



# **THE ARRETON & OAKFIELD FEDERATION**

## **ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

**COMMITTEE: CCP Feb 21**

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# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

## Introduction

1. Regular and punctual school attendance is vital. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. There is clear evidence of a link between good attendance at school and high levels of attainment. The Federation fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school, on time and therefore having access to learning for the maximum amount of time. Our policy applies to all children registered at Federation schools and is made available to all parents/carers of pupils via our websites.
2. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority (School Attendance Guidance Sept 18 and Code of Conduct Sept 18 (updated)). The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff, and Governors, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play.
3. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's attendance, the Executive Head Teacher (EHT), Head of School (HoS), staff and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. The staff work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members and look forward to coming to school.
4. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with learning. This will impact on their progress and ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance is below 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## Aims and Objectives

5. This attendance policy ensures that all associated with our schools are fully aware of the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this policy we aim to:
  - a. Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
  - b. Achieve the highest possible attendance for all children.
  - c. Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm.
  - d. Raise awareness to parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
  - e. Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education and Inclusion Service (EIS) so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
  - f. Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
  - g. Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
6. We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:
  - a. Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.

- b. Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- c. Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- d. Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- e. Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- f. Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- g. Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## Definitions

### 7. Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason. 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, consequently not all absences reported by parents will be classified as authorised. Absence will be authorised in advance in the following circumstances:

- a. A pupil is educated off site (eg for a pupil to participate in an approved activity).
- b. A pupil is involved in an exceptional special event/occasion and permission has been granted by the HoS in advance. In authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's attendance, attainment and ability to catch up on missed schooling will also be considered.
- c. A pupil participating in an educational visit authorised by the school.
- d. Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.
- e. Where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents are encouraged to make such appointments out of school hours whenever possible), and return their child immediately after – or send them to school beforehand. Parents must meet and sign out their child at Reception prior to taking them out for a medical appointment. Pupils will not be allowed to leave the premises unless they are accompanied by a parent/carer.
- f. Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control (eg extreme weather conditions).
- g. Where the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong.
- h. Where the local authority has a duty to make travel arrangements for the purpose of facilitating the pupil's attendance and have failed to discharge that duty.
- i. Where the pupil has been excluded from the school and no alternative provision has been made.
- j. In other very exceptional circumstances where a request could not have been made in advance (eg family bereavement) and then for a very limited period.

**Unauthorised absence** An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. The absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. The decision about whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised rests with the HoS. Some of the reasons for **NOT** authorising absence would be:

- a. No explanation has been given by the parent/carer.

- b. The school is not satisfied with the explanation.
- c. The pupil is staying at home to mind the house.
- d. The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- e. The pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons (eg a birthday).
- f. The pupil has been stopped on a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

**Regular Attendance** All children are expected to attend school regularly in accordance with the Childrens' Act and Government/Local Authority guidelines. For the purposes of this policy 'regular' is determined by the Federation and should be the maximum number of days possible to attend school notwithstanding any authorised absence. The Federation recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and safeguarding children. The federation recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at the school will challenge parents/carers about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. **A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised.** The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always be at the discretion of the HoS.**

**Oakfield:** Classrooms open at 08.50 on a school day. Pupils will be registered at 08.55. A pupil is late if registered after 09.00 but before 09.20. After 09.20 the pupil will be registered as unauthorised absence. Pupils arriving after 09.00 must register via the Reception Area.

**Arreton:** Classrooms open at 08.20 on a school day. Pupils will be registered at 08.25. A pupil is late if registered after 08.30 but before 08.50. After 08.50 the pupil will be registered as unauthorised absence. Pupils arriving after 08.25 must register via the Reception Area.

## 8. Procedures

The Federation will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents/carers and pupils.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence (eg holidays taken during term time).
- Work with parents/carers to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality.
- Refer to the EIS any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Report attendance statistics to the LA and the DfE when requested.
- All staff raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the HoS.

## 9. Responsibilities

All members of the school community have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the responsibilities individuals have.

The HoS, as the Attendance Leaders, are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance including coordinating and promoting regular and improved attendance.
- Ensuring up to date attendance data and issues are shared with the governing body and SLT.
- Ensuring that all staff responsible for taking registers, including temporary or supply staff, are trained to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.
- Establishing trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the EIS.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the EIS.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Ensuring the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the Federation.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, particularly poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for absence offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the HoS where there are concerns.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up actions taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation meetings where necessary.

Administration/Reception staff are responsible for:

- Accurately collating and recording registration and attendance information, for the HoS and Governing body.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Late data is recorded.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no explanation for absence is known.
- Supervising electronic registration of children who arrive late, go home early or leave the site during the school day for any reason.
- 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/ carers and reporting concerns to the HoS.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance/absence/punctuality.
- Accurately reporting attendance returns to the Local Authority and DfE as required.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly, correctly dressed and ready to start school punctually under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, between designated start/end of school day times.

- Contacting Reception on the first morning of absence (eg illness and the predicted date of their return).
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time (either in writing or verbally). For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we require evidence from the doctor or dentist (appointment card/letter).
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school.
- Working in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries and taking an interest in their children's work and activities.
- Keeping requests for absence to a minimum.

Pupils are responsible for:

Being aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher in the first instance. Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents/carer to explain the absence immediately on returning to school. All pupils also have a responsibility to follow school procedures if they arrive late.

#### 10. **Registration**

**The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day.**

The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher in the morning and immediately after the lunch hour. 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.

11. The Class registers will be preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

#### 12. **Lateness**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct classroom for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Classroom doors close at 09.00 (Oakfield) and 08.30 (Arreton). Access after this time is via Reception. Any pupil who comes into school after this time will be marked as late in the attendance record until 09.20 (Oakfield) and 08.50 (Arreton) (Attendance code L). Any such pupils will count as present but will be dealt with under the lateness policy as detailed in this paragraph. After 09.20 (Oakfield) and 09.00 (Arreton) the pupil will be marked as an unauthorised absence (Attendance code U). The absence is unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil being late. Reasons such as missing the bus, clothes not clean or shoes lost will NOT be classed as a legitimate reason. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the EIS. Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M). Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and the important start of day activities. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of our concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

#### 13. **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers 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' electronically. The Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

#### **14. 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. Reception staff check all 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 therefore will contact the parent/carer to check the reasons for the child's absence. Reception will maintain a written log of all such contact.

#### **15. Illness**

When children have a serious illness they may be away from school long term - the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given home tuition outside school. Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

#### **16. Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of a head teacher to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, a head teacher will only be allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Whilst the Federation understands the financial pressures on families, the availability of cheaper holidays during term time, availability of holiday accommodation, overlapping dates to a school term and other such holiday arrangements are NOT exceptional circumstances. There are 175 non-school days in the calendar year in which to take holidays.

a. Leave of Absence. The Federation will consider every application individually. We will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision. We will not authorise time off school during periods of national tests. It is not policy to grant leave of absence other than in the most exceptional circumstances, for example:

- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable leave of absence rota and evidence is provided to this effect. Please note that parents who are self-employed will be assessed on an individual basis according to the nature of the self-employment.

b. In considering absence for extended leave of absence (trips overseas) the school will take into account the following:

- a visit to family overseas may be important in terms of a child's identity and self-esteem as he/she grows up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
- where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

#### **17. Addressing Attendance Concerns**

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the EHT, HoS and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In our primary schools we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

18. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the EIS. The EIS will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral from the school. The EIS visits regularly to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance. They work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if a School Attendance meeting does not improve attendance.

#### **19. Monitoring Attendance**

Our office staff has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded. Regular meetings are held with the HoS to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

20. Attendance issues are complex with poor attendance often linked to the emotional wellbeing and health of a child, challenging family circumstances or safeguarding concerns. Where necessary the attendance policy will be used in conjunction with the safeguarding and child protection policies.

# **Attendance Guide for Parents – Oakfield/Arreton St Georges**

## **When does my child need to be in school?**

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at 09.00 (Oakfield) and 08.25 (Arreton) and the afternoon register on completion of the lunch hour.

## **What happens if my child is late?**

By being late, your child will miss the important start of the day learning. This often underpins or supports subsequent learning. Therefore being late puts your child at a disadvantage to the rest of the class.

If your child arrives after 09.20 (Oakfield) and 08.50 (Arreton) he/she will be marked as absent (unauthorised) unless an acceptable reason is given.

Pupils who arrive after registration has closed should report to reception and be registered.

Where a pupil is late on more than one occasion in any week the school will write to the parents/carers of the pupil regarding their child's punctuality. If a pupil is consistently late a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons/difficulties for lateness.

## **What should I do if my child cannot come to school?**

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of any absence, and on every day of absence that follows and a predicted date of return. A message can be left on the answer phone out of school hours. If you do not contact us we will contact you. We also require a written explanation of your child's absence on your child's return to school. A reminder will be sent to you if we have not received your letter. If we do not receive a written explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's annual attendance record.

## **What reasons will the school accept for absences?**

Illness

Emergency dental/medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during school holidays whenever possible).

Day of religious observation

Exceptional family activity (eg bereavement)

Except in case of illness, permission for your child to miss school should be requested well in advance, giving full details of the proposed absence. By giving sufficient advance notice you will ensure that there is time available for the school to make any necessary further enquiries and for written notification of whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised to be sent. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate or other medical evidence or to provide details of medical personnel to enable the school to make direct contact.

## **Can we take family holidays during term time?**

In line with Government legislation, the school policy is all family holidays should be taken in school closure periods. A 'Leave of Absence' from school may be granted in exceptional

circumstances where an application has been made by the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides on the Absence notification form. The HoS will only grant a leave of absence if there are exceptional reasons for absence from school during term time. Applications must always be made in advance and evidence may be requested to support any application. Where an absence has been unauthorised by the school and the time off school is taken, the school will refer to the Education and Inclusion Service (EIS).

### **What is a Truancy Penalty Notice and when would one be issued?**

The school has a duty to share their attendance data with the EIS and to notify them when unauthorised absence has been taken in term time. The law says that parents/carers are committing an offence where their children (of compulsory school age) are absent from school without good reason (eg persistent truancy or unauthorised absence). A Truancy Penalty Notice is a financial penalty (£120 per child reduced to £60 on payment within 21 days) issued by the Local Authority. There is no warning letter prior to issue of a truancy Penalty Notice. The Isle of Wight Authority will issue each parent/carer with a Truancy Penalty Notice fine where attendance is below 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence within a 12 week window. Where the penalty is not paid in full and/or within the prescribed time limit the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against the parents/carers in the Magistrates Court.

### **I am thinking about taking my child on a trip overseas to visit relatives, what should I do?**

The school recognises that such trips help children keep in touch with their extended family although parents would always be encouraged to make such trips during school holiday periods. We appreciate that due to the long distances often involved there may however be some overlap with term time. Should you be considering such an absence you will need to put your request in writing to the HoS explaining the reasons and family circumstances for this visit. We may request evidence that this is not just a holiday.

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure he/she leaves in the correct clothes and properly equipped for the school day. A clear, well managed morning routine helps establish school within the routine. Show your child that you value his/her learning by asking them about their school day. Follow the home-school agreement and attend parent evenings and other information sessions at school to enable you to support your child's learning and progress.

### **My child is trying to avoid coming to school, what should I do?**

Contact the school immediately and openly discuss your concerns – initially with the class teacher. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship issues, bullying or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem, looking at the appropriate support available. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances with the EIS – the school can put you in touch with them.

## **What will happen if my child's attendance level falls?**

The school monitors the attendance rate of all children as requested by the Local Authority. Where a child's attendance rate is considered too low the Local Authority requires the school to take intervention action. The following actions will therefore be taken in accordance with Local Authority guidelines.

Attendance rate falls below 95% - a letter will be sent home from the school to inform the parents/carers that their child's attendance level requires improvement and the child's attendance will continue to be closely monitored.

**Persistent Absence category:** Attendance rate falls below 90% - a meeting (School Attendance meeting) will be arranged with the EIS and parents/carers at the school to discuss attendance, the support the school can offer and to agree a remedial action plan. Attendance will be monitored for a further 3 weeks. Any further decline in attendance will trigger referral to EIS. It should be noted there is a 'fast track' procedure to referral where previously attendance has been poor.

Where attendance does not improve, the EIS will be contacted by the school.

## **Will the school contact me if my child is absent?**

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

# Attendance Guide for Pupils

## Attending regularly and on time

Regular attendance will help you make the most of the opportunities at schools. It will help you keep up with your school work and get the best results you can. In the future it will help you get a job – employers like people who are reliable and on time.

## Absences

Acceptable reasons for absences include:

### Illness

Emergency dental/medical appointments (routine appointments should be made in the holidays or out of school times whenever possible)

Day of religious observance

Exceptional family event (eg bereavement)

Looking after your brothers or sisters, birthdays, general trips such as shopping and helping those are NOT reasons to be absent from school.

You will also need a note from your parents/carers to explain all absences from school, on the day you return to school. You will also need a note if you arrive at school late. If you do not bring a note or the explanation is unsatisfactory, the absence will count as unauthorised and will be shown on your end of year report.

Remember – the law requires you to be in school unless other educational arrangements have been put in place for you.

## Need help?

Problems with your school work? Are you being bullied? Are things difficult at school – or at home?

You may feel like missing school is the answer. It is not – it may even make matters worse. Talk to someone – your class teacher, another member of staff, your parents/carers. We will do everything we can to help you get over the problem.