for non-school attendance proceedings under the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

What happens after a third time? (within three years)

If parents/carers are issued with a penalty notice a third time for either term time leave or unauthorised absence the case will be presented directly to the Magistrates' Court and a fine of up to £2,500 can be issued.

We urge parents/carers not to interrupt their children's schooling and talk to their head teacher before requesting leave of absence.

Response to Absence

If any child has not been registered or the school has not been notified about a child's absence, the office will contact parents as soon as possible between 9.15am and 10 am via telephone and email. Registers will be checked in reverse year group order. If a reason has been supplied, no further contact is required unless the absence lasts more than 3 days. If no reason for absence has been provided, and the school is unable to make contact by 11am, this will be followed up by a home visit. If we remain unable to establish contact, we may phone the Police as recommended by the Local Authority to ensure the safety of the child and family. The absence will be marked as unauthorised (see above). At each stage of this process, parents are invited in to speak to the Headteacher or Attendance Coordinator if they have specific concerns or issues. The Attendance Coordinator will proactively identify children who have cause for concern and the school will work with these parents to draw up support plans for resolving attendance and punctuality issues.

Lateness

School doors open at 8.30am and close at 8.40am. Anyone arriving after classroom doors are closed should enter the school via the main reception door and report to the office. Lateness is classed as any child arriving after 8.40 am and up to 9.00am when registers close. They will have an 'L' mark entered on the register with the number of minutes late recorded and will keep their attendance mark for the morning. Arriving after 9:00am when the registers close will result in a child receiving a 'U' code which is an unauthorised absence mark for that session. This will result in the child losing the entire morning's mark. **Persistent levels of unauthorised absence due to**

lateness may result in a penalty notice being issued. Lateness is monitored weekly and letters are sent home where there are patterns of regular lateness, informing parents of the anxiety and disruption caused to the child. If this remains persistent, then the Attendance Coordinator will contact parents to enquire about potential barriers and support before referring to the school Education Welfare Officer. The end of the school day is 3:10pm. Parents who are late collecting their children at the end of the school day will be contacted by the school office. If the parent has not been in contact by 5:30pm, a phone call and/or referral will be made to Children's Social Care. If parents persistently fail to collect children on time, this may also result in a referral being made to Children's Social Care.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The Attendance Coordinator works closely with the Education Welfare Service to improve the attendance of all our children. Each year, the school is set an annual attendance target which we expect the entire school community to contribute towards. Whilst the majority of our children contribute to achieving this, there are a minority who do not. The school follows the Rochdale Borough Council Emotionally Based Non-Attendance (EBNA) Guidance for schools which supports children who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors (such as anxiety or depression), often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The Attendance Coordinator, SENCO or other school staff will initially meet with the child and parents to create an attendance support plan with individualised support. This is followed up with a review meeting and, if further support is needed, then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. There are different strategies used by the Education Welfare Service to support families and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance. There is a graduated response, starting with providing literature and advice to parents on the impact of poor attendance and punctuality, letters, phone calls, home visits, attendance meetings, Legal Enforcement Attendance Panels, penalty notices and ultimately court action. Hopefully, any attendance issues or concerns can be resolved long before court proceedings are initiated.

School Involvement in Attendance

The school response to absence is conducted in an age appropriate way. If a child's attendance is showing cause for concern then initially the Attendance Coordinator will contact the family to ascertain the reasons for poor attendance or lateness. From this, actions will be put in place to overcome any barriers the child and family are facing. Teachers will be actively involved in speaking to their class about attendance and punctuality regularly, giving positive reinforcement and stressing the impact of attendance and punctuality upon achievement. Teachers will comment about how the class is contributing towards the school target by the class attending well and everyone being on time. Any individual concerns should be passed on to the Attendance Coordinator to follow up and monitor any children who are already highlighted as a concern.

Persistent Absentees

A child who has an attendance figure of 90% or below is classed as a Persistent Absentee and legal action may be taken. For children who transfer into our school, historical attendance figures will be taken into account and a new child may find a referral being done as soon as they arrive. This is a supportive measure to change attendance patterns for the better.

Monitoring and Evaluation

These are the steps and checks that are done to support the attendance process:

- Daily registers are completed electronically by the teachers and verified by the Office Administrators. Details of all absences and lateness are recorded.
- All classes have data available to understand how well they are contributing towards the school target; this is done through the School Information Management System (SIMS) homepage for each class. Teachers should comment about the attendance of the class after the register is complete i.e. the contribution towards the target, the class attending well, everyone being on time etc.

- The Attendance Coordinator and office administrators will do a daily check of all unauthorised absences and follow up with phone calls to parents. Where appropriate, a home visit will be carried out and the school Education Welfare Officer informed.
- The Attendance Coordinator will monitor any health related issues affecting attendance and make relevant suggestions to teaching staff concerning this e.g. hand washing. School Health will also be contacted for advice and support.
- A weekly attendance league table is used to promote good attendance, with a class from Key stage 1 (including Reception classes) and Key stage 2 being awarded for the highest whole class attendance in the week. This is celebrated each week at the school's celebration assembly and rewarded with extra playtime.
- Letters are sent to parents when children have persistent lateness.
- 'Guidance for Reporting your Child's Absence' is sent to parents whose children have been absent and they have not provided school with a reason for absence.
- Where medical evidence is requested for absence, this will continue until the child achieves the school attendance target of 96% at the end of the academic year.
- The Attendance Coordinator will analyse attendance through the School Information Management System looking at whole school attendance percentages, individual pupil percentages, authorised absences, unauthorised absences, patterns of absence, proportions of attendance (100% and below 95%). If any child falls below 90%, parents will be contacted with attendance monitored regularly with the School Education Welfare Officer.
- Attendance Coordinator to work in partnership with parents and carers, offering support and advice to families with attendance or punctuality issues.
- Any changes in attendance patterns are reviewed with further clarification being required by the families or referrals being made to Education Welfare Service, health professionals and other multi-agency teams.
- Joint home visits, where needed, by the Attendance Coordinator and Education Welfare Officer.
- Attendance Reports/Data prepared and given to Headteacher and Governors regularly
- Whole school review meetings with the school Education Welfare Officer.
- Parents and carers communicated to about their child's attendance and punctuality formally three times a year; twice at parent meetings and also as part of the end of year school report.