



Attendance Policy Statutory Policy (annual)

Date next due for review by committee	Reviewed by committee	Any Changes YES/NO	Approved by Committee
	29 September 2021	Updated policy	
September 2022			

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Syresham St James Church of England Primary School and Nursery seeks to create an environment that reflects our Christian ethos, providing safe, happy, loving and challenging working conditions for all members of the school. This environment is exemplified by our school values to promote respect, generosity, courage, love, fairness and forgiveness.

Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, a legal requirement, parents being responsible for ensuring that any child of compulsory school age received efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. Compulsory school age is defined as: commencing at the start of term on or after a child's fifth birthday and concluding on the last Friday in June of the school year in which the pupil becomes 16. It is also essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them. The school curriculum is very full and any time missed cannot be replaced. Furthermore, parents and children need to understand that an explanation will be required for all absences. This discourages truancy, which can lead to antisocial behaviour and place children at risk. Regular attendance is dependent on high regard for education and for those who deliver it. Home attitudes are so important. Education is therefore a partnership. As stated in the Home School agreement, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time, suitably attired and equipped to undertake curriculum activities.

The Local Authority (LA) for the school is **West Northamptonshire Council**. The school complies with West Northamptonshire Council's Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIP), **Attendance and Enforcement Policy**. Within West Northamptonshire Council the duty of instigating court procedures related to attendance at school is delegated to the EIP Team.

Registration

Registers will be taken at the beginning of every morning at 8.50am and every afternoon at 1.00pm. Registers will be returned to the school office as soon as possible, but before 9.00am in the morning and before 1.10pm in the afternoon. A member of the school staff will contact parents of children who have not arrived in school, or telephoned or sent a message with an explanation, by 9.15am. Absence will be deemed to be unauthorised for that session if no communication from parents is received and where none of the conditions outlined under authorised absences apply.

Authorisation Codes

A list of coding will be clearly displayed inside each register, and this will be used at all times.

Please see Appendix 2

Late Arrivals

All children arriving after registration will need to go to the school office to be registered as late (L) and where possible the reason for late arrival will be recorded. The child/Parent/Carer will be required to detail the late arrival in a book in the school office. The register will close at 9.30am after which time pupils will have a 'U' recorded against their name (late, after registers have closed) – similarly 1.15pm for afternoon registers. If a child persistently arrives late, the Head will ask the parents to discuss the problem, and it may be necessary to inform the LA. If a child leaves school early, due to illness, a medical appointment etc. they must be signed out of school, detailing the time and reason.

Absence

The Law is clear on absence: "only the School, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents". (p 10, DCSF Guidance Book, Keeping Pupil Registers, September 2006). Parents are expected to complete an absence form as soon as their child returns to school after an absence or write a letter, the form makes it easier for parents to give an explanation. When a reason is considered unsatisfactory, the parent will be required to see the Headteacher, and the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. Absence returns will be made on-line termly to the DCSF. Unauthorised absences will be monitored and reported to the LA.

The parent/s of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to achieve regular attendance will be considered for legal processing unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Irregular attendance raises complex issues. Pupils may be failing to attend school for a variety of reasons. Some reasons may be outside the immediate control of the school, but good practice and appropriate responses with the school to identify the needs can help to improve attendance. It is therefore important that there are clearly defined criteria and procedures for referring non-attenders to EIPT.

Failure to Ensure Regular Attendance

The Education Act 1996 Section 444 states:

Section 444(1) where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the EIPT will consider instigating legal proceedings.

Section 444(1A) where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the EIPT will consider instigating legal proceedings. Where it can also be proved the parent/carer knew about the poor attendance and failed, without reasonable justification to ensure regular attendance then legal enforcement will be taken under this section.

Illness

Parents are expected to notify the school if a child is absent through illness as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This may be by letter, telephone call or by verbal message. Telephone messages will be recorded by the school office. An absence form must be completed on the child's return to school.

Medical and Dental Appointments – including Hospital and Opticians

Parents are expected to make every effort for appointments to take place out of school time. When this is unavoidable, parents must seek prior permission and may be asked to produce an appointment card. Such absence would then be authorised. They would also be expected to restrict this time to a minimum, i.e. the child to be returned to school as soon as possible that same day.

Holidays/Family Outings

Family holidays in term time will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances (see below). Parents should apply for permission to take a child out of school before any holiday is booked. This application must be made to the Headteacher in writing and should include the reasons parents feel it is appropriate for their child to be taken out of school during term time. The Headteacher will respond by letter. Each application will be considered on an individual basis and in certain cases the Headteacher may require a meeting with parents.

PERMISSION WILL NOT USUALLY BE GRANTED. If the school does not agree the absence and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence is unauthorised. Where parents keep a child away longer than the period agreed, the additional days are unauthorised.

Exceptional Circumstances

Days of Religious Observance

Absence will be authorised for pupils participating in a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Advance notice must be given in writing.

Family Bereavements

We fully understand how traumatic such an event can be for a family, and that it may not be possible to follow the above procedures. However, we would expect to be notified as soon as possible in writing. Such absences would generally be authorised, for a period depending on the individual circumstances.

Families from other countries

We appreciate that occasionally it may be necessary for overseas families to make an extended visit home, and that it is not always possible to organise this outside term time. Parents must follow the above procedure, but requests will generally be treated sympathetically.

Education Penalty Notice (England) Regulations 2013

Penalty notices (PN) for non-school attendance

These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates' Court proceedings whenever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more unauthorised absences in a 6-week period however schools are expected to follow their attendance procedures in identifying the issues and putting support in place.

Penalty Notices for term time absence

These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates Court Proceedings whenever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more of consecutive unauthorised absence.

Where a child has had 2 periods of unauthorised leave for which the parent has been issued with a PN, on the third occasion on PN will be issued and that parent will be prosecuted under Section 4441 as long as the parents was warned that this would happen.

Please see Appendix 1 – PN Request checklist

Education Supervision Order

If parents are acting responsibly, but cannot ensure regular attendance of their child/children because of the attitude of the child/children, then consideration should be given to applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO).

An ESO is an order made by the Family Proceedings Court under Section 36 of the Children's Act 1989. The initial order is for 1 year but application can be made to extend the order yearly for up to 3 years. The court must be satisfied that a child of compulsory school age is not being properly educated and that the making or the order would be better for the child than making no order at all.

Please refer to the West Northants Council Attendance and Enforcement Policy for full terms and legislation.

Exclusion Penalty Notices

For a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school and is excluded from that school either for a fixed period or permanently, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 if that child is present in a public place during the school's hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Parenting Orders

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act allows courts to make a Parenting Order for cases on non-school attendance brought under sections 443 and 444 of the Education Act 1996. The aim of the order is to increase parenting support and to encourage parents to develop better parenting skills.

APPENDIX 1

Penalty Notice (PN) Request Checklist

The criteria detailed below is to be considered as best practice guidance for schools when considering the use of a penalty notice and does not replace existing legislation nor associated evidential burden.

Before completing form

- Has the period for which the PN is requested been recorded as unauthorised?
- Are there any missing marks or coding irregularities?
- Does coding on the register accurately reflect the dates for which the PN is being requested?
- Is the reason for the request indicated on the form eg unauthorised holiday or unauthorised absence?
- Have the parents/carers been informed that they could receive a PN.

Criteria for issuing PN

- 5 days or more continuous absence.
- Can be used as a sanction for irregular attendance. A PN may be used in this instance where a pupil accumulates 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period.

Documentation to accompany irregular attendance request

- Completed Contact form
- Attendance certificate ensuring all absences are coded as unauthorised eg no 'N' codes
- Evidence of actions taken – letters issued, notes of meetings held, Parent Contact Meeting (PCM) chronology, offer of Early Help Assessment (EHA)
- Evidence that the parent/carer has been notified that they may receive a PN (this can be within documentation of school website, in behaviour policy, in newsletters to parents etc.

(If Leave of Absence Request Form is completed by parent/carer)

- Copy of request for leave of absence received from parent/carer and signed by all relevant parent/carers and any letter pertaining to that request.
- Signed evidence that school have informed parent/carer in writing that absence will be unauthorised and that this could lead to a PN being issued.
- Reasons for not authorising the holiday should be clearly stated to parent/carer.
- Up to date registration certificate showing the period of absence as unauthorised 'G'

(If Leave of Absence Request Form has not been completed by parent/carer)

- Up to date attendance certificate showing the period of absence as unauthorised 'G' and the date of return.
- Evidence as to why the school believe that the absence was for the purpose of a leave of absence.

- Signed copy of letter to parent from the head teacher stating that the absence will be coded as unauthorised as it is believed to be for the purposes of a leave of absence without exceptional circumstance and that this could lead to a PN being issued.
- Completing contact form**
- Parents' full name and surname. Please include parents' date of birth where known.
 - If there are two parents, details of both parents should be completed.
 - Address should be checked.
 - A PN will be issued individually to both parent/carers.
- The contact form should only be submitted once the child has returned to school. If the child fails to return then the school should follow their Missing child procedures.
- Documentation provided by the school which supports the request for a PN by the Local Authority can be used as evidence should any legal action be taken. All cases where there is non-payment of the PN would be considered for a prosecution under s.444 of the Education Act 1996.
- In the event that the case proceeds to a prosecution school staff may be required to provide a written witness statement and may be required to give evidence in court.
- Please note that in all cases where PN's have to be withdrawn by the Local Authority due to material errors or incorrect procedures followed or caused by the school, an administration charge of £30 may be considered.**

APPENDIX 2

Attendance Codes

Code	Description
/	Present (am)
\	Present (pm)
B	Educated off site (not dual reg)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers have closed)
M	Medical/dental/optician appointments
N	No reason provided
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers have closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances – i.e. snow day
X	Non-compulsory school age or COVID-19 related
-	All should attend/no mark recorded
7	Illness due to Covid-19
8	Self-isolating due to covid-19
9	Shielding due to covid-19