



Abbots Farm Junior School

Attendance Policy

1. Aim

The aim of Abbots Farm Junior School's attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

Abbots Farm Junior School takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying and behaviour.

2. Legal framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they 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. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

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

The Education (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Abbots Farm Junior School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly.

3. Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and their child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- ❖ **parents keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- ❖ **truancy before or during the school day**
- ❖ **absences which have never been properly explained**
- ❖ **children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together.

4. Procedures

This policy brings together all of our written statements on attendance with our practice in the classroom and the office. Children at this school are expected to attend all sessions punctually. Our sessions are defined in our School Prospectus as follows:

The School Day:

8.40 - 8.50 Children are admitted to classrooms for 'Start of the Day' (SODA) activities.

8.50 - 9:05 Registration

8.50 -12.20 Morning Session (3hrs. 30mins)

1.20 - 3.20 Afternoon Session (2 hours) - All children should have left the premises by 3.35pm unless taking part in an organised extra-curricular activity.

Extra-curricular activities take place during lunchtime and after school.

Daily registration lasting 15 minutes.

Daily break of 15 minutes.

Daily Worship lasting 15 minutes.

From 8.50 each morning, the office records pupils arriving late to school. Children who arrive after 8.50am have their names entered into the late book. This book is kept in the school office, and any children whose names appear regularly are spoken to about getting to school earlier. If there continues to be a problem, a letter is sent to their parents reminding them of the start times of our sessions. If the problem still persists, it is referred to our Attendance Enforcement Officer.

Registers called twice a day at the beginning of each session. We use the SIMS Attendance module and the class registers are OMR attendance sheets. Children who have not arrived in class by the time the register closes at 9.05am are marked absent. If they subsequently appear, they are marked as late. Our school attendance register is printed monthly. Annually these are bound into one document and kept for three years as our record of attendance.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- **Illness**

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

- **Medical or dental appointments**

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible. Parents should show the appointment letter or card to school.

- **Other Authorised Circumstances**

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example a family bereavement.

- **Exclusion**

Exclusion from school is treated as an authorised absence. The head teacher will arrange for work to be sent home.

- **Leave of Absence**

The Government have 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 states:

- ❖ Head teachers **shall not** grant any Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Head teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- ❖ Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.

- ❖ Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parents, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- ❖ 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 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.

Following the principles of the law, the provision for Headteachers to authorise absence purely for the purpose of a **family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance.**

Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the headteacher agrees to consult with the Attendance Enforcement Officer prior to authorisation being given to the parent.

Parents have the right to request a review by the governors if leave of absence is unauthorised to check that correct procedures have been followed. If a request is made, a panel of governors will seek advice from the Warwickshire Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service. However, parents must understand that the headteacher has the final decision in this matter. Parents should put their request in writing within 6 weeks of a decision being made.

- **Late Arrival**

Registration begins at 8:50am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. Pupils arriving after the close of registration will be recorded as late, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for the school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late.

- **Unauthorised Absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- ❖ A pupil's / family member's birthday
- ❖ Shopping for uniform
- ❖ Having their hair cut
- ❖ Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- ❖ "Couldn't get up"
- ❖ Illness – where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- ❖ Illness of parent
- ❖ Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school

5. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff
- annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and children to implement the policy effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that the Registration Regulations, England 2006 and 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children, and staff
- take time at governor's meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

School leadership team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues

- ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job
- report to the governing body each term on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include a expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises

- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.
- sign a home-school agreement.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- speak to their teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable
- bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. Pupils are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all students what this procedure is by their teachers. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation
- sign a home-school agreement.

6. Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

Schools recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/ separation incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Abbots Farm Junior School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those parents with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Agreed by Governors: September 2017

This policy will be reviewed annually