



# Policy for Attendance

**This policy was reviewed by: Vicky Brown**

**This policy was adopted by the Governing Body in Autumn 2019**

**It will be reviewed Autumn 2021**

*"For learning, smiling and remembering"*

## **Introduction**

At Avondale our commitment to high standards and to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual development of our pupils is defined by the regular punctual attendance of all staff and pupils. We provide our pupils with an exciting and challenging curriculum which enables them to fulfil their potential while in school and in the wider world, in order to achieve in this context children must be in school regularly and on time.

Attendance Legislation Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have. This is regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 and can be served with a penalty notice by an authorised officer, which includes a Head teacher. Full payment of the penalty discharges the parent from liability for conviction following a prosecution. Regular attendance at school is a prerequisite for child achievement.

Absence whether it is long term, frequent or occasional leads to missed experiences and may cause fractured social relationships which encourage an increased pattern of nonattendance. "School have a responsibility to engage children in learning and to promote attendance" DFES Publication -Tackling it together.

As an educationally inclusive school we constantly monitor and evaluate the progress each of our children make. Avondale School is keen to work in partnership with children, parents and outside agencies to support all families and ensure children make progress with their education and life beyond education. We recognise that children who are absent will miss important educational opportunities which will affect their grades.

## **Aims**

At Avondale we aim to:

- Encourage each family to ensure that their child or children attend school everyday, alert and ready for the day ahead. This enables them to achieve their full potential by having full access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Encourage good habits of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a prompt and effective start to all school sessions.
- Keep records of attendance in line with the current DFE requirements.
- Employ an active and effective monitoring system with strategies for encouraging good attendance.

## **Avondale and Parents**

DFES Publication- School Attendance, Statutory guidance and departmental advice August 2013 Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full- time education. This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision, or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home). Securing a high level of attendance requires Avondale and home to work closely together.

In order to achieve this it is essential parents/carers:

- Ensure their child arrives on time for registration.
- If their child is ill to notify the school on the first day and every following day of absence, including an estimation of the likely length of absence through the absence line.
- Contact the school at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attendance.
- Recognise that the school will be concerned when any child fails to meet the attendance target and work with us to improve their child's attendance

## School Systems and Procedures to promote good Attendance and Punctuality Registration

The accuracy of the register is of paramount importance both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions that may be required.

Start of Sessions, AM registration is 8.45am PM registration is 1.00pm. It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for every child.

Every child must fall into one of three categories of present, absent or late. We all have a duty of care and are responsible for safeguarding children; therefore it is vital that the information is accurate.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

This legislation came into force on 1 September 2013

Authorised absence is where Avondale Primary School accepts there is good reason for absence. An authorised absence requires communication from the parent/carer. Any child whose parent does not provide a reason for absence will have the absence recorded as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- Absence due to illness or other unavoidable cause.
- An absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which the parents belong.
- There is no acceptable transport and the school is not within walking distance.
- Situations where the school authorises absence. Only the school can authorise a child's absence, and the school is not obliged to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason. Any absence during term time, including annual holidays, are unlikely to be authorised, unless it is judged to be an exceptional circumstance. This is in-line with our absence in term time policy. Authorisation remains at the discretion of the Head teacher and Governors from DFES Publication- School Attendance, Statutory guidance and departmental advice August 2013.
- If a child has 5 broken weeks attendance within a term then school reserves the right to record these absences as unauthorised unless medical evidence is received.

### **Organisation**

- The Headteacher, class teacher and the school secretary fulfil their legal requirement to record and monitor staff and pupil attendance.
- Class teachers take the register at the beginning of each half day session
- Registers are sent to the office by 9am or 1.15pm so that the school office can make any necessary phone calls to follow up absences and has them all to hand in the event of an emergency.
- Attendance after 9am but before 9.30am, after 1pm but before 1.15pm is counted as late.
- All late arrivals are monitored and from September 2015 persistent lateness may result in a fine being issued to the parents / carer's in line with new guidance from the DFE.
- Attendance after 9.30am or 1.15pm will be counted as an absence until it is registered at the office. It must be accompanied by a reasonable explanation from a parent/carer.
- The class teachers refer concerns to the Attendance Coordinator. The Attendance Coordinator will then contact the parents / carers to discuss the situation, or will issue the relevant letter advising parents / carers of the situation and reminding them of their duties.
- Full attendance and punctuality is encouraged and praised throughout the year.
- When a child transfers from Avondale to another school, a statutory common transfer form and all the educational records relating to the child, including copies of any pupil reports, are passed on.
- Children are deleted from the admissions register on confirmation of a child starting a new school and receipt of details of the transfer.
- The school share any attendance concerns or details of referrals with the new school.

- The school inform the LA of the decision to remove a child from the admissions register.
- A child who is known as a name other than his/her legal name have the 'known as' name in the register.
- Name changes of pupils will not be accepted without written legal proof, e.g. in adoption cases or Residence Orders (with the leave of a court). The consent of the child is not necessary in law.
- When a child is subject to foster care there is **no** right for anyone, including the Social Care Department, to change a child's name.
- Attendance registers are kept for 7 years after they were last used.
- Registers are marked using the LA guidelines. These are found within the register.

### **Absence**

- Parents are expected to notify the school on the first day of a child's absence before 10.30am.
- Reasons for absence are kept with the register. (Telephone messages are written down and passed to the class teacher.)
- Any absences that are still unexplained are followed up by texts / requests from the attendance coordinator. See Appendix A.
- School have the right to refuse to authorise any absence, for example an absence due to illness without a doctor's note. This right will only be exercised in extreme cases and only after a warning letter has been sent to parents or carers.
- Parents are discouraged from taking family holidays within the school year. In exceptional circumstances a holiday form must be completed before the holiday and the Headteacher will consider the request in light of DFE guidelines. Requests are unlikely to be authorised and any absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The Inclusion Officer may be consulted and a penalty notice may be issued.
- Parents who take their child out of school during the day for appointments or medical reasons must sign them out and in again at the school office.
- Good attendance will be encouraged and praised by class teachers at all times.
- If, despite expressions of concern school still has on-going concerns about a child's attendance the family may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. This may happen:  
If a child's attendance drops below 90%.  
If a child misses 12 morning or afternoon sessions (equivalent to 6 days) of unauthorised absence in a term.  
If a child is persistently late.  
If a child misses the equivalent of 10 days in a term to authorised / unauthorised absence.
- The EWO has several courses of action under the Anti Social Behaviour Act of 2003, including issuing and enforcing a Parental Contract. In some cases the IO may issue a penalty notice. This gives a family 15 days to improve a child's attendance, if this does not happen a fine of £60 rising to £120 may be issued. Again this will not happen without warning letters being sent home.

### **Penalty Notices**

Penalty notices are fines of £60/120 imposed on (each) parent per child. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. These will apply to any parent who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is registered at a state school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not found in a public place during schools hours without a justifiable reason. When Avondale considers a Fixed Penalty Notice they will balance it against the option of giving a further warning notice dependent on the level of unauthorised absence i.e.: a. 14 sessions of unauthorised absence over two consecutive rolling terms b. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term c. An accumulation of unauthorised absence leading to an attendance of 90% or less Any queries about decisions made by the Head teacher regarding authorisation of absence need to be taken back to the Head teacher or school governing body using their complaints procedure if necessary. The local authority are

not part of the authorisation process and their decision to consider the issue of fixed penalty notices is based on information submitted by schools.

### **First Day Absence system**

If a child is unavoidably absent from school, parents are asked to contact the school office on 01254 763084 leaving a reason for the absence on the absence line by 10.30am.

### **How Avondale manages attendance**

All children whose attendance is below 94% over a 5 week period will be monitored weekly and the escalation system will be implemented. Each day parents will be contacted asking for reason for absence where we have not received an explanation. If there has been no reasonable explanation for the absence the absence will be coded as unauthorised.

**Stage 1** Parent/carer informed that attendance is below 94% a target is set and monitored over 2 weeks.

**Stage 2** If target is not achieved parent/carer invited in for a meeting with Headteacher to establish reasons for absence and appropriate support offered. Targets agreed and monitored over 2 weeks. An Individual Attendance Plan may be put in place. Absences may not be authorised.

**Stage 3** If target is not achieved parent/carer invited in for a meeting with the governors to establish reasons for absence and appropriate support offered. Targets agreed and monitored over 2 weeks. An Individual Attendance Plan may be put in place. Absences may not be authorised.

**Stage 4** Should there be no improvement and attendance remains a concern there will be a consultation with an inclusion officer from the local authority and a referral will be made.

### **Punctuality**

- Good punctuality is encouraged and praised by class teachers.
- A child arriving late not only disrupts his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. Persistent lateness is often a significant indicator of underachievement.
- If a child has overslept, parents are encouraged to bring them to school late rather than keep them at home all day. We believe that part of a day's schooling is better than none.
- Certificates and prizes are presented annually for children who have achieved full attendance.
- Pupils are expected to be on task quickly after playtime and lunchtime breaks. Staff play a vital role in encouraging good timekeeping.
- In cases where persistent lateness is thought to be harming a child's education a referral may be made to the local authority; persistent lateness may result in a fine being issued to the parents / carer's in line with new guidance from the DFE.
- Children arriving after 8.45am must enter school through the main office

### **Pupils with Special Needs**

We believe that all children at Avondale are entitled to a full and balanced curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is the responsibility of the class teacher with the support of the SENCo, Support Assistants and outside agencies as appropriate.

### **Inclusion**

In accordance with our equal opportunities policy all our pupils are given access to the national curriculum. We endeavour to help all children to reach their full potential irrespective of gender, race, class, ability, age or belief.

### **Reporting to Parents**

- The child's attendance record is reported on the summer term report to parent(s)/carer(s). However, they will be contacted before this date if there are any concerns regarding their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Parents are given holiday dates well in advance (in the school brochure, through our regular newsletters and on the web site) and are expected to take family holidays outside of school time. Parents are also requested to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours if at all possible.
- Information on approved absence and lateness is included in the school brochure and appears in our school newsletters and on the web site.

The responsibility for regular attendance and good punctuality lies with parent(s)/carer(s). In partnership with them, the school aims to encourage all children to be punctual and achieve high attendance. Where there are problems, we hope to overcome them sensitively and in compliance with legal requirements.

### **The Role of the Attendance Co-ordinator**

- To work closely with the staff and Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the school.
- To consult regularly with staff members with concerns regarding attendance or punctuality.
- To monitor children's attendance carefully and make referrals to the Inclusion Officer or other appropriate agencies as and when necessary.
- To work with parents who are having difficulty to improve their child's attendance.

### **Updating Documentation**

This policy document will be regularly reviewed to assess its value as a working document, and will be modified as necessary according to the experiences that have taken place.

This policy was approved by the governors in Autumn 19 and will reviewed Autumn 2021 or in light of any incident or changes to Authority or Government policies.