



Attendance Policy

Marie Fellows
Head teacher
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Introduction:

As a school, we do our utmost to develop a partnership with parents and value the relationship between school and home; we work with the community to drive the school forward and ensure the children in our care are the very best that they can be. You and your child/ren play an important role in making our school successful.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is important that you make sure that your child attends regularly, "Attendance is everyone's business" (DFE 2022) and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

School's target for attendance is 96% and above. This is equivalent of a child having no more than 7 school days absence in the whole academic year.

Why is regular attendance important?

Learning:

Good attendance is learnt behaviour. It is proven that children with highest attendance achieve highest attainment and have wider life chances. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

The Law relating to attendance:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is the registered parent/carer responsibility. If a child fails to attend school regularly the parent/carer can be held accountable and be prosecuted as per legislation set out under the Education act 1996. The two offences are:

- Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 - a fine of up to £1,000.
- Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996 - a fine of up to £2500 and imprisonment for an aggravated offence.

The Local Authority can also issue sanctions for general absence and leave of absence by issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine).

Safeguarding:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (July 2018) Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2024) and School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children have the best outcomes.
- Detecting early support through school's support strategies or an Early Help Assessment.

The Law relating to safeguarding:

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on Local Authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis and unexplained absence may be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Attendance procedures and types of absence:

Every half-day absence (either morning or afternoon) from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

The school may grant an authorised absence for reasons such as genuine illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after class register has closed).
- Shopping, looking after other children, oversleeping, or birthdays.
- Unauthorised leave of absence/holiday or day trips in term time.
- Absences of children whose attendance is a concern and parents have been requested to supply medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This can often make your child feel more anxious over time and make matters worse. **If there are any problems with regular attendance, please contact school to discuss these matters as early as possible so we can support you and your child.**

If your child has been identified as having **attendance below 90%**, they may have all further absence **unauthorised** on school's register. However, should parent(s) provide evidence from a medical practitioner advising that the period of absence was necessary, the absence for the evidenced period will be authorised.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is “everybody’s business” (DFE 2022) - parents, pupils, all members of school staff and the LA. To achieve excellent attendance school will follow the DFE guidance “working together to improve attendance” (DFE 2022)

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Newsletter.
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, and outings/events.
- Contact and work with you if we have concerns about your child’s attendance.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/ \	Present in school / = am, \ = pm	Present
B	Off-site educational activity e.g., taster day at another school	Approved Education Activity
C	Authorised absence granted school	Authorised absence
C1	Authorised Regulated Performance	Authorised absence
C2	Temporary Reduced Timetable	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another school	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by school or in excess of the period determined by school	Unauthorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental appointment)	Authorised absence
J1	Interview (employment or educational admission)	Approved Education Activity
K	Alternative provision (LA arranged)	Authorised absence
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical or Dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Unauthorised absence
O	Absence without authorisation	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
U	Arrived late after registration closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to be in school	Not counted in possible attendances
Y1	Unable to attend ((transport normally provided not available)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y2	Unable to attend (widespread disruption to travel)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y3	Unable to attend (part of the school closed)	Not counted in possible attendances

Y4	Unable to attend (whole school closed)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y5	Unable to attend (sentence of detention)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y6	Absent in accordance with public health guidance or law	Not counted in possible attendances
Y7	Absent in accordance with public health guidance or law	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not on roll	Not collected for statistical purposes
#	Planned whole or partial school closure	Not counted in possible attendances

Punctuality and late after registration

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Regular attendance and punctuality help to instil good habits and promote the development of a positive attitude towards school. Arriving late to school is stressful for both parent and child and is not a good start to the day. Children who arrive late miss essential learning time, instructions for the lesson, disrupt the routine of the classroom and the work/progress of others

Children should arrive between **8:40am -8:50am**. and the class register closes at 9:00am. If your child arrives late after the gates close, they must come through the main reception, sign in and will receive a 'L' late mark. The school register closes at 9:30am any child arriving after this time will be marked as a 'U' which is classified as an unauthorised late absence. **If unauthorised lateness persists it could result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or enforcement proceedings against you.**

Attendance/Absence procedures for Parent/Carer:

- Ensure your child/ren attend school every day the school is open.
- Notify school each day when your child is absent giving reason for absence. (School will decide to authorise or unauthorise the absence)
- Notify School of any changes to emergency contact details or medical issues that may have an impact on your child's attendance.
- Avoid taking holidays/leave of absence in term time unless there is exceptional circumstance. Parent/carer must notify the school at least 5 days prior to travel via a school leave of absence/holiday form. There have been occasions where parents have taken holiday without notifying school or said their child is off due to illness. We politely request parents are honest with school as this causes a large amount of time wasted, undertaking calls, home visits and even referrals to children missing education.
- Book routine medical appointments outside of school (where possible) or bring your child in for part of the school day when possible.
- Engage with school, attendance support and the Local Authority if your child's attendance starts to deteriorate.
- Engage with further support offered, such as attendance support and family liaison visits, Early help, parenting contracts and the Local Authority to prevent further legal action.

Early Years, Nursery & Reception:

Early years foundations provide valuable opportunities for children to experience learning and development whilst having fun. It aids their social skills, independence, self-esteem and initiates good habits and routine.

If your child has a place in school nursery/preschool or reception, they also must attend regularly. School follows the same safeguarding procedures if a child is absent. Parent/carer are expected to contact school if they are unable to attend through unavoidable cause as failure to do so may instigate safeguarding procedures or may risk losing their place.

Holidays in term time/leave of absence.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we kindly ask parents not to take children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

"It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the head teacher (not the Local Authority) or his/her designate may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing/on an application form provided by the school. Where a parent takes a leave of absence to which the application was refused or takes a leave of absence where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty fine (upon a return from such leave) by the Local Authority may be requested. When requesting a fixed penalty fine the school may calculate the period of days taken within a 10 school week period"

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless –

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

All applications must be made in writing to the Head Teacher at least 5 school days prior to the requested leave date.

Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parent/carers in writing. A general guide for parents, is leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13-week holiday time would not be authorised.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should parent/carers proceed with the leave it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on school's register.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5 days notice will result in all absence being recorded as (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement).

If a pupil does not return to school after the leave of absence date, school will:

- Investigate the reasons surrounding the absence.
- Refer to the Local Authority and under Regulation 9, 1(i) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- May consider removal from the school register.

School Absence Procedures

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Lead, Mrs Felton/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to our Lead, Mrs Felton and/or the Local Authority if attendance moves below 95%.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, the school may invite parents into school to set up an Attendance Support Plan. Within the meet they will discuss matters and try to resolve the situation by agreement or may use the following strategies:

Attendance strategies:

- Weekly attendance analysis
- Phone call to discuss attendance concerns
- Home visits/safe and well visits
- Parenting contract
- Improved attendance correspondence
- Attendance certificates
- Attendance assemblies
- Interventions (mentor/meet and greet)
- School Attendance Strategy Support Meeting.
- Maintaining positive communication (school refuser/long term illness etc)
- First day absence contact
- Unexplained absence letter
- Punctuality letter
- Suspected holiday in term time letter
- Issue letters when your child's attendance is a concern (from below 95% onwards)
- Attendance clinics
- Late gates
- LA referrals

Persistent Absence (P.A.)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. Severely absent pupils are classified as those missing 50% or more of school. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

If your child reaches PA, you will be informed of this. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, below or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority through targeted support via school and with partners to try to remove the barriers of poor school attendance.

Statutory Referrals to the Local Authority

If your child's attendance does not improve and unauthorised absences persist school may refer the case to Dudley Council, School Attendance and Education Support Service (SA&ESS). They are a statutory service for the enforcement of school attendance and other education related legal interventions for children in employment, children in entertainment, children missing education and elective home education.

They have the legal power to issue:

- a Parenting Order
- an Education Supervision Order
- a School Attendance Order
- the first penalty notice issued to a parent/carer in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- a second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- a third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Parents can contact the SA&ESS themselves to ask for guidance on their procedures via Dudley MBC's MyDudley online platform: <https://my.dudley.gov.uk>

For general information regarding school absence, visit:

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-support-service/>

Children Missing Education

"A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006" (DFE 2022).

If you move out of area and the distance is too far to travel to School, **please notify us immediately and fill in a removal from roll form (obtained from school)**. We advise you contact the admissions department (of the Local Authority where you now reside) as quickly as possible to obtain a new school place, as often places are limited.

All schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. If your child ceases to attend school and we have had no contact from parent, we will deem this as a safeguarding issue. We will try to contact you and may undertake a home visit. We will then follow the Local Authority referral procedure for a child missing education before removal from roll.

Those responsible for school attendance:

Mrs M Fellows Head teacher – who has overall responsibility for attendance at Brook Primary School. She has responsibility for the strategic management of attendance according to this Attendance Policy and any resulting decisions that have to be made.

Mrs D Felton, School Office – who is responsible for maintaining the pupil registers with accurate information and for implementing first day absence communications on a daily basis.

Governors – who are responsible for the ratification of this Attendance Policy and ensuring that it is rigorously implemented.

In addition:

Education Attendance Solutions Ltd are employed by Brook Primary School to assist and actively support with the strategic and management of attendance, absence and punctuality.

Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensure every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Appendix i

National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Absence

I am taking this opportunity to write to inform you of some important changes the Department for Education is introducing regarding school attendance and the issuing of penalty notices when children are absent from school. A new National Framework for Penalty Notices has been being introduced. The new regulations will come into effect from the 19th of August 2024. The aim is to improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England.

The national framework includes:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of ten sessions (usually equivalent to five school days) for any unauthorised absence within a rolling ten school week period. The 10-week period may span different terms or school years. For example, two sessions of unauthorised absence in the summer term and a further eight during the autumn term.
- An increase to the rate of a penalty notice from £120 to £160 if paid within 28 days and £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period, the notice will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at £80.
- A national limit of two penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool must be considered (such as prosecution or another attendance legal interventions).
- This means that if you have applied for a leave of absence to take place from September 2024 and the school has not agreed to authorise it, you may receive a penalty notice at the level prescribed by the new framework.

Please be aware that new legislation does not allow schools to authorise any holidays in term time or authorise leave retrospectively.

We believe that good attendance is essential to support your child in getting the most out of their education and we thank you for your continued support.

If you have any concerns about your child's attendance, please don't hesitate to contact the school and ask to speak to Mrs Felton our Attendance Lead, who will be able to offer support for your child and family.

Yours Sincerely

Mr M Allen
Deputy Head Teacher

Appendix ii

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why has the Department for Education brought in a National Framework for penalty notices?

There was concern that penalty notices (sometimes called fines) were being issued inconsistently across the county with some Council's issuing multiple penalty notices to a family within a year and some issuing none at all. This created a postcode lottery for families, so the framework has been introduced to ensure more fairness and consistency.

What is a penalty notice?

A penalty notice allows parents to discharge an offence by paying a one-off penalty without the matter being referred to court where they could receive fines of hundreds of pounds and a criminal record.

I've already applied for authorisation of leave this term but for a holiday in September 2024. If the school don't authorise the leave, will I have to pay £80 or £60, as I applied this academic year?

The new law will require any unauthorised absence from 19th August 2024 to be dealt with under the new regulations so it would be £80 for each child and each parent. For a family of four with two children, that would amount to £320 if paid within 21 days of receiving the penalty notice. If paid between day 22 and 28, it would be £640.

What if I have a family emergency or bereavement abroad?

Unexpected family emergencies do happen unfortunately and can be very upsetting. However, parents must notify the school themselves of the absence as soon as possible as messages from friends or relatives who don't have parental responsibility may not be accepted. Schools are not allowed to authorise leave retrospectively. Notifying the school doesn't mean the absence will be authorised though. In the case of a family emergency or bereavement abroad, parents are strongly encouraged to request authorisation from the school and ensure absence is no longer than 5 school days. The final decision about authorisation sits entirely with the Headteacher.

What if I receive a penalty notice and don't pay it?

The law states that the local authority must withdraw the penalty notices and prosecute the parents in court where they could each receive £2,500 fine, a parenting order, a criminal record and various costs awarded against them.

What happens if I pay a penalty notice for unauthorised leave next term but then take the children on another holiday the following year?

The new framework means that for a second offence within a three-year period, the discount of £80 per parent for each child won't apply. For a family of four with two children, that would amount to £640. A third period of unauthorised absence within a three-year period means that the local authority will be unable to issue another penalty notice and may instead refer the matter directly to Court.

I want to visit family abroad for six weeks next year. If the school doesn't authorise the absence, will I be issued with a penalty notice?

Any level of absence can have a serious impact on children's education, but lengthy absence can be particularly devastating. For that reason, it's unlikely that a penalty notice will be issued, and the matter may be referred directly to the Court instead.

What is 'good attendance' and why is it so important?

Generally good attendance is considered to be at least 96% for most children. Some parents think 90% attendance is good but that means a child will have missed at least 200 lessons over a year, lessons that will never be repeated. Since the pandemic, attainment and progress levels in schools have deteriorated along with attendance levels. This could mean that children today may leave school unable to be as competitive in the jobs market, so its important children attend school as much as possible.

Absence from school of any length can also have a negative impact on children's wellbeing, including their mental health. Worries about not being able to catch up, not understanding lessons, or impacts on friendships are all common in children who are absent from school. Children are sometimes absent due to genuine extreme physical or mental health needs, requiring support. In those circumstances, attending school as often as they can be acknowledged and celebrated.

I'm struggling to get my child to school. What help is available to me?

We are here to help. Please contact the school and ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns.

My child has special needs and has lots of hospital appointments which I have evidence for. Will I receive a penalty notice?

No. Penalty notices can only be issued where there is unauthorised absence, and those absences will be authorised. If your child is going to school as often as possible as you are working in partnership with the school, you will be doing the best you can to ensure your child gets a good education despite the circumstances.

What happens to the money for penalty notices when they are paid?

Currently the law requires penalty notice revenue to be spent on the administration of penalty notices which generally means, for example, any online payment software, electrical equipment such as laptops for issuing penalty notices and staffing costs. From 19th August 2024, local authorities will be able to use the revenue to support school attendance more widely, including promotional materials, etc. Penalty notice revenue must be ringfenced for attendance and cannot be used for wider council funding

Date of Policy/Review: August 2024

Amendments made February 2025 (Following advice from ESS)

Policy reviewed by: Mrs M Fellows in consultation with Mrs D Felton

Approved by Governors: February 2025

Next review due: October 2025