



Attendance Policy

(Cutthorpe Primary School)
DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Rationale

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their school age child/children attend school every day, when the school is in session, if they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

In school we do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, due to ill health, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Arrival & Registration

- There will be no adult supervision before 8.40am and we recommend that no child arrives before this time unless they are supervised by the child's agreed adult.
- All children should be ready to come into school at 8.45am each day. The start of the day begins with the ringing of the school bell at 8.45am. The school gate will remain open until 8.55am and there will be a member of school staff on the playground until this time. The register is taken twice a day at 8.55am and 1pm for Infants and 1.15pm for Juniors. A day is counted as two attendance sessions.
- The school gates will be locked at 8.55am and all children should be in school before this time. Any child arriving after this time should enter through the front door and report to the office. The child will be signed in as late (L) in the register. The adult responsible for drop off will also need to sign in their child.
- Morning registration ends at 8.55 am. If a child arrives after the registration period, he/she will be marked as late. After 9.30am, this will become an unauthorised absence (U). The afternoon register is taken at 1pm for Infants and 1.15pm for Juniors.
- It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent/carer outside of normal hours are signed in or out from the office. The signing in/out register (Appendix 1) in the office is used in the case of an emergency or fire drill.

Illness and Medical Appointments

- 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 child should be returned to school directly after the appointment. Where a child is leaving for a medical during the school day, an appointment card/message must be presented to the school office.
- The school office should be informed before 9.30am on the morning on the first day of a child's absence through illness and then each morning, if appropriate, for the duration of the absence.

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 sends an email or telephones 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. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Reasons such as:

- Illness, receiving medical attention or a medical appointment
- Religious observance covering only day(s) exclusively set apart for such observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong to
- Short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstances
- Approved sporting activities

If a child is absent

- Parents are expected to email or telephone the school by 9.30am on the morning of the day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason.
- When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- The school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer if no message has been received regarding the reason for absence. In the first instance, this will usually be a text message.
- If there is no response it may be necessary for staff to visit the home and carry out a welfare check in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child(ren) and establish their safety and wellbeing. If there is no response at a home visit a slip indicating the

visit will be left requesting information on the absence. No response to an enquiry regarding a child's absence by the end of the school day will be considered unexplained and will be recorded as unauthorised, with continued investigations ongoing until the reason for absence is known. This must not be later than 5 days after the session.

Holidays

Amendments to the 2006 regulations which came into force on 1st September 2013 remove references to a family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from the school if leave is granted and in all such cases, the return date must be agreed by the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will consult the criteria for exceptional circumstances for term time leave before deciding whether or not to grant permission.

- All holiday requests should be referred in writing to the Headteacher in good time (at least a fortnight) before any bookings are made.
- An absence for holiday that has not been agreed by the Headteacher will be recorded as unauthorised.
- All holiday requests must be submitted on the standard leave of absence form (Appendix 2).
- A hard copy of the leave of absence request form should be handed in to the school office. Electronic and other forms of request will not be considered.

In declining any request for leave of absence, the Headteacher will warn parents that not only will the absence be categorised as unauthorised, but also that the Local Authority may serve each parent with a penalty notice for each child without any further warning or intervention.

Under the Code of Conduct, the local authority (Derbyshire County Council) will serve a penalty notice for a period of holiday during term time that has not been authorised by the Headteacher. Moreover, the Local Authority may do so without any further recourse to assessment or casework with the pupil or family. There will be no requirement for:

- The Local Authority Welfare Office to offer support
- Any formal warning
- The absence threshold to be met

If a pupil takes unauthorised term-time leave for 10 consecutive sessions or more (generally 5 days) they will be subject to a Penalty Notice. The fine for a penalty notice is £80 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £160 if not paid within 22 days to 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent. For second offences of unauthorised term-time leave (10 consecutive

sessions or more) within a three-year rolling period (from 19th August 2024), the fine is a flat £160 per parent, per child. For the third offence in a three-year rolling period (from 19th August 2024), the referral will be automatically considered for prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Three-Year Period		
First Term Time Leave	Second Term Time Leave	Third Term Time Leave
10 sessions (5 days) or more.	10 sessions (5 days) or more.	10 sessions (5 days) or more.
£80 for each child per parent. E.g. if two parents take 3 children away, the fine would be $£80 \times 3 = £240$ per parent. The total would be £480. If you pay after 21 days it rises to £960. If you don't pay after 28 days = a prosecution.	£160 for each child per parent. E.g. if two parents take 3 children away, the fine would be $£160 \times 3 = £480$ per parent. The total would be £960. If you don't pay after 28 days = a prosecution.	Prosecution.

Examples of what may constitute Exceptional Circumstances

- To have a short absence (up to three days) to attend a family wedding or to attend a special family reunion or celebration, or to attend a special religious or cultural festival, may constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- If a parent, due to the nature of their work, cannot possibly take time off during the regular school holidays, then this might constitute an exceptional circumstance. A letter from the parent's workplace may be requested.

Each application for leave is judged individually. Repeat applications for the same period will not be considered. Unfortunately, to have a week or more of holiday in school time because the cost is cheaper does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Previously a good attendance figure would have been considered. This is no longer the case. Headteachers alone have the power to authorise leave of absence, but only when the reasons for absence are deemed to be exceptional.

Teachers will not usually set work for completion when a child is absent on holiday, but the child should be encouraged by parents to read and keep a diary of their experiences.

Should parents go ahead with a planned leave of absence that has not been authorised by the Headteacher, a letter will be issued to the parent and this may result in the Local Authority issuing a penalty notice.

Examples of requests for leave of absence that do not meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised and could be subject to a Penalty Notice fine/prosecution for pupils of statutory school age are:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.
- Trip of a lifetime.
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if it does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance.
- Leave taken due to potential travel disruption.

Long Term Absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the appropriate support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

For children deemed to be “missing from education”, procedures detailed in our policy number 15, Children Missing from Education will be followed.

Repeated Unauthorised Absence

- Unauthorised absences remain on the child’s record and may be reported to the Local Authority.
- Attendance and punctuality are monitored by the MAT (Multi Agency Team) and the school. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem.
- The Local Authority has the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their legal responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. This action may include parents being issued with a fixed penalty notice and/or court action.

Threshold for unauthorised absence

The threshold for unauthorised absence is defined as:

- Five sessions of unauthorised absence in a five week period.
- Ten sessions of unauthorised absence spread within a five week period where no medical evidence has been received.
- Persistent absence threshold met within the last twelve months and where there is some current unauthorised absence.
- The threshold for poor attendance is below 90%

With the exception of leave of absence for a holiday, these criteria will be the trigger for considering whether to issue a penalty notice.

Our Commitment to Supporting Attendance

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will listen, empathise and support with attendance. However, if this is unsuccessful, legal sanctions will be considered where appropriate.



Monitoring and Review

The school sets a challenging attendance target each year against school, local and national benchmarks. These targets are agreed by the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and the Local Authority School Improvement Partner at the annual target setting meeting. The Headteacher will report on attendance percentages to the full Governing Body.

- It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance.
- The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy and for ensuring that it is carried out.
- The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The school will keep accurate records on file for a minimum period of three years.

As a result of such monitoring requirements we have developed an attendance monitoring system.

- **Letter A** – This is an individual reminder that your child's attendance is falling. We recognise that it may be because of illness but it lets you know the figure we have on our school system. It is usually sent out if periods of illness have resulted in attendance falling below 95%.
- **Letter 1** – This letter is a clear reminder that, regardless of reason, your child's attendance is now below 95% and causing concern. It is written formally and is part of the evidence trail to ensure that school has followed a process. We know that most children will not need Letter 1 as absence is due to illness.
- **Letter 2** – This letter shows that your child's attendance has now fallen below 90% and absence is becoming/is persistent – there may be numerous reasons for this. It invites you to meet with me. This is an informal meeting so that we can go through your child's attendance record together. My experience of these meetings is that parents tell me about their child's illness or other reasons for their absence. Once I have had this face to face discussion, we talk about monitoring attendance in the immediate future and set attendance targets. This is individual for each case. Meeting together allows us to talk through the reasons for absence and for the school to offer support if required. It is easier to do this than continue to write letters.
- **Letter 3** – This letter is sent after a scheduled meeting, laying out the attendance targets of 90%+ required over a set monitoring period. If attendance continues to fall over this monitoring period, is mainly unauthorised and goes below 90%, school will refer to the Local Authority Education Welfare Team which may lead to a penalty notice and/or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. In these final instances, actions are out of the school's influence.

Appendix 1

Please do not complete this form until the child has arrived/left.

[illegible]

Appendix 2
LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

PLEASE NOTE - The **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** state that Headteacher's should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Name of Child(ren) Year Group
..... Year Group
..... Year Group

Childs Address
.....

Name of Applicant(s) and Address (if different).....
.....
.....

I / We wish to apply for our child(ren) to be absent from school for EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES on the following dates.

From..... To.....

Total number of days our child(ren) will be absent from school

Please supply in as much detail as possible the reason for your request and why you feel it is **exceptional circumstances**. Please include the names of the adult(s) who will be with your child(ren) during their absence from school.

Continue over the page if necessary

Signed (both parents if applicable)

Date

.....

IF THE REQUEST IS FOR A FAMILY HOLIDAY PLEASE SUBMIT IT BEFORE THE HOLIDAY IS BOOKED.



School attendance update 2024/5

Dear parent/carers

We are writing to you because the Department for Education (DfE) have introduced some new guidance for schools and Local Authorities (LAs) for managing school attendance. They have also introduced a new national framework for penalty notice and amended the law. These changes come into effect from the 19 August 2024 and all schools and LAs across the country will be expected to follow the new statutory guidance.

Support first

The importance of regular attendance at school cannot be stressed enough. All schools and LAs are expected to promote school attendance and provide support to remove barriers where a pupil is struggling to attend school. This may mean that the school raises the issue of attendance even if your child has only had a couple of days off ill. This is not because they don't believe you. By working with you, schools can step in early to help to prevent patterns of absence developing. Schools may identify other underlying issues that are making your child reluctant to attend school and be able to help you and your child.

For this to be successful parents need to work with the school. Where it can be demonstrated that a parent/carers is not fulfilling their parental responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education then the school can consider requesting that the LA take further action. This can be in the form of a penalty notice, prosecution, or the school may suggest other formal interventions.

National Framework for penalty notices

To provide consistency, the Government have introduced a new national framework for when schools and LAs believe that they have exhausted all offers of support and the parent/carers is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school.

The threshold for when a school should consider next steps is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be made up of any form of unauthorised absence including late after close (attendance code U) of register and odd days of unauthorised absence (attendance code O) which add up to 5 days within a 10-week period.

At this point the school will consider if it is likely that the attendance will improve with further support. They may then decide to refer the case to the LA for formal monitoring. This may proceed to legal action if the attendance does not improve.

Education Penalty Notices are issued to parents of statutory school age children. They can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school. The new costs and process is outlined [below](#):

First Offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years) -The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.

Term time holidays

Pupils should not be taken out of school during term time unless it is unavoidable. Schools are required to consider requests for leave of absence in term time and should only approve the leave if there are exceptional circumstances. If a request for leave is denied and the pupil is absent for 5 days or more then the school is expected to refer the case to the LA. The LA will issue a penalty notice with no requirement for a formal warning to be issued. Penalty notices can also be issued where a pupil is absent for repeated incidents of unauthorised leave in term time that fall below the 5-day threshold. In every case, the request for the Penalty Notice comes in from the school to the LA for the process to be completed.

New registration codes

You might find that your child's attendance report looks slightly different next year. The DfE have amended some of the codes to include numbers as well as letters. These new codes are to enable schools, LA and the DfE to better understand the reasons for absence.

For example:

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance.

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance.

The important thing for you as a parent is still the C which means that the absence was authorised.

There is also a new code which has been introduced for pupils who are on the school roll but are temporarily being provided with an alternative education by the local authority, such as a home tutor.

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority.

Full details of all of the changes can be found by visiting the Government webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>