



Arden Forest Infant School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Headteacher :	R Gunn	Date: 04.09.2024
Chair of Governors	T Hoskin	
Last reviewed on:	September 2024	
Next review due by:	September 2025	

The Attendance Policy is reviewed regularly, as part of the school's review of safeguarding policies and procedures.

Introduction

Arden Forest Infant School has a good record for attendance historically. As a successful school we aim for children to achieve their full potential during their time at the school. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. This policy sets out how we look to work with families to achieve this goal.

To enable our school to keep children safe this policy links to the following legislation that enables our school:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2024
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Education Act 1996

Legislation in relation to school attendance can be found with the following:

Education Act 1996

Education Act 2011

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 v.

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 & 2013

Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007

Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

Why Regular Attendance is Important

Learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence, including lateness disrupts teaching routines, so may affect the learning of others in the class.

There are two types of absence:

- i. authorised - where the school approves student absence;
- ii. unauthorised - where the school will not approve the absence.

Safeguarding

Promoting the welfare and life opportunities of children is the shared responsibility of the school and parents/carers. Failing to attend school on a regular basis may be considered a safeguarding matter.

Legal Responsibilities

Schools are responsible for recording child attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session as outlined in The Education (Pupil Registration), (England) Regulations 2006.

The register must record whether the child was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their children receive efficient, fulltime education by regular attendance at school or otherwise under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not;
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Legal Framework

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude; to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everyone's responsibility – parent, carer, children and all members of the school staff.

To help focus on this:

- The school will provide attendance information to parents/carers in the end of year reports and at the parents' consultations in February (a copy of the child's attendance register, showing attendance and the pattern of attendance over the school year).
- We will report on school attendance levels through school newsletters.
- Offer parents and carers support to encourage an improvement in attendance and/or signpost to external agencies (including Early Help), as appropriate.
- Contact parents and carers when child's attendance falls below the school's attendance target.

- Staged letters will be sent out to parents/carers highlighting poor attendance over a period of time.
- This Attendance & Punctuality Policy will be shared with parents/carers.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parent or carer), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness, medical/dental appointments, emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which would not be considered reasonable under the Department for Education's guidance. Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Routine dental, optician appointments etc
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration without a valid reason (Please see **Punctuality** guidance below).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Weddings.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed by the school. (Please see Leave of Absence guidance below in reference to Holidays in Term Time).

There may be occasions where your child is reluctant to attend school. Most problems are easily resolved, and are nearly always the result of a misunderstanding or simple oversight. Schools are busy places and while we always endeavour to do our best to support you and your child, we recognise that occasionally matters need to be discussed and reviewed. We value the very important relationship between home and school and the pivotal role it plays in a child's education. Parents/carers should not hesitate to contact the school with genuine concerns as communication is vital in our working together.

Persistent Absenteeism

A child is identified as a 'persistent absentee (PA)' once they have missed 10% of their own possible sessions. Therefore, all children with attendance below 90% are classed as PA.

Absence at this level may do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. Lessons missed cannot be repeated and 'catching up' on work is never as good as the original learning experience; therefore, we need parents' fullest support

and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence level, or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and parents/carers will be informed.

Children who are identified as PA are tracked and monitored by the Pastoral Manager and class teachers. Parents/carers are advised of how such levels of absence will affect their child's attainment.

If measures put in place by the school fail to improve the child's attendance, then the case could be reported to **Warwickshire Attendance Service** (see below). Persistent unauthorised absences could lead to Warwickshire County Council using Fixed Penalty Notices and/or legal proceedings.

Absence Reporting Arrangements

All absence should be reported to the School Office by the child's parent/carer (not family friends or siblings) on the morning that a child is not in school. Parents/carers are asked to telephone the school between 8.30 and 9.30 am.

Parents/carers are asked to call on each day of absence. A message can be left on the school telephone/answer service, providing the child's name, class, reason for absence and an expected date of return. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, the school needs to be informed as early as possible so that, if necessary, the school can offer appropriate support.

When notifying the school of planned absence (e.g. hospital appointments, visits to secondary schools, etc.), a written letter or appointment card needs to be sent into school, which can be kept on the register and informs both teachers and office staff. (A verbal message in the playground can be forgotten when a teacher is dealing with a class of children).

Similarly, parents/carers who are in school on the day their child is absent due to illness (i.e. they are dropping off a sibling), need to inform the School Office of the absence, rather than the verbal message in the playground. This ensures the absence is properly recorded.

Forms regarding leave of absence can be obtained from the School Office. Guidance on taking holidays during term time can be found below under **Leave of Absence**.

Any child who arrives late, or leaves early, must report to the School Office, so that their attendance can be correctly recorded and to adhere to safeguarding and health & safety procedures.

If there has been no communication from the parent/carer of an absent child by 10:00; the school will attempt to make contact. The class teacher or head teacher will contact parents/carers to discuss attendance if absences persist.

Telephone Numbers

It is most important that we have a contact address and telephone number for emergency use during school hours. If this should change, please let us know immediately, so that our records can be amended. Since the introduction of Edulink, we also need to be informed of any changes to email addresses as well as mobile telephone numbers.

Those Responsible for Attendance in School

The School Office takes responsibility for first day absence calls and for recording reasons for absence. The School Office uses SIMS (electronic data management system supported by the Local Authority) to manage child attendance and produce registration documents.

The School Office provides class teachers, the Pastoral Manager and the Head teacher with attendance information relating to individual children and cohorts/groups of children (including vulnerable groups).

Class teachers discuss attendance levels with parents/carers when the need arises, while the Pastoral Manager and Head teacher monitor attendance patterns across the school and is involved with families where attendance is poor.

Monitoring Procedures

Children who are in school every day find learning more satisfying and manage the demands of the school day in a more positive way. The school monitor the attendance of all children weekly and use a staged approach to address any issues.

- Stage 1 – Initial concern (Child is not present in School and the Office/Pastoral Manager has attempted to make contact, or School are not satisfied with the amount of time a child has not attended School). In this instance, if School have not received communication with parent's/carers, or still have concerns, the Pastoral Manager and Head Teacher will conduct a **Home Visit** to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child and/or family, as part of our duty of care. Where a Child/Family may not be present at a Home Visit, and School have reasonable cause for concern, Staff may phone 101 to request a Safe and Well check.
- Stage 2 – Concern (below school target of 95.6%) (school office instigate) – Child's attendance level has fallen below the school target. Letter sent to parents/carers expressing concerns and offering the parent/carer an opportunity to contact school to discuss.
- Stage 3 – Informal school meeting (93%) – Child's attendance level declines further. Parent/carer offered an opportunity to contact the school to discuss concerns. Child set an appropriate individual short term attendance target.
- Stage 4 - Formal school meeting (90%) – Despite previous intervention, child's attendance level is still not improving. Parents/carers invited to school for a

meeting to discuss concerns and the potential support from external agencies (e.g. Early Help). Formal individual attendance target set and parents advised that any absence during the period will be unauthorised unless covered by appropriate medical evidence. If a parent/carer declines the offer of a meeting, targets will be set and parents should be sent a letter outlining the target and an agreed target review date.

- We may also review the attendance of your child based on the overall attendance percentage at the end of the previous academic year, against the number of days lost at any point during the current academic year.
- Any children failing to show an appropriate level of improvement may be discussed with the **Warwickshire Attendance Service**.
- In some situations where there is persistent or poor attendance, it may be appropriate to consider and explore if there are safeguarding concerns that may need to be discussed with parents/carers and Children's Services in order to identify the best approach to supporting a child and their family.

Punctuality

Punctuality is an important life skill. By ensuring children arrive at school on time parents will ensure that they are registered properly, receive essential information and instructions and reduce disruption to both child and class.

No child should be left unattended on the school premises. They should be handed over to school staff through the routine of coming into class between 8.30 and 8.35am, when the classroom doors are opened. The school cannot be responsible for children who arrive early. There is a breakfast club operating on the school site. It is a parental responsibility to ensure children arrive in school safely for the start of the school day.

The school day starts at 8.35am, and we expect children to be in their classes by this time. Teachers open the classroom doors to the children at 8:30am.

All children arriving after 8:35am must sign in at the school office by their parent and the reason for lateness provided for school records. Children receive an 'L' (late) in the register if they arrive after the register has been taken. This is in line with the statutory duty to accurately report all children's attendance in school. Registers close at 9.00am and children who arrive in school after this time will receive an unauthorised late, 'U' code in the register ('late after close of registration').

Leave of Absence

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013, regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The regulations regarding Leave of Absence (The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.) advise:

- Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application

Leave of Absence

- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Expectations

- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission for a Leave of Absence from a school may only be given by a person who the school's proprietor has authorised to do so (an authorised person).
- Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.
- Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify the parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.
- It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.

- Where applications for Leave of Absences are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an “unauthorised” absence. Where a leave of absence is requested but additional days take either prior to or after the request, they may be considered as part of the leave of absence.
- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25

The law relating to Penalty Notices changed with effect from 19 August 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absence taken from September 2024 will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).

- First Leave of Absence Offence: The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
- Second Leave of Absence Offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.
- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice). A Penalty Notice will not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.

- The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- **It is important to note**, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £160 each, totalling £320 for both children, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

Application for Leave of Absence forms can be found at the School Office.

Warwickshire Attendance Service

The school is responsible for liaising closely with the Warwickshire Attendance Service and follow their standard approaches in managing attendance issues. When appropriate, Warwickshire Attendance Service will escalate the situation and instigate legal procedures.

Prosecutions for non – school attendance must be conducted in line with the Warwickshire Non School Attendance and Fixed Penalty Code of Conduct and the Code for Crown Prosecutors and must pass the evidential and public interest tests.

School Targets

The school's absence levels are consistently below the national average for primary schools. Attendance for 2023/2024 was 95.3% (authorised absence was 3.6% and unauthorised absence was 1.2%).

The school, working alongside its Governors has set an attendance target of 95.6%, believing this to be a realistic and, therefore, meaningful target.

Governors work with the school's leaders to help shape the strategic direction of the school.

We expect that Governors will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted within school, including children, parents and staff

- Review the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Identify a Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Warwickshire County Council has a legal duty to identify children missing education and to make sure they return to education wherever possible. Schools are required to take appropriate action for children missing education. Arden Forest Infant School, as a Warwickshire school, must:

1. Notify the Local Authority when a child is to be removed from the school admissions register.
2. Work jointly with the Local Authority to establish the whereabouts of a child before deleting them from the school admissions register.
3. Notify the Local Authority within 5 days of adding a child's name to the admissions register at a non-standard transition point.

If the school has a concern that a child is missing education, the head teacher will make a referral to the CME Officer.

Deletions from the Register

The school will only delete a pupil from their register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. In accordance with the 2016 amendments the Local Authority will be notified prior to removal.

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and the 2016 amendments, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- i. The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- ii. The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- iii. The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- iv. Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- v. Death of a pupil
- vi. Transfer between schools
- vii. Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system

- viii. Failure to return from a leave of absence after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- ix. A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- x. In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- xi. 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the school and local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- xii. Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

All pupils removed from the register will be reported to the relevant LA in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations Amendments 2016. Each Academy will follow Birmingham's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Please contact the Head Teacher or Pastoral Manager for any questions relating to Attendance and Punctuality on 02476-315913