

STENSON FIELDS PRIMARY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Stenson Fields Primary Community School set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils. We build strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school, ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Encourage children to attend school regularly and punctually by:-
- Creating a warm, welcoming and secure atmosphere where pupils feel valued
- Providing children with a stimulating, broad curriculum
- Providing a clean, attractive, safe environment in which to work.
- Keep a careful record of admissions and attendance
- Pass on relevant information to relevant persons
- Discourage absence/lateness

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Discussions with pupils if there is a problem that may lead to absences
- Discussions with parents/carers where attendance is an issue to provide support if appropriate
- Supporting parents with challenges linked to absence
- Signpost to external services for support as appropriate

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

- **Class Teachers:** Ensure children are registered accurately and efficiently.
 - **Administration staff:** Follow up absences where a reason is unknown, monitor attendance and lateness and notify the family support worker/Headteacher.
 - **Family Support Worker:** Monitors attendance and notifies parents/carers if there is cause for concern. In some cases, they may identify any relevant support that the school or external services may be able to provide if appropriate.
 - **Headteacher:** Monitors attendance, meets with parents if poor attendance is persistent, considers and requests for absence through exceptional circumstances, sets attendance targets, report attendance figures to Governors.
- Parents:** Encourage good attendance and punctuality, inform the school on the first day of non-attendance. Follow the correct process for requesting absence for exceptional circumstances. Understand that failure to ensure good attendance and punctuality could make them liable to a penalty notice or other statutory action, including prosecution.

Registration

The school doors open at 8.50am and children are expected to be in school by 9.00am this gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using Integris. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

Lateness

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 9.00am will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9.10am will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect your child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.15am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

In circumstances of persistent lateness, parents/carers will be invited to a formal meeting with the Headteacher and family support worker to establish, and if appropriate support reducing any barriers.

Absences

Parents are requested to notify school by telephone, parentmail or verbally regarding any absences of their child before 09.15am. Parents are encouraged to have medical appointments outside the school day, however if this is not possible, appointment cards/letters must be shown as proof at the school office.

The class teacher marks all known absences before the register closes, if the reason for the absence is not known it is marked as 'N' which will be followed up and categorised by the Admin team. Notifications regarding absence are kept electronically on Integris. Class teachers are informed of absence messages through notes on the registration system.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parents of these children by telephone.

Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a Leave of absence request form available from the school office/school website and handed in TWO school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

If you are concerned about your child's absence and need support, you can contact our Family Support Worker Mrs Duerden through calling the main office or email dduerden@stensonfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

If we are concerned about your attendance you may:

- Be contacted by the Family Support Worker for a 'check-in' conversation
- Receive a 'nudge' letter if attendance drops below the expected attendance (monitored termly)
- Receive a '30 day improvement letter' if attendance does not improve from the first 'nudge' letter
- Be invited to a formal meeting on how to support attendance

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

National framework for penalty notices

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.