

# Attendance

## Policy

(Including Term-time Leave Policy)



ALLINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

### **This policy applies to pupils of compulsory school age**

#### **Principles:**

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. In extreme circumstances, permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

We understand that many children are sometimes ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially concerns about social issues or learning difficulties are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the children at an early stage. It is never better to cover up children's absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending: this gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and can indeed make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. In order to record the absence correctly, we ask parents to notify the office in writing about the cause of each absence, although this may be after an initial phone call has been made to the office.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, secondary transition visits or other unavoidable causes. Only the school can authorise an absence and this is based on the information you provide to us.

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at the school do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the parent/ carer and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason
- Truancy before the register is marked
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

The school and the parents are expected to work together to ensure that attendance and punctuality are good. Working together to resolve issues with attendance and punctuality is nearly always successful. For cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification. If Early Help Intervention is not deemed appropriate, the case may be referred directly to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer. The School Liaison Officer will try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can refer the case to the Enforcement Team who may pursue legal action, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

#### **Overall Aims:**

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

### **Procedures:**

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This is the equivalent of missing one day a week which is almost half a term of school. These are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence.

The school will maintain consistent procedures for the statutory registration of pupils through the use of the SIMS attendance database, following the guidelines below:

### **Registration**

Pupils are expected to attend school regularly.

- The class register is taken twice a day at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions.
- The register will record whether the pupil is present or absent.
- Absence codes will be used to show whether the absence has been approved or is unauthorised.
- Parents are expected to telephone before 9.00 am to inform the school if their child is absent that day.
- Registers are checked daily by the school office.

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time.

- Pupils are asked to arrive at school for 8.45 am each morning. Those children who do not arrive in time to go through the gate in the morning are asked to go through the office, in order to check they have been signed in and that they have been booked for a school dinner if necessary.
- The gates will be locked at 8:45 am. Pupils arriving after 8.45 am should report to the office.
- Arrival after 8.45 am and before 9.15 am will be recorded as late (code= L).
- Arrival after 9.15 am will be recorded as 'Arrived in school after registration' (code= U).
- If local circumstances (e.g. weather or a traffic accident) mean that it is difficult for many parents to ensure that children are on time on a particular day, we will extend the register closing time for that day.

### **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time.

### **Punctuality**

Punctuality is very important. Arriving late for school is a poor start to the day, potentially causing embarrassment to your child, disruption to the class, unnecessary difficulties for teachers who are teaching, and most importantly, disturbance to learning for other children. At Allington Primary School, the school day

starts at 8.45am, and pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45 am. All pupils who arrive after 8:45 am must report, with their parent or carer, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

## **Absence**

It is not typical for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, birthdays or day trips. Leave may be granted on compassionate grounds in an emergency (e.g. after the death of a close relative).

A request for a term-time holiday is not a parental right. Leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances but arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is 'unauthorised' absence and may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings undertaken by the Local Authority.

## **Illness and medical appointments**

The school office should be informed during the morning of the first day of a child's absence through illness and then each morning for the duration of the absence. If parents have not contacted school, they will receive a telephone call, asking them why the child is not at school. Unexplained absences will also be followed up by letter. Parents will be reminded of the importance of good attendance and punctuality in newsletters, or more frequently if their child's attendance is causing concern. Where there are persistent or prolonged periods of sickness, the school may refer the matter to the Inclusion and Attendance service, so that the correct advice and assistance can be put in place to support the family through this difficult period. There may be occasions where medical evidence is needed to support the reasons for your child's absence from school. The school will not approach your doctor to obtain that evidence: it is your responsibility as a parent/carers to provide a medical certificate or doctor's letter, as appropriate.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the school should be informed in advance and the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment, unless advised otherwise by medical professionals.

## **Special Leave of Absence in term time**

Holidays in term time are not an entitlement and are strongly discouraged by the Government, Local Authority and school.

Parents should be aware that term time holidays are not an automatic right. The Head of School can now only authorise absences for exceptional circumstances and no absence will be authorised for a child with less than 90% attendance.

Holidays will never normally be authorised at the beginning of school terms; during examination periods; or where the child is persistently absent, including because of ill health.

## **Process for requesting holiday absence**

By law, applications must be made by a parent normally residing with the child. Parents should seek permission for authorised holiday absence before making firm bookings/arrangements/payments for your holiday.

Applications should be made in writing, using the school's Request for Special Leave of Absence form (obtainable from the school office) at the earliest opportunity before the absence is due to begin: absence will not be granted retrospectively.

The Head of School will consider each request and inform the parent/carer as soon as possible, in writing, whether the request has been granted or not. The governing body may consider an appeal against the decision of the Head of School

Parents who decide to take a holiday without permission will incur unauthorised absences for their child.

## **Arrangements for absence in other circumstances**

### **Religious observance**

Allington Primary School recognises all religious beliefs and actively seeks to support families on occasions where days are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which they belong. Where a family wishes to exercise this entitlement, the school asks that the family contact them in writing at the earliest opportunity, requesting a religious observance day, so that the length of absence from the school can be agreed and that the pupil can be correctly registered.

### **Family bereavement and exceptional circumstances:**

Sudden, serious circumstances do occur, rarely, when it is impossible for a family to bring a child to school. It is essential that school is informed by the parent of the circumstances so that the appropriate code can be written in the register.

### **Who is responsible for attendance matters at Allington?**

- Mrs Ward- monitors daily attendance and will make contact with parents where the reasons for an absence are unreported by parents.
- Mrs Monks- monitors attendance alongside Miss Ward and will work with parents to notify them of issues with their child's attendance and will offer meetings to discuss how the school and family can work together to improve attendance.
- Mrs Howson- monitors attendance with Mrs Monks and the class teachers, and reports absence figures to governors as well as the steps that have been taken to address attendance issues.

At Allington, we aspire for our attendance to be 97% or above across the whole school and we check this at three key points in the year. Where a child's attendance drops below 94%, a letter will be sent to parents informing them of their child's attendance figure and inviting them to contact the Inclusion Manager if they feel they need support to improve attendance. The issuing of letters will coincide with parents' evenings wherever possible so that teaching staff have the opportunity to discuss attendance with parents.

If attendance does not improve, a second letter will be issued to the child's family, inviting them to meet with Mrs Monks to find a solution to improve the child's attendance.

Should there still be no improvement, a third letter may be issued, requesting parents to provide medical evidence for any further absences.

The final stage, should the attendance figure still not show improvement, would be to involve Early Help or the Local Authority, following the Kent School Referral Pathway procedure.

### **Children Missing in Education**

In order to prevent children from becoming Missing in Education, the school is legally required to notify the Local Authority of all children removed from our registers outside normal transfer times whatever the reason. Parents are requested to provide the school with all the necessary information about future addresses or new schools in the event of planned changes of address etc. Any information the school holds will be passed on to the relevant school or local authority as required.

The school will notify the School Liaison Officer that a child is to be considered CME if:

- A child leaves the school to attend another school and notification of the new school place is not received after ten school days.
- An absence is agreed and the pupil does not return after the agreed time, any additional absence will be classed as unauthorised and if they have not returned within 10 school days of the expected return date, the Education Service will be notified.

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents in order to ensure the highest levels of attendance possible are achieved.

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## Term-time Leave Policy

Children should attend school every day that the school is open. Absence is disruptive to children's learning and can also impact negatively on their social and emotional well-being. However, we recognise that there are times when absences are reasonable or unavoidable (e.g. illness or transition visits to new schools) and leave can be authorised in certain circumstances. If you wish to request leave for reasons other than your child's illness, you must notify the school in writing in advance.

Leave should only be requested for the shortest time possible. Absences of more than a few days should normally include times when the school is closed, or only part of the absence may be authorised. Leave may be refused at certain times of the year. For example absence will never normally be authorised at the beginning of school terms or during examination periods.

The Head of School may grant leave in 'exceptional' circumstances only. These may include:

- Sudden, unexpected incidents such as the sudden illness or death of a close family member, or on other compassionate grounds.
- Special 'one-off' family events such as weddings, funerals and other occasional celebrations.
- Opportunities to travel overseas for special events that cannot be held in school holidays.
- Time to complete exams, assessments outside of school e.g. piano gradings and dance exams.

These are only examples. Should you think the reason for the term-time leave is 'exceptional', you must notify the school of the reasoning by completing the leave request form. Requests are considered on an individual basis, and attendance figures will influence the outcome.

Where permission for leave is granted, the school will not provide work for the children to complete while they are absent. If parents wish for their children to complete learning based activities outside of school, they will need to source these and provide these themselves. Work will only be provided where the reason for the absence is medical.

Appendix 1

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
<b>D</b>	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances



## Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

