



# Petersfield Church of England Aided Primary School

## ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

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Adopted by the FGB	24 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
Next Review	2021

**School Lead:** Mrs Laura Penrose (Headteacher)

**Adopted by FGB:** September 2020

**Date of revision:** This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner, should there be changes to the DfE legislation and guidance.

### **RATIONALE**

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring that all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education.

**This policy should be read in conjunction with the Government Guidance (August 2020)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

**We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary schools.

The Government expects:

- Schools and Local Authorities to:
  - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
  - Ensure every child has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
  - Act early to address patterns of absences
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

DfE September 2013

### **AIMS**

At Peterfield Primary School, we believe that children should attend school every day when the school is in session. We do all that we can to encourage children to achieve good

attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is a positive ethos and culture that promotes a love of learning. In order to achieve this aim, we work hard to make our school a happy and rewarding environment for all. We also ensure that children who are unable to attend school, due to ill-health, are supported as appropriate.

### **ATTENDANCE REGISTERS**

Under the Education Regulations 1995, the Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the school keeps accurate attendance registers. At Petersfield Church of England Primary School, attendance registers record the attendance of children who are present at the start of both the morning and afternoon session each day. They also record whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. These are kept on file for a minimum of three years.

### **THE SCHOOL YEAR**

Children are expected to attend school for 190 days each year. One day counts as a morning and an afternoon session, a total of 380 sessions per year.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Parent/ carers are responsible for making sure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn five between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory age on 31 March; if they turn five between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August; if they turn five between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December.

### **PUNCTUALITY, ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION**

The school doors open at 8.45am. Children enter through the playground doors and proceed quickly to their classrooms for a starter activity provided by their class teacher. At 8:55, attendance registers are taken by the class teacher. Morning registration starts at 8.55am and closes at 9am. If a child arrives during registration, he/she will be marked as late (L).

It is important that children attend school on time each day; this is the parent/carer's responsibility. As well as being distressing for a child to enter a lesson late, it is also very disruptive for a class and the teacher. Any child arriving after 8.55am must be signed in by a parent at the school office. The 'Late Signing In and Out' form in the office must be used to record time of arrival, reason for lateness and parent/carer's signature. School cannot accept a reason for lateness from a child.

After 9am, any absence becomes an Unauthorised Absence (U) for that session. The afternoon register is taken in the same way at 1.00pm.

Parents/carers are required to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why their child is absent or late before an absence code can be changed. If no satisfactory explanation is received from a parent, by the end of one week, any absence will permanently remain as an unauthorised absence. School cannot accept an explanation for absence from a child. Not all explanations for an absence given by parents/carers can be considered appropriate for an

absence to be authorised, in which case, the mark given originally will remain on a child's attendance record for that academic year.

### **ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**

If a child is ill, parents/carers should notify school before 8:55am on **the first day of absence** and before 8:55 on each morning during the illness. This is the parent's responsibility. Parents/carers may also e-mail the office with this information – [office@peterfield.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@peterfield.cambs.sch.uk) or visit the school office. If not possible, the answer machine (01223 207382) is checked daily. Parents/carers should email a message stating; name of child; class; the reason for absence; name of the person leaving the message and the time. **All** absence information must go to the school office. Parents/carers may also tell the teacher on duty on the playground for information, but this should not be construed as formal notification for an absence having been provided to the school.

No child should attend school until 48 hours after they have suffered sickness and/or diarrhoea.

If on the first day of absence a valid reason is not received, an 'N' code (No reason yet provided for absence) will be coded against the child's name. If no valid explanation is given within one week by a parent then that absence will remain as unauthorised absence and cannot be changed.

Every effort should be made to arrange dental/ medical appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible, children should be returned to school as soon as possible after the appointment. Parent/carers are required to sign their child(ren) in and out of school at the school office in the 'Late Signing In and Out' form.

If a child becomes unwell during the school day, we will make every effort to contact Parent/carers, so it is important that we have up to date contact numbers. Should emergency contact details change, parents/carers should inform the school office as soon as possible.

### **ABSENCE**

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. The school office may contact the parent/carer on the first day of absence, if no reason for absence has been received. If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher will inform the school office. The school will then contact the parent/carer immediately in order to check on the safety and location of the child.

### **TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

<p><b>HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME ARE ABSENCES WHICH WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED</b></p>
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and may incur a penalty notice.

In exceptional circumstances, parent/carers may seek authorisation for specific absences from the Headteacher.

As a voluntary Aided Primary School, we do not have any choice but to apply the law.

Legislation no longer allows Head teachers to authorise 10 days absence from school for a term time holiday. The regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday. The default school policy is that absences **will not** be granted during term time. The Education Pupil Registration Regulation 2006 and 2013 (amended) legislation makes it very clear that term time leave of absence, which includes holiday during term time, should not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances.

Whilst cases for exceptional circumstances are considered individually, exceptional means just that - it cannot be done at any other time and is truly exceptional. Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable. Examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, and respite care of a looked after child or a housing crisis which prevents attendance. Exceptional Circumstances are "**rare, significant, unavoidable and short**".

As a school, we also authorise 1 day's absence for a close family wedding booked for a school day (not including those with Parental Responsibility who can choose the dates) assuming this cannot be avoided in term time. In addition, specific days for religious observances or festivals will be authorised. The religious observance days are set apart by the religious body of the individual religion, not determined by the parents.

Events that do not constitute exceptional circumstances include:

- Holidays, at any time, almost certainly do not count as exceptional circumstances.
- Holiday taken to suit a parents' fixed holiday dates, holiday rota or self-employment.
- A trip of a lifetime.
- Visiting family abroad

Any request for leave of absence must be made **a minimum of two weeks in advance**. During this time, we may request additional information if your request relates to exceptional circumstances. If you are requesting a Leave of Absence, please take the time to write to or meet with Mrs Penrose to share as much information as possible to enable a fully informed decision.

Please remember that every effort should be made to arrange dental/ medical appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible, evidence of the appointment should be provided when notifying school of the proposed absence.

Criteria for judging exceptional circumstances therefore include:

- Has a request been submitted on the Leave of Absence request form a minimum of two weeks in advance (or as soon as known if an emergency situation or bereavement)?
- Is it a one off event?
- Is it unavoidable?
- Is it "rare, significant, unavoidable and short"?
- Is it a holiday?
- Is it a close family wedding?

- Is it a religious observance set apart by the religious body?
- Is a sibling at another school? If so, has the request been made for them?

#### Following the decision of the Headteacher

The form will be annotated accordingly – authorised or unauthorised - and returned to parents. If the Leave of Absence is not authorised, the school must use the 'G' code to mark the absence. Where G codes have been used to record absences and meets the criteria for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued, the school MUST refer to Local Authority.

#### Suspected holiday

If the school has any reason to suspect a pupil is on holiday when a Leave of Absence request has not been completed and the child is absent, the school will contact parents and notify them of a suspected holiday. The parent has the responsibility to prove their child was absent for an authorised reason. If sufficient proof is not received, the school is required to refer the case to the Education Welfare Legal Panel for a Penalty Notice to be considered

#### Right to appeal

The Local Authority cannot override any decisions made by the Headteacher and therefore any appeals to the Council will be redirected to the school. The Governing Body delegate their decision-making power to the Headteacher. If a complaint is raised with the Governing Body, Governors will apply the same criteria as the Headteacher in accordance with the law with the default expectation being that Leave of Absences will not be authorised.

Whilst we value the positive relationships we have with parents and the huge support we receive, these and almost any other matter are unrelated to any Leave of Absence request. Headteachers have to act within the guidance and the law and therefore it is very rare that a Leave of Absence will be approved.

### **ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE and PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

All attendance and absence is monitored closely by the school; figures for whole school attendance are published by Ofsted and the DfE. Records of each child's attendance are kept year on year for comparison. **We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

Should a child's attendance fall below 90% then this is classed as persistent absence. All absence is followed up by the school initially. Sometimes, absence may involve the support and intervention of the County Attendance Officer.

As a school, we follow the Cambridgeshire County Council policy 'Managing Attendance, Three Letter System (Including the use of Penalty Notices) to alert parents to the fact that there may be a problem with attendance. If a pattern of absence or regular absences emerge, Parents/Carers will receive a letter from the Headteacher (where attendance falls below 96%) outlining the concerns. In addition, we have a letter from the class teacher to offer additional support to enable improved attendance. Parents/Carers will be invited in to school to discuss

this with the Headteacher and to agree targets. A record of this meeting will be kept on the child's file.

## **THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE**

Should there be no improvement in attendance the County Attendance Officer will become involved. The Attendance Officer is based with the Locality Team in Cambridgeshire LEA (01954 286012) and is able to support and advise parent/carers on many issues including frequent lateness or regular absence from school. The Attendance Officer is also able to give guidance on the employment of children, children in entertainment and child protection. The Attendance Officer visits regularly to monitor whole school and individual attendance. Any persistent lateness or absence may be followed up, by letter, home visits and even penalties including custodial sentences or prosecution in the magistrate's court.

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABSENCE**

**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 a reason from a parent/carer as required by this Policy and the School has authorised this absence. An example of this could be when a child has been ill. Only the school can make an absence authorised, and it should be noted that not all absences will be authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences and absences supported by parents will be classed as authorised. For example if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, or if a parent keeps a child at home because the parent or relative is ill, this is not an authorised absence.

**Unauthorised absence** – an absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the authorisation of the Headteacher.

**Exceptional Circumstances** – some absences may be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Any requested for authorised absence must be made on the School Leave of Absence form available from the school office at least two weeks in advance. Requests for holidays during school time in almost any circumstance **DO NOT** constitute exceptional circumstances.

**LONG TERM ABSENCE** - occasionally, a child is absent from school due to illness or a medical reason, sometimes this might be long and protracted. In this instance the school will work with the family and outside support services.

## **CELEBRATION**

Headteacher awards are part of our culture of celebration. From time to time children may be recognised for excellent attendance.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If they are aware of any unexpected absence during the school day, they will alert the school office as soon as possible.

The school office monitors attendance and records absences on the school attendance system. These records include who reported the absence to the office and what was reported as the reason for the absence. The office staff provide weekly updates to the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) who meet regularly to review attendance. Where the office staff have any concerns about an unexplained or unauthorised absence, they will raise this with the Headteacher immediately.

Headteachers are required to contact parents where attendance is a concern. Therefore attendance will be recorded and commented on at each Parents' Evening. Parents will receive a copy of their child's attendance record at each Parents' Evening. The Annual (July) report will celebrate excellent attendance and identify "this must improve" for all attendance below 92% and "this needs to improve" for all attendance under 96%.

Where there are on-going issues about the attendance of any child, parent/carers will be informed by the Headteacher. This will be done by the use of the three letter system of referral. Sometimes this process may include involvement by the Attendance Officer and prosecution in magistrates' court.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body of Petersfield Church of England Primary School to monitor overall attendance. Regular attendance and absence figures are discussed by the Governing Body. The Governors work closely with the school to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as possible.

**ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL CHILDREN**

**80% OR LESS ATTENDANCE IS EQUIVALENT TO  
YOUR CHILD MISSING 1 YEAR OF EDUCATION IN 5 YEARS**

**MISSING IN EDUCATION**

From September 2016, all schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations (Children missing education Statutory guidance for local authorities, Annex A). This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made. Where a parent intends to remove a child from school, notification must be in writing and the admissions procedures followed to ensure Parents fulfil their duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

Name and address of parent

LETTER ONE – Attendance below 96%

Dear Parent

Re: Name of pupil Dob: School: Petersfield

We are writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage\_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. We have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as We are sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required. We would draw your attention to the school's policy on Attendance which is on the website.

We will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and we look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact us. If helpful, please do speak to your child's classteacher, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mrs Laura Penrose & Mrs Rachel Peachey  
Co-Headteacher

cc. Attendance Officer – *for information*

Enc.

Record of attendance  
School Attendance Information



Name and address of parent

LETTER TWO – Attendance below 94%

Re: Name of pupil Dob: School: Petersfield

Dear Parent

We am writing to inform you that «forename»'s Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting «forename»'s progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date: Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect. We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and we hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mrs Laura Penrose & Mrs Rachel Peachey  
Co-Headteacher

cc. Attendance Officer

Enc.

Record of Attendance

School Attendance Information

LETTER THREE – PENALTY NOTICE WARNING – Attendance below 92%

Dear

Re: Child Name:                      DOB:            School: Petersfield

As the Headteachers for xxx, it has been brought to our attention that xxx has been absent from school for xxx sessions this school year/over the previous xxx weeks. We enclose a record of XXX's attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools were advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

We are therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next (4) weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued.

We actively encourage you to meet with me so that we can work together to ensure xxx's attendance improves with immediate effect.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mrs Laura Penrose & Mrs Rachel Peachey  
Co-Headteacher

cc. Attendance Officer

Enc.

Record of attendance

Attendance Information

Name and address of parent

**REFERRAL TO EWO**

Re: Name of pupil                      Dob:                      School: Petersfield

Dear Parent

We are writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance has not significantly improved since we last contacted you.

We have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

We are now formally requesting the involvement of the Attendance Officer who will contact you in due course to arrange a meeting.

We will continue to be available to discuss this matter with you and we still actively encourage you to meet with us so that we can work together to ensure xxx's attendance improves with immediate effect. Please telephone us on the number above should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mrs Laura Penrose & Mrs Rachel Peachey  
Co-Headteacher

cc. Attendance Officer  
Enc.  
Record of attendance  
Attendance Information