



Salisbury Plain Academies



Durrington Cluster Attendance Policy

1 Introduction

This policy has been written in consultation with Avon Valley College, Bulford St Leonard's Primary School, Durrington Junior School and Figheledean St Michael's Primary School. It is a common policy adopted by the five schools.

1.1

The schools aim to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. The Governors/Academy Advisory Boards and staff of the schools believe that attendance is of the greatest importance if pupils are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It puts children at risk and can result in children being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

1.2

We recognise that pupils may not be attending for a variety of reasons, some of which are outside the immediate control of the schools, but we intend actively to pursue the goal of regular attendance. Individual absences will be carefully investigated and pupils and parents left in no doubt that an unjustified absence cannot be tolerated.

1.3

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995* the Governing Body/Academy Advisory Board is responsible for making sure the schools keep 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.

2 Parent-school partnership

2.1

Parents are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. The schools are responsible for supporting attendance and taking seriously any problems which lead to non-attendance.

2.2

It is also the parents' responsibility to ensure that children arrive on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. As partners with the schools in their child's education, they instill in their children a respect for education and for those who

deliver it. They impress upon their children the need to observe the schools' code of conduct, and reinforce this through discipline in the home. Parents will be reminded of the rules from time to time through school newsletters. Our Home-School Agreements, which we are required by law to implement, reinforce this partnership and are revised annually.

- 2.3** Pupils' individual Annual Reports to Parents must show the number of unauthorised absences since the last report.

3 Reporting Absence

- 3.1** It is the parents' responsibility to notify the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible. A telephone call, message left on the answer machine or a note to the office on the first day of absence should be followed by a note explaining the reason. This note will be kept in the register and used to account for all absences which must be reported annually by law. All absences must be reported by the start of the school day.
- 3.2** Our attendance policy will be stated at appropriate opportunities. There is a statement in the school handbook issued to all new and prospective parents and we underline this responsibility at parents' meetings and through newsletters.

4 Registration

- 4.1** Members of staff are made aware of the importance of maintaining registers and are issued with guidelines for their marking. This is to ensure consistency throughout the schools and follows Department for Education guidelines.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518586/Advice_on_school_attendance.pdf

5 Categorisation of Absence

- 5.1** Clear guidance is given, in the Department for Education document, on whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. It is for the school to decide whether the absence is authorised or not, depending on the circumstances, but the overriding principle must be that it is the school which authorises the absence and not the parent.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- sickness
- unavoidable medical/dental appointments (The school can request to see an appointment card if a child's absence is a cause for concern)
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances, such as the wedding of a family member or a bereavement (member of the immediate family)
- terminal illness or bereavement of a parent or sibling if the absence is concurrent
- prison visits
- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking leave of absence outside term time at any point in the academic year

We do request that, whenever possible, all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours.

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- shopping / day trip / visit to a theme park
- looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents
- minding the house
- birthdays or a birthday treat
- oversleeping due to a late night
- appointments for other family members

6 Long-term absence

6.1 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 material home, so that they can keep up with their school work if they are well enough to do so.

6.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be repeated, the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

7 Authorising Leave of Absence

7.1 The schools' holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during these assessment periods. Teacher training days are published as soon as the schools have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed Head teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances". **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. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right.**

The schools will consider every application individually; their policy is **NOT** to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

A request for a leave of absence must only be considered if:

- The parent the child normally lives with applies in advance for the absence; and
- There are exceptional circumstances for the absence

If the parent with whom the child normally lives does not apply for the absence this would be considered as an unauthorised absence and this parent would be liable to the issue of a Penalty Notice. Absence cannot be authorised if anybody else applies for the holiday.

The Headteacher/Principal and Governors/Academy Advisory Boards have determined that:

- in **exceptional circumstances** permission may be granted for a maximum of five days of holiday providing your child has a good (96% or higher) attendance record over the previous three terms.
- where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher/Principal on behalf of the school Governors/Academy Advisory Boards, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed five school days in any one academic year.
- if leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare will be notified.
- leave will not be authorised by the school if it is tacked on to a school holiday
- leave will not be authorised by the school during a period of statutory assessments or external exams

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are issued for absence taken during term time where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school or an absence has not been requested in advance and pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year and additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Penalty Notices for Holidays

In accordance with guidance from Wiltshire Local Authority, holidays during SATS and other external exam periods will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

In line with the amendments made to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 please note the following:

- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of your child's poor school attendance
- Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent for each child named on the notification. In all cases this will be parent with whom the child lives.

8 Educational Welfare Service

- 8.1** Local Authorities (LAs) are charged in law with enforcing attendance of pupils of compulsory school age. Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) are employed to carry out these responsibilities. Our EWO is Mrs Tracy Satchell, who has a good knowledge of the schools and the catchment area.

8.2 It is our legal duty to report to the LA continuous pupil absences of more than two weeks and on those pupils who fail to attend regularly, except where those absences are covered by a medical certificate. This is a minimal requirement and in order to fulfill its responsibility, the LA uses the annual returns we send. The EWO is consulted where we are in any doubt as to whether an absence is justified or not.

9 Monitoring and review

9.1 It is the responsibility of the Governors/Academy Advisory Board to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher/Principal. The Governors/Academy Advisory Board also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors/Academy Advisory Board will therefore examine closely the information provided and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are in line with national expectations.

9.2 Each term the following data will be collected and analysed in order to assess performance and trends:

- whole school attendance rates;
- numbers and proportion of persistent absentee pupils;
- rates of unauthorised absence;
- attendance/absence rates for particular cohorts and groups (year groups, gender, ethnicity, SEN, etc)

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

9.4 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If they have concerns about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher/Principal, who will contact the parents or guardian.

9.5 All unexplained absences are investigated by the admin staff on a daily basis. Unless a message explaining the absence has been received, the admin staff will attempt that day to make contact with the pupil's home via telephone or via our School Comms system. Thereafter 'reasons for absence' letters are sent.

A second request makes reference to the following guidance for parents <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview> making clear their responsibilities and possible consequences of unauthorised absence.

9.6 This policy will be reviewed by the Governors/Academy Advisory Board every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Signed..... (Headteacher/Principal)

Appendix 1

Sample letter for school use - authorised leave of absence (holidays in term time)

Dear

With reference to your request for to be absent for days for

family holiday / wedding / funeral / other reason (delete as necessary)

I am writing to advise that the reason you have provided is deemed exceptional and the absence for this period will be authorised as holiday.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Principal

Sample letter for school use - unauthorised leave of absence (holidays in term time)

Dear

With reference to your request for to be absent for days for

family holiday / wedding / funeral / other reason (delete as necessary)

I regret to inform you that this will not be agreed on this occasion.

The reason that you have provided for requesting a leave of absence does not indicate an exceptional circumstance and

- a) *Your son / daughter will be taking his / her SATs / GCSE examinations during the period the absence has been requested; and*
- b) *His / her educational progress will be affected by any disruption at this point in time*
(delete as applicable)

I must advise you that if you do take your son / daughter out of school for this period of time the absences will NOT be authorised and will mean that your child will have a total of sessions (.....school days) of unauthorised absence .

If further unauthorised absence is recorded that amounts to 10 sessions or more within a 6 month period and additional unauthorised absence is within the previous 12 months, the Education Welfare Service will be notified and the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice* to each parent for each child. The 12 month period includes all unauthorised absence up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Your son / daughter's attendance will be monitored and you will be notified if there is further concern.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Principal

*the Penalty Notice shall be a sum of £120 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

Sample letter for school use - unauthorised leave of absence (holidays in term time)

Dear

With reference to your request for to be absent for days for family holiday / wedding / funeral / other reason (delete as necessary)

I regret to inform you that this will not be agreed on this occasion.

The reason that you have provided for requesting a leave of absence does not indicate an exceptional circumstance and

- a) Your son / daughter's current attendance rate is currently less than 96%
- b) Your son / daughter has had unauthorised absences between and
- c) Your son / daughter will be taking his / her SATs / GCSE examinations during the period the absence has been requested; and
- d) His / her educational progress will be affected by any disruption at this point in time

(delete as applicable)

I must advise you that if you do take your son / daughter out of school for this period of time the absences will NOT be authorised and will mean that your child will have a total of sessions (.....school days) of unauthorised absence.

Where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and unauthorised absence amounts to 10 sessions or more within a 6 month period and additional unauthorised absence is within the previous 12 months, the Education Welfare Service will be notified and the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice* to each parent for each child. The 12 month period includes all unauthorised absence up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Principal

*the Penalty Notice shall be a sum of £120 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the Penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the Local authority is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' court for the offence of unauthorised absence.