



Greenfield Primary School

Attendance Policy September 2018



Introduction

“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 July 2017 (www.education.gov.uk)

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

- Rufford Primary
- Ham Dingle Primary
- Hob Green Primary
- Oldswinford C of E Primary
- Greenfield Primary

1. What the law says about School Attendance

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).

The school expects all children to attend every day that the school is open and on time for registration. Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the Government as persistent absence.

2. Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents and 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.

a) Illness

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.

b) Medical Appointments

Medical appointments must be made out of school time wherever possible.

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. A copy of the appointment time/letter may be requested.

c) Lateness

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.

d) Difficulty getting a child to school

If parents/carers are having difficulty getting their child to attend school they must notify the school immediately (school office, class teacher, Headteacher) about the concerns. The school will make every effort to meet with parents and attempt to rectify the problem.

3. Responsibilities of the School

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.
- 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
- Work alongside parents to improve attendance through the Assistant SENCo

The Pupil must:

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

4. Absence

a) Leave of Absence

Any request for 'leave' must be put in writing stating exceptional circumstances. This must be received by the Headteacher no later than **20 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.

b) Holiday/Any other Absence

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

c) Lateness

The school opens at 8.45am so that the school day begins with the children ready for registration in the classroom at 9.00 am. The afternoon session begins with registration at 1.00 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 Headteacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing.

d) 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 or reaches 7 days in any school year the school may request evidence to inform a decision to authorise any further absence. The Headteacher 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 Headteacher may decide to remove the right to the authorised absence due to illness and record any absence as 'unauthorised'. The Headteacher 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.

5. School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools are also required to have an additional 5 days that are used for staff training. These are 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 Headteacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, eg election days, severe weather, the school may have to close. The Headteacher 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, use of the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Headteacher must close part or all of the school.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Headteacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. If the Headteacher 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.

6. Penalty Notices

From 1 September 2017 there are new rules for unauthorised absence in term time. Holidays in term time are classified as unauthorised absence. In Dudley, the Education Investigation Service will instigate statutory intervention on behalf of the Local Authority, when notified that a pupil has a relevant level of unauthorised absence. This can result in a Penalty Notice being issued to a child's parents or carers. A Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, whether married or not
- Any person, who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person
- Any person, who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person – having care of a child or young person means a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child

A Penalty Notice might be issued, when unauthorised absence results in a child having less than 90% attendance or when a child has 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence. A session is a morning or an afternoon, so 10 sessions is the equivalent of a week off school. A Penalty Notice is £60, if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt.

Parents and 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 the first 6 days of exclusion.

7. 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 in doing so they may issue penalty fines or take legal proceedings to ensure that parents do so.

The Headteacher 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.

The Headteacher and Governing Body of each school have a responsibility to inform EIS if parents choose to homeschool their children or if there is a concern that a child is missing in education.

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Date of Review: July 2019