

Attendance Policy

Parish Primary School

Date: September 2020
Review: September 2021



PARISH
CE Primary School
Part of the Aquinas Trust

Building Learning, Friendships and Faith

Contents

Context.....	3
Objectives and targets	3
Action plan	4
Moving forward	4
The following strategies will be followed by the school:	4
Parents will have the responsibility to:	5
Absence requests.....	6
Registration.....	6
Reporting Absences	7
First Day Contact.....	7
Children Missing from Education (CME).....	7
Definitions.....	7
Authorised Absence	7
Unauthorised Absence	7
Responsibilities	8
Class teachers are responsible for:	8
The Office Staff are responsible for:	8
The Headteacher is responsible for:	8
Parents and Families are responsible for:.....	9
Monitoring and evaluation	9
Reviewing.....	9
Intervention flow chart	10
Standard letters	11

Context

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, fulltime education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The 'otherwise' includes home education.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations make provisions for the necessity of admission registers and attendance registers of pupils as well as the granting of leave of absence for pupils. Parents may not authorise absence; only the Headteacher or those authorised by the Headteacher can do this. Schools may authorise any absence but inappropriate use can be just as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence

Monitoring and controlling school attendance are a key part of Parish Primary School's objectives. We believe that:

- Responsibility for promoting school attendance is shared by everyone in the school;
- The attendance policy touches all aspects of the school's life, and relates directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum;
- Rigorous collection and analysis of data about attendance enables the school to check its progress against measurable outcomes.

Attendance at school is a vital part of a pupil's education and has a heightened profile in this school with the Headteacher having responsibility for whole school attendance as well as oversight of the school's pupil welfare system.

The trust, school and Headteacher believe that it is important that the children in their care do not lose any schooling unnecessarily. In the primary phase this places the responsibility on parents and carers to ensure regular attendance.

Objectives and targets

The aims of the attendance policy are to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and therefore take full advantage of the educational opportunities available;
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children apart from those with chronic health issues;
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school;
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education;
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age;
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence;

- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued as well as support the growth in pupil of a sense of their own responsibility for attendance;
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance;
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

Action Plan

Parish Primary School undertakes the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes;
- Maintain appropriate attendance data;
- Communicate the attendance procedures and expectations to all colleagues, parents and pupils;
- Maintain consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness;
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness (if parents and families have not communicated with a first day contact) with parents of children who are absent from school without prior knowledge;
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time;
- Work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality;
- Refer any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents and families have not responded to school initiatives to the Educational Welfare Service;
- Report attendance statistics to appropriate external agencies;
- Maintain a reward system for good attendance at school;
- Provide an AHT and Attendance Officer to oversee all attendance issues and liaise with the class teacher and head teacher raising concerns.

Moving forward

The following strategies will be followed by the school:

- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including parents, pupils, teachers and the academy advisory council.
- Registers will be marked accurately according to management information system guidance;
- Attendance records kept for every class and all non-attendance checked against the daily register that will be taken at the beginning of the morning session and beginning of the afternoon session;
- Monitoring all pupils whose attendance is below 96% or below 90% (persistent absence).
- AHT, Attendance officer, family worker and EWO meet every half term to analyse attendance and create action plans

- In light of explanations for such attendance patterns, parents may be informed of this and asked to attend an interview with the Education Welfare Officer. Parents will be reminded of their obligations to ensure attendance and a programme of support will be agreed if necessary. On a further occurrence, parents will be reminded of the legal action that can be taken and the fine that can be imposed by the Education Welfare Service;
- Informing The Education Welfare Service (EWS) of continued or persistent absence, and habitual lateness. The school may refer individual cases of 5 days or more to the EWS/Local Authority for Fixed Penalty Notices in line with EWS guidance where unauthorised absence may impact on the pupil's learning and development;
- Promote good attendance as the norm and constantly seek to improve attendance across the school. All pupils will be aware of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality through class discussions and whole school assemblies and newsletters.
- Enable good attendance to be recognised, valued and celebrated across the school.
- Seek to identify underlying reasons for absence.
- Fulfil statutory requirements. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies.
- Inform parents of their child's attendance, if it is a cause for concern.
- To continue to implement a system of rewards and sanctions- (see below)

Weekly	Termly	Annually
Attendance promoted in class and stickers given for improved attendance.	Attendance certificates.	Certificate for high attendance over the year.

Parents will have the responsibility to:

- Make sure their children are educated between the age of 5 and 11 to the fullest extent.
- Inform the school on the first day of absence and secure prior authority for authorised absences.
- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Contact school office **before 9:30am** on the first day of absence to offer an explanation for absence.
- Contact the school office on the third day of absence to update the school on the condition of the child and visit to the GP if necessary.
- Keep the school office updated on the reason for absence - if absent for more than 3 days.
- Co-operate with school and the Education Welfare Service if there are attendance problems.
- Make sure that their child has had a good night's sleep – children need to be wide-awake to learn.
- Discuss with staff any problems associated with their child's attendance and or punctuality in order to resolve issues swiftly.
- Make medical / dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

- Give advance notice of absence for religious observance or Year 7 interviews.
- Take family holidays outside term-time.

Absence requests

All requests must be put in writing to the Headteacher, in a timely manner, preferably a fortnight in advance of any absence. The letter should notify the school of the parents' intention to take their child out of school. The school's response to this request in turn informs parents how the school will record such an absence in the register. It is the responsibility of the parent to appropriately act on this information in light of this policy.

Parents do not have the right to take children on holiday in term-time. All requests for absence will be considered on an individual basis and will not normally be granted except in exceptional circumstances.

Registration

The school gates open at 8.45am. The school day starts at 8.55am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom. The class teacher must complete the attendance register by 9.00am in the morning and by 1.30pm in the afternoon. Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Once the gates are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via reception. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (Attendance code U).

The school requests that routine medical (e.g. jabs) and dentist appointments (e.g. check-ups) are made outside of school hours (e.g. during weekends and holidays). Where a child is receiving "specialist treatment" and appointments are set by an appropriate medical team, evidence of such appointments should be submitted to the school.

The school will record any absence for "specialist treatment" as a medical absence (Attendance code M) where the parent has little or no input into the timing of such appointments (e.g. appointments with consultant level practitioners etc). The school will not authorise absences for routine medical or dental appointments.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

The school will take all reasonable steps to contact families to clarify how absences are recorded in the register. The school uses several standard letters to communicate concerns

to families (see Appendix 2). These letters provide parents with opportunities to seek support and advice to address the issues being raised.

Reporting Absences

Parents and families should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When Parents notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details from parents. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

When a child or young person is absent or missing from school, they could be at risk of significant harm through physical or sexual abuse, concerns should be reported to the safeguarding team. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or one of the deputies in their absence) should be informed immediately if the school is informed by a parent that their child is missing; referrals will be made to the Police, Education Welfare Service and Social Services, as appropriate.

Definitions

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Office (EWO) will be informed about continued or persistent absence, and habitual lateness. The school may refer individual cases to the EWO/Local Authority for fixed penalty notices in line with EWO guidance where unauthorised absence may impact on the pupil's learning and development.

The school also reserves the right to apply to the EWO/Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice when a child is taken out of school for a family holiday of 5 days or more, which has been not been authorised by the Headteacher.

The school cannot authorise family holidays. Other requests will be considered on an individual basis and will not normally be granted except in exceptional circumstances.

Responsibilities

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents and families;
- Informing the Family Worker where there are concerns and acting upon them;
- Providing background information to support referrals;
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns;
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness;
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

The Office Staff/Family Worker/AHT are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information;
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence;
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made;
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home;
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance;
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised;
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues;
- Making referrals to the EWS service;
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWS;
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance;
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence;
- Working with colleagues to review the attendance strategy to improve attendance to school.

Parents and Families are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment;
- Ensuring their child is in school by 8:55am
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence;
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist;
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised;
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Headteacher, assistant Headteacher, family worker and office staff will work to keep attendance regularly under review and report to the Advisory Council once a term on attendance figures and patterns. The policy will be evaluated by the Advisory Council following reports from the leadership team, Education Welfare Service and others.

Reviewing

The policy will be reviewed and altered in the light of any concerns brought by any of the above and where changes in legislation make it necessary and on an annual basis regardless.

Appendix - COVID-19

In order to suppress the impact of the COVID-19 virus, the Government directed that all schools in England and Wales must close from Monday 23 March until further notice. Thus, the academy closed to children registered as pupils at the school from Monday 23 March 2020 except for those children:

- Whose parents are key workers and who cannot be looked after at home. Key workers are those that are detailed in the Government's Guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities in England on maintaining educational provision (19 March 2020)¹; and
- Who are vulnerable. Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Schools are also asked to consider children at the fringes of social care, who may not have a social worker but are nevertheless vulnerable.

Collectively referred to as the Priority Group.

In order to protect the Priority Group, the academy implemented social distancing and hygiene measures as suggested by the DFE in order to minimise contact and the transmission of COVID-19.

Since 23 March, in order to protect vulnerable pupils, the academy has:

- Maintained contact with the social worker responsible for the vulnerable pupil and parents/carers and encouraged attendance, where appropriate.
- Monitored attendance of vulnerable pupils where it has been agreed with the social worker and parent/carer that the pupil will attend. Non-attendance being notified to the social workers and recorded on the academy's child protection records.
- Monitored the attendance of pupils with EHC plans where, through risk assessment in conjunction with the local authority, it has been agreed that the pupil will attend the academy. Failure to attend has been reported to the local authority and recorded on the pupil's education plan.

Since 23 March, the school suspended the use of its usual attendance register and completed the attendance registers as directed by the DFE and the local authority.

From 1 June, the academy is expecting all Priority Group pupils to return to school. In addition, from [1/15] June the academy is expecting all pupils in [nursery, reception, year 1 and 6/ Years 10 and 12] (the Eligible Group) to return to school.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

Registers

From 1 June, the academy will resume taking its usual attendance register as well as completing the DFE's online educational setting status form. The academy's register will be kept open until [insert time] which takes into account the staggered opening times being implemented during this period. The academy will apply the registration codes as advised by the Government.

Parents and pupils are urged to adhere to their allotted time as it is vital in ensuring that contact between groups is kept to a minimum and social distancing requirements are observed. Parents/ pupils must advise the headteacher if they are unable to observe these requirements.

Non-attendance

Pupils that fall within the Priority Group and Eligible Group are encouraged to attend school unless they are ill, self-isolating for 14 days as a member of their household is suspected to have or does have COVID-19, extremely clinically vulnerable or shielding. Studies have confirmed that school is the best place for children to learn and the latest guidance from the government suggests that children and young people do not have a significantly adverse reaction to COVID-19. In addition, the academy has implemented the government's guidance in order to make the school as safe an environment for pupils as is reasonably possible given the current situation and the associated risks.

However, if pupils within the Priority Group and Eligible Group fail to attend, non-attendance will not result in the sanctions are detailed in this policy and parent/carers will not be fined. However, the academy will contact parents of pupils in the Priority Group and Eligible Group to discuss the reasons for non-attendance especially in relation to those pupils who attendance was a concern prior to 23 March and who are not engaging in remote learning.

Full Opening of the Academy

From the commencement of the autumn term in 2020, all pupils of compulsory school age must return to school. This appendix will no longer apply from the 2020 autumn term. The academy will apply its attendance policy as detailed in the main body of this policy, subject to the following as detailed in the government guidance:

1. A pupil with COVID-19 symptoms must not attend school for at least 7 days from first developing symptoms unless the pupil has a COVID19 test and receive a negative test result. In such cases, absence will be authorised.
2. A pupil who lives in a household where a member of the household has developed COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, must self-isolate for 14 days from the date when the individual with the symptoms first developed them. In such cases, absence will be authorised.

3. A pupil has been designated as extremely clinically vulnerable or clinically vulnerable and has confirmation from medical professionals that he/she must not attend school. In such cases, absence will be authorised.

The Academy processes personal data in accordance with the data protection principles embodied in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 1988. The Academy complies with the requirements of the data protection legislation as detailed in the Trust data protection Policy.

All staff are aware of the principles of data protection and will not process personal data unless necessary. The Academy safeguards the personal data it collects through the operation of the Trust's data protection policy and processes and the IT policy. In addition, the Academy has taken steps to ensure that all its contracts that process data have the GDPR compliant provisions.