



## Absence during Term Time

# Policy and Guidance for Parents

This policy was reviewed by: Vicky Brown

This policy was adopted by the Governing Body in October 2021

It will be reviewed October 2023

*"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. If children are to get the greatest benefit from all the educational opportunities offered at Avondale Community Primary School, it is important that they have good attendance and punctuality. This means they are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. As children grow and prepare for their next stages of education and employment, they need to see good attendance and punctuality as important qualities that are valued by others. We will do all we can to encourage good attendance and punctuality, which will increase the chances of a child achieving their full potential.

## 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.
- Challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Maintain an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to assist in improving attendance and punctuality.
- Maintain an effective and efficient system of gathering, monitoring, analysing and acting on attendance related data.
- Continue to ensure that good attendance and punctuality is a priority for pupils, parents, staff and governors.

*Note: this document is based on the Local Authority Policy Statement: Considering Applications for Discretionary Leave of Absence during Term-Time (July 2013) and the amended Joint Procedures for Issuing Education-Related Penalty Notices (July 2015)*

Roles and Responsibilities Achieving good attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of the parents, supported by members of the school staff.

## Parents have a responsibility to:

- Ensure their child attends school every day that school is open.
- Ensure their child is ready to enter school when the doors open every day that school is open.
- Ensure their child is collected from school promptly by an appropriate person, and notify school at the earliest opportunity if they are running late or if somebody is collecting their child who is not listed on the pupil contact form.

- Not keep their child off school for minor ailments.
- Arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.
- Notify school by telephone before 9.00am if their child is unwell and unable to attend school for any reason, on the first and each subsequent day of absence.
- Request permission in advance for any planned leave of absence.
- Provide a satisfactory explanation for any absences and lateness.
- Ensure that school have up to date contact details and respond promptly to calls from school.

### **School have a responsibility to:**

- Act within the requirements of statutory and non-statutory guidance, local Codes of Conduct, and with reference to other relevant policies, particularly Safeguarding (including Prevent).
- Keep an accurate attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Work collaboratively with parents, pupils, governors and other agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Individual roles within school

### **The Headteacher will:**

- Make attendance a high priority, maintaining a working knowledge of children and families whose attendance requires improvement.
- Decide whether any absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised in accordance with this policy, and taking account of statutory and non-statutory guidance.
- Work closely with the Attendance Officer, contacting parents and carers in appropriate circumstances.

### **Teachers will:**

- Record attendance in their Class Attendance Register using the codes / (present AM), \ (present PM) or L (late before register closes) - twice daily.
- Discuss attendance at Parents Evening for those children where there are attendance concerns – termly.

### **The Office Manager or Administrative Assistant will:**

- Input the Class Attendance Register onto SIMS – twice daily.
- Record details of phone calls from parents about pupil absences in the Attendance Diary and enter the appropriate attendance codes on SIMS – daily.
- Record the name of any child who arrives late in the Attendance Diary and notify the parent via text – daily.
- Provide the Attendance Officer with a list of pupils who are absent without contact – daily.

### **The Attendance Officer will:**

- Work closely with the Head teacher, providing accurate information about children whose attendance requires improvement.
- Contact parents/carers or other named contacts for all pupils who are absent without reason – daily.
- Monitor and analyse attendance and punctuality levels regularly, including reasons for absence, unexplained absence and patterns of non-attendance – ongoing.
- Work with parents and children to improve attendance and punctuality – ongoing.
- Make referrals to the Local Authority Inclusion Team and School Nurse where appropriate – ongoing.

## Punctuality

- Parents are expected to ensure their child arrives at school on time.
- Pupils who arrive after the doors close at 8.50am will enter the school via the school office.
- Parents or pupils are expected to provide the school office staff or Attendance Officer with a reason for their lateness. This will be recorded on SIMS.
- Children who arrive between 8.50am and 9.30am will receive a late mark (Code L). Registers close at 9.30am and children arriving after this time will receive an unauthorised absence mark (Code U).

## Medical and Dental Appointments

- Parents are expected to arrange non-urgent medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.
- Parents should notify the school of the appointment in advance and where possible provide a copy of an appointment letter or card.
- Pupils should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- Where the pupil misses the morning or afternoon registration due to a medical or dental appointment, the session will be recorded as an authorised absence (Code M).
- Pupils must be collected by an appropriate person if they are leaving school during the school day and the adult must complete a slip with the reason for the pupil leaving school.

## Revised Government Regulations

Revised regulations, which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, removed all references to 'family holidays', 'extended leave' and the former statutory threshold which allowed up to ten school days leave per year for the purpose of a family holiday during term-time.

With the above references omitted, the amended regulations are now explicit that:

- Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.
- Parents **must** make an application in advance. Schools cannot **grant** retrospective approval for any leave of absence.
- There is **no entitlement** for parents to take their child on holiday during term-time.

In addition, when considering applications for discretionary leave of absence, **Headteachers must always:**

- **be satisfied that each child's individual circumstances warrant being granted leave;**
- take into account the frequency of any such requests, the pupil's attainment, overall attendance and ability to catch up on missed lessons; and then
- determine the number of days, if any, a child can be away from school.

Please note: requests for absence in the period leading up to, or the week of, any formal tests (SATs) will **automatically be refused**. Any absence in Year 6 would also, in most circumstances, be routinely refused.

Consequently, a request for leave of absence in term time is not guaranteed automatically. It will be a rare, irregular occurrence, only allowed in exceptional circumstances.

The Local Authority Policy Statement **identifies** a generic list of **examples** of 'exceptional circumstances' which **may** justify approval. These examples include:

- members of the armed forces who are returning home from active duties.
- employees who are prevented from taking family holidays outside term-time. A supporting letter from employers will need to be support the application. A maximum of 5 days leave in one academic year maybe authorised.
- the death of an immediate family member (**parent, grandparent, sibling, uncle or aunt**).
- a child or parent/carer receiving medical treatment abroad – additional guidelines apply and evidence must be supplied **which is supported by a senior medical consultant**.
- families who can evidence that they have experienced genuine disruption to their originally agreed return travel plans, e.g. severe weather conditions or civil unrest.

**Note:** in the case of all intended travel abroad, copies of travel arrangements/tickets are requested providing confirmation of intended dates of both outward and return journeys.

### Procedures for Parents Requesting Leave of Absence During Term-time

**Note:** This procedure is required for **all absence requests**.

- A letter of application/ request for absence during term time request form must be submitted to the Headteacher in advance of the requested absence, allowing sufficient time to consider the request and respond appropriately (**usually a minimum of two weeks**).
- The letter/form should detail the request and state why the absence should be considered as 'exceptional', providing dates of the first and last day of intended leave.
- The Headteacher may request a meeting with parents to further clarify the request and discuss the granting or otherwise of the application.

### **If an application is granted...**

Parents will be notified in writing of the decision confirming the agreed dates of absence and the date by which the child/children will be expected to return to school. This letter will also inform parents of the actions which may be taken if they fail to return on time e.g. the issuing of a penalty notice for unauthorised absence or the child's/children's names being removed from the school roll.

In those rare circumstances where leave of absence is granted in **excess of 10 school days**, parents will also be required to complete and return a Local Authority **Application for Discretionary Leave of Absence** form confirming the request for absence in accordance with the dates authorised by the Headteacher. This application form will then be forwarded to the Local Authority to enter into their E-tracker.

This system will generate text messages to parents on the first 'approved' day of absence confirming their agreed date to be back in school. The Headteacher will receive email copies of all correspondence. The e-tracking system also creates a daily report of when all those children granted extended leave are due back in school on each day and sends this in an e-mail to the Local Authority's Pupil Tracking and

Licensing Officer, who will then contact the child's/children's school to check if the child/children have returned.

### Failure to return by the agreed date...

- In the case of a child/children **granted** leave of absence but the child/children then fail to return to school **within 5 school days** of the agreed return date, a request to issue a penalty notice to the parents will normally be made by the Headteacher to the Local Authority Learning Access Manager.
- Penalty notices will be issued unless the school is satisfied that the child/children are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause e.g. flight delays. In all circumstances, evidence will need to be provided to substantiate the reasons given. It is the responsibility of parents to inform school of any changes to return dates in advance of/on the date agreed to prevent the commencement of procedures by school to issue a penalty notice.
- In the case of a child/children **granted** leave of absence but the child/children then fail to return to school **after 10 school days** of the agreed return date, the child's/children's names **may also be removed from the school roll** as an alternative action to issuing a Penalty Notice, with no guarantee of re-admission.

### If an application is not granted...

- If permission for discretionary leave is **not granted**, the Headteacher will write to the parents explaining the reason why the request has been refused and warning them of the potential consequences for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school, e.g. the issuing of penalty notices and/or the removal of their child/children from the school roll.
- However, warning letters may not be issued in instances where leave of absence is either not requested by parents in advance or requested with insufficient notice for a warning letter to be sent. In these instances the Local Authority reserves the right to issue penalty notices without a warning letter.
- If a parent removes a child/children from school **without seeking prior approval** from the Headteacher **or disregards the Headteachers decision** to refuse an application for absence, then the procedures for issuing a penalty notice **will** commence with failure to return to school within 5 days, or alternatively, the child's name may subsequently be removed from the school roll, with no guarantee of re-admission, should they still fail to appear after 10 days of continuous unauthorised absence.

### Penalty Notices – circumstances of use

The circumstances in which a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- **Unauthorised holidays in term time**
- **Unwarranted delayed return from discretionary leave (without school agreement)**
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed

'Parentally condoned absence' also refers to 'ad hoc' absences, not necessarily consecutive days, which are deemed to be **unauthorised**.

Penalty notices may be issued in these circumstances for a **minimum of 10 unauthorised school sessions (5 days)** by any child in any **one term** and/or a **minimum of 14 unauthorised school sessions (7 days) over two consecutive terms**.

Persistent late arrival after the register has closed will be monitored and determined by the school's Education Welfare Officer and Penalty Notices issued accordingly.

### **Penalty Notices - costs**

By law, individual Education Penalty Notices are required to be issued to each liable parent/carer per child, i.e. in the case of a family with both parents and two children who are taken out of school without the Headteacher's permission, 4 x separate Penalty Notices will be issued.

Further amendments to the Education Regulations have reduced the time limits by which a Penalty Notice amount must be paid:

- **Payment of penalty within 21 days - £60 per parent, per child; and where not paid**
- **Payment of penalty within 28 days - £120 per parent, per child**
- **Non-payment of the penalty within 28 days will normally trigger prosecution in the Magistrates Court**

The Local Authority will retain any revenue from the income generated by the issuing of penalty notices to help cover administration and enforcement costs.

### **Religious Observance**

- Absences for religious observance will be recorded as an authorised absence (Code R) when the day has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.
- Where necessary, school may seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance, and may also take advice from the Local Authority.

### **Child Performers**

- Parents of a child performer may seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work, and modelling.
- Parents must contact the Headteacher or Attendance Officer in advance to discuss the nature and frequency of the work and must be in possession of a valid performance licence from the Local Authority.
- Any absences authorised for child performers will be recorded as an authorised absence

### **Children Missing Education (CME)**

A CME report will be made to the Local Authority when:

- a pupil has been absent for ten consecutive school days or more without authorisation from school or contact from the parent.
- school has good reason to believe the family has moved out of the Blackburn with Darwen area and the child's whereabouts are unknown.

- a pupil fails to return to school for 10 consecutive days beyond the expected return date following a holiday / leave of absence.
- a pupil is withdrawn from school and parents are unwilling or unable to say where or how their child will continue to be educated.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

- The Attendance Officer will monitor attendance and punctuality for all pupils on a weekly basis.
- All children with attendance below 96% will be monitored closely – contact will be made with parents and support will be offered to improve attendance.
- Where attendance does not improve and absences are due to illness, medical evidence will be requested in order for any further absences to be authorised.
- Referrals may also be made to the School Nurse where regular illness or medical problems are having an adverse effect on a child's attendance.
- Pupils with attendance below 90% and with four days unauthorised absence (8 sessions) or more will be invited into school to discuss their child's attendance
- Punctuality will be monitored every three weeks and contact will be made with parents where lateness is a concern, either in terms of the regularity or pattern of lateness and the amount of school time missed. Support will be offered to reduce lateness. If a child is persistently late after the register closes, they will be referred to the attendance officer.

### **Promoting and Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality Regular good attendance and punctuality will be promoted and rewarded.**

- Each week the class with the best attendance will receive the Attendance trophy that will be kept in their classroom until the following week.
- Each term children with 100% attendance will be rewarded with a 100% attendance certificate.
- All children who achieve 100% attendance at the end of the year will receive a special Avondale inscribed pen
- The names of children with 100% attendance for the full year will be placed in a draw, two winners will be drawn out both will receive a cheque for £50

**Policy Revised: October 2021**

**To be reviewed: Autumn 2023 or as necessary due to local/national legislation requirements**