

# Abbey Hill Primary and Nursery School



## Attendance Policy

Agreed by governors October 2021

To be reviewed October 2023

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## 1. Introduction

At Abbey Hill Primary and Nursery School we expect good attendance and punctuality from all of our children, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which everyone connected to our school feels proud of their identity, and able to participate fully in school life.

Children should attend school every day as good attendance promotes successful learning and the good habits needed for the responsibilities of adult life, especially in the workplace.

All school staff will work with children and their families to ensure every child attends school daily and punctually.

To meet these objectives, we will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with parents and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support. We will also keep the profile of attendance high across school to emphasise the importance of good attendance for all children.

Odd days off over an academic year have a huge impact on children. It is very difficult for them to catch up on lost learning.

### Approximate days absent from the beginning of the school year

	Autumn term	Spring term	Summer term
100%	0	0	0
95%	4	7	10
90%	7	13	20
85%	11	19	30
80%	14	26	40

## 2. Key Aims

- To improve the overall attendance of children in school.
- To ensure everyone in our school community recognises the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To promote a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality among children and families, providing support and advice where needed.

## 3. Legal Framework

It is important for parents and carers to understand that there is a statutory obligation for children to attend school. Section 444 a and Section 444 1a of the Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child(ren) attend school on every day the school requires them to do so. Failure to do so is a criminal offence which leads to a prosecution or a Penalty Notice fine. Abbey Hill Primary and Nursery School and the Local Authority also have a legal obligation to ensure your child(ren) attend school.

#### **4. Parental Responsibility**

The definition of parent for the purpose of this policy is any person who has day-to-day care of the child at the time school attendance is required. This can include other family members such as grandparents, or families where partners are not natural parents. In cases where parents have separated both parents are still liable for ensuring regular school attendance under legislation, even though one of the parents may not live with the child. **The Local Authority views persistent absenteeism as educational neglect.**

- Parents and carers are required to ensure that their children receive full time education and are therefore primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school every day.
- Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children:
  - Attend school every day
  - Arrive at school on time in uniform and ready to learn
  - Are absent only for reasons that can be authorised.

#### **5. School's Responsibility**

It is the school's responsibility to check and monitor school attendance regularly and effectively, and to inform parents of their child(ren)'s attendance levels. It is also a responsibility to report to governors on the overall attendance of children and that of particular groups of children.

#### **6. School Procedures**

##### **Registration**

The school day starts at 8.50am. Registers are marked shortly after this using Scholar Pack. Pupils who are not present for registration will be marked as absent. If they arrive after the register has been submitted to the office they will be marked as present but late. Arrival after 9:30 will be marked as a half day's absence, indicated by a 'U' in the register.

##### **Pupil Absence**

We ask parents and carers to help the school by notifying us of the reason for any absence and the child's likely return date, by 9:30am. The school office will record notified absence and the reason given. This may be done by email on [pupilabsence@abbeyhill.notts.sch.uk](mailto:pupilabsence@abbeyhill.notts.sch.uk) or contacting the school office on 01623 484512.

If no notification has been given regarding a child's absence, a member of the attendance team will contact the parent or carer for a reason. Absences will be unauthorised until a reason is provided. Emergency contacts may be contacted and home visits may be carried out as part of safeguarding procedures.

##### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absences will be given where no reason for absence is obtained from parents or carers and for the following reasons:

- Truancy
- Staying at home to look after younger children or sick relatives
- Overlaying
- Shopping trips
- Birthdays
- Hair appointments
- Family holidays that do not meet the exceptional circumstances criteria

- Regular illness where no medical evidence is forthcoming
- Patterns of non-attendance e.g. every Friday

The Local Authority may pursue cases of poor attendance through the courts. They consider 6 sessions (half days) unauthorised absences within any given 6-week period as persistent absence.

### **Appointments during the School Day**

The school encourages parents and carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours. We recognise that this is not always possible with some appointments especially with specialist services such as paediatricians, Speech and Language Therapy, CAMHS etc. For children who have appointments during school hours, parents or carers should provide a record of their appointment. These appointments will be authorised.

### **Holidays during Term Time**

From September 2021 Abbey Hill Primary and Nursery School will introduce Penalty Notices in accordance with the Code of Practice and the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 to parents and carers whose child(ren) truant from school or absent from school due to a holiday of 6 sessions (3 days) over a 6 week rolling period. Any request for a Penalty Notice to be issued will be made through the Local Authority and any money received through the issuing of the Penalty Notice will go to the Local Authority and not the school.

The school has put a range of interventions and support in place and works closely with parents and carers to improve low school attendance. However, if attendance does not improve after these procedures have been followed, or if parents and carers fail to engage with the school, then a referral will be made to the Local Authority who will implement their own procedures which may lead to an issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The penalty is £120 per child per parent if paid within 28 days, but reduces to £60 per child per parent if paid within the first 21 days. There is no right of appeal by parents and carers against a Penalty Notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the Local Authority must decide whether to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. This could lead to a fine of up to £1000 per parent and carer per child.

It is important to note that no more than two Penalty Notices will be issued in a rolling 12-month period. Where further absences occur or where the Local Authority deem it appropriate, enforcement may be dealt with directly by the court.

Parents and carers may request a leave of absence using the school's request form which will be considered by the head teacher and school attendance team. If the reason for absence falls into the exceptional circumstances criteria set by the individual school's governing body, then the absence will be authorised. Exceptional circumstances which **may** be agreed by the governing body are:

- For those parents or carers who work in the Services or Police Force
- For family funerals or a significant bereavement
- For a family wedding day, not a holiday after the wedding
- For religious observance
- For visits back to a child's country of origin depending on the circumstances.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

Once a child has accrued 3 days (6 sessions) of **unauthorised absence** over a 6 week rolling period, whether the unauthorised absence relates to a family holiday or is more general in nature, the head teacher can ask the Local Authority to issue an Education Penalty Notice to each parent or carer for

each child to whom persistent absence applies (see Appendix B/D: Penalty Notice). The school can also request that the Local Authority issue an Education Penalty Notice when a child is persistently late and where they are signified as a 'U' in the attendance register (see Appendix B/D: Penalty Notice).

### **Children Missing Education**

A child going missing from education can be an indication of abuse or neglect. School staff should follow the school's procedures for dealing with children who are missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and to help prevent the risks of them going missing in the future.

Schools are required to make the Local Authority aware of any child who fails to attend school regularly and why a child is absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days.

The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Leads work closely with all school staff to manage risks to children. They make sure the appropriate agencies are involved so that children receive the appropriate level of early help or statutory intervention to ensure they attend school regularly.

### **7. Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

Individual children's attendance is monitored regularly for:

- Patterns of unexplained absences
- Persistent absences or persistent lateness
- Any patterns of authorised absence

Response to the above absences is undertaken in the form of letters and meetings with parents and carers. If necessary, this is escalated to the Local Authority for further support and action. This is led by the head teacher.

Attendance audits are carried out each half term with specific focus on children whose attendance is lower than 90%, which makes them a persistent absentee. Audits are carried out for all children in school including nursery and pre-school. Separate audits are carried out for punctuality.

In addition:

- Individual attendance is shared with parents and carers via end of year reports.
- Summaries of attendance rates are prepared weekly for each class from Reception to Y6 and shared with children in assembly.
- Whole school and individual class attendance is reported to the Governors termly.

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Date:

## Appendix A – Advisory Letter

Date of letter

Mr & Mrs XXX  
Home address  
xxx

Dear Mr & Mrs XXX

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

During a recent register audit it has been brought to my attention that XXX has had a number of absences this academic year which has resulted in an attendance level of X%.

Any unauthorised absences of 3 days (6 sessions) or more over a 6 week rolling period can lead to you being issued with a penalty notice fine of up to £120 for each child who is absent. The fines can be issued to both parents and carers for each child.

Please take immediate steps to ensure your child gets to school on time every day and obtain medical evidence if he/she is too ill to attend.

Any other reason for absence should be discussed with the school and it is the school's decision whether to authorise any absence that is not covered by medical evidence.

Yours sincerely

Ms H Chambers  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration Certificate

Copy: CPOMS / Pupil file

## Appendix B – Unauthorised Absence Penalty Notice Warning Letter

Date of letter

Mr & Mrs XXX  
Home address  
xxx

Dear Mr & Mrs XXX

### **PENALTY NOTICE WARNING**

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

The registers at Abbey Hill Primary and Nursery School show that, to date, your child has missed X days (X sessions) of school due to unauthorised absences over the last X weeks.

You, as parent, have legal responsibility under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. As such unless your child's attendance improves you, will be referred to the local authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child.

**Should your child (Insert name) have any further absence, which results in them having in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period, we will request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice of up to £120 for each child who is absent. The notice can be issued to both parents and carers for each child whose absence meets the Penalty Notice threshold.**

Please take immediate steps to ensure your child gets to school on time every day and obtain medical evidence if he/she is too ill to attend.

Any other reason for absence should be discussed with the school and it is the school's decision whether to authorise any absence that is not covered by medical evidence.

Yours sincerely

Ms H Chambers  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration Certificate

Copy: CPOMS / Pupil file



## Appendix C – Unauthorised Penalty Request

Date of letter

Mr & Mrs XXX  
Home address  
xxx

Dear Mr & Mrs XXX

### **Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)**

On (Date) we wrote to you to explain that (child's name) was absent from school for xx days due to unauthorised or unexplained absences.

We also informed you that this could lead to you being issued with a Penalty Notice.

I am now writing to advise you that a request has been made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ms H Chambers  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration Certificate

Copy: CPOMS / Pupil file

## Appendix D – Holiday Penalty Notice Warning

Date of letter

Mr & Mrs XXX  
Home address  
xxx

Dear Mr & Mrs XXX

### **PENALTY NOTICE WARNING FOR HOLIDAYS TAKEN IN TERM TIME**

Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)

I note your application to take (child's name) out of education for xx days to go on holiday. Schools are only allowed to agree a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application and do not believe it meets the exceptional circumstances criteria, therefore your request has been declined. Should you decide to remove your child from school on the dates indicated in your application, then their absence will be marked in the register as unauthorised.

An unauthorised leave of absence of more than 3 days or 6 sessions (over a 6 week rolling period) for the purpose of a family holiday, can lead to you being issued with a Penalty Notice fine of up to £120 for each child who is absent. The fines can be issued to both parents and carers for each child.

If you do remove (child's name) from school for the period stated in your application, I will request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice.

Yours sincerely

Ms H Chambers  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration Certificate

Copy: CPOMS / Pupil file

Appendix E – Holiday Penalty Request

Date of letter

Mr & Mrs XXX  
Home address  
xxx

Dear Mr & Mrs XXX

**Child X (dob XX/XX/XXXX)**

On (date) we wrote to you to explain that Abbey Hill Primary and Nursery School would not authorise (child's name) absence from school for xx days for a holiday.

We also informed you that this could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued to you.

I am now writing to advise you that a request has been made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ms H Chambers  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration Certificate

Copy: CPOMS / Pupil file