



PensMeadowSchool

Living, Growing, Learning

Attendance Policy

DECEMBER 2020

NEXT REVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 2022

Staff Responsible: Michal Pawlowicz

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1. Introduction

1.1 Good attendance helps the pupils in our school community to maximise their learning. At Pens Meadow School, we recognise that good attendance is central to raising standards and pupil progress. Consequently, we are committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance in order to enable our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

1.2 Under the *Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006*, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

1.3 Pens Meadow School adheres to the *DfE Guidance on School Attendance* updated in August 2020 and apply recommendations on making arrangements to safeguard and promote welfare of children.

2. Definitions

2.1 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 notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

2.2 Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

2.3 COVID-19 related absence¹

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, following the “lock down” period in Summer Term 2020, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, the DfE have made changes to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’.

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ should be recorded using code X
- schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak

Examples in which ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ could apply:

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
- Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

3. If a Child is Absent

3.1 The parent will:

- Notify the school by telephone as soon as possible to the start of the school day.
- Give a reason for the absence – including evidence of positive COVID-19 test if applicable
- Give the expected return date
- Provide, on request, evidence of offsite appointments – such as a hospital or dentist appointment letter/card.

3.2 The class teacher will:

Class teacher will record the absence in the register and Integris. When a pupil is absent and there have been issues raised through TAC etc in regards to potential causes for concern i.e changes to home circumstances, sudden disengagement with school, high levels of unexplained absence, then a priority call list form must be completed by the teacher or other nominated member of staff.

Closing times for the registers are:

Ridge Hill Site
9:15 AM
1:30 PM

Pensnett Site
9:30 AM
1:30 PM

3.3 The school office staff/SLT will:

- Record any telephone notifications of absence from parents in CPOMS
- If notification is not received, telephone parents/carers by 10am on the first day of absence and record the outcome of the call. A priority call list will include concerns raised by class staff and those pupils for whom attendance has fallen below 85%.
- Maintain regular contact with parents/carers throughout the pupil’s absence.
- Keep written notification from parents/carers on file.
- Write to parents/carers requesting a reason for absence if it has not been provided.
- Record any absences as authorised or unauthorised according to current DfE guidelines.

4. Absence due to Illness (including long term absence)

4.1 A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a medical appointment.

4.2 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

4.3 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send home learning material, where appropriate.

4.4 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will endeavour to make arrangements for outreach provision, where appropriate.

5. Requests for leave of absence

5.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances where a parent may wish to request leave of absence for a child to attend, for example, a significant event. We expect parents to contact the school at least a week in advance. Consideration will be given but leave is only granted in *exceptional* circumstances. What is exceptional is at the Head teacher's discretion.

5.2 Parents do **not** have the right to withdraw their children from school for up to ten days for an annual holiday. Since **September 2013** there have been significant changes to attendance regulations for pupils at school. The Department for Education has instructed thus:

'Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.' It is up to the Head teacher to decide what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'. In this context it shall mean significant emotional, educational, cultural and/or spiritual value to the child or children, which outweigh(s) the loss of teaching time. It will be important to review each case individually and parents and carers who wish to request annual leave for 'exceptional circumstances' should apply in writing to the Head teacher.

6. Repeated unauthorised absences

6.1 The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

6.2 The governors, supported by the LEA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

7. Rewards for good attendance

7.1 All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one month will receive an excellence certificate for attendance, awarded in assembly. There are special gold certificates for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole term. They will also be entered into a prize draw.

7.2 We also recognise that those children with the most improved attendance within each phase.

8. Monitoring and review

8.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they can request an annual report from the head teacher. Attendance figures are in each term's governors' report written by the Head teacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

8.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

8.3 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately and raise their concerns in weekly TAC meetings. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the head teacher or Deputy as safeguarding officer for the school, who will contact the parents or guardian.

8.4 This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.