

	SLINGSBY SCHOOL Pupil Attendance Policy	Date for Review March 2022
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Full time education is mandatory under law in England from the year a child is 5 to the age of 16.

Unbroken attendance at school is important for learning. However, there will be times when absence is unavoidable and acceptable, and we at Slingsby School will always support and help any families in need. This policy explains the approach we follow to manage attendance and how we, together with the Local Authority, respond to poor pupil attendance.

The Governors have made it clear that they will support the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Service in promoting high levels of attendance and taking action where there are unsatisfactory reasons for absence.

Parents/carers are provided with a detailed letter which sets out our expectations and the information in this policy when they start at Slingsby School.

What is good attendance?

There are 190 school days each year. To ensure a child fully achieves their potential, they should be in school for at least 95% of this time (180 days). If then, for example, a child is taken out of school for a 2-week holiday in term time, then any further absences e.g., through illness will immediately put that child below the 95% threshold.

What about lateness?

The law states that parents are legally required to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time. Persistent lateness is dealt with in much the same way as irregular attendance. Persistent lateness can be every bit as harmful to a child's education as missing school. Children are expected to arrive at school *before 8:50am so that they are present for registration. Children who arrive in school after 8:50am must be accompanied by a responsible adult who is required to walk them to class. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for the children's social development and lateness causes problems over lunch numbers, register marking and missed instructions. Where a genuine reason for lateness exists, this will be an authorised absence but where explanations are inadequate or the lateness is after 9am, then an absence (late) will be recorded.

**During times of National lockdown due to Covid-19, pupils in class 1 and 4 are expected at 8.50am. Pupils in class 2 and 3 are expected to arrive punctually at 9am. This is to ensure social distance rules are followed by families outside the immediate premises.*

Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised in accordance with the Department for Education guidance. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given.

Unacceptable Reasons

The following reasons are not acceptable:

- Shopping visits
- Care for family members
- Days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows
- Parents'/ Carers' work commitments or business trips
- Holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- Parental/Carer illness

Unauthorised absences will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Illness and First Day Call

If a child is unable to attend school through illness, the parents/carers should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence before 8:50am. Alternatively, they can email admin@slingsby.n-yorks.sch.uk or call in person at the school office. It is useful to know the expected day of return.

We have a duty to contact families in periods of absence so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure; therefore, if parents/carers do not contact us, we will contact them. If we are unable to establish the whereabouts of a child, two members of staff will visit their house to check their wellbeing.

Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments, this will normally be counted as authorised. Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness, we will need to discuss this with parents to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support – e.g., involving the School Health Service. A letter regarding a child's persistent absence will be sent to remind parents/carers of the Attendance Policy.

Unavoidable Closure of School

In a situation where school is forced to close for unavoidable reasons, this will not affect a child's absence score. We have a Home Learning facility on our website so that online learning can continue to take place.

Medical/Dental Appointments

It is generally better if these can be arranged outside school hours but we know this is not always possible. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day, parents are asked to email the school office with evidence of the appointment and on leaving it is important that parents sign their child in/out on the pink form in the foyer. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g. bereavement, family problems, etc. where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs.

Leave of Absence to be authorised by Head Teacher

Where parents/carers wish to take their child(ren) out of school during term time for purposes other than holidays, they should complete the Leave of Absence Form. This is available on our website.

Holidays

Please be reminded that the current law does not give any entitlement to parents to remove their child from school during term-time for the purpose of a holiday. **It is not our policy to authorise holidays in term time.** The only exemption to this is where parents serve in the armed forces and in some circumstances, farming or tourism (this does not extend to the emergency services i.e. Police, Fire, Ambulance etc.). Where authorisation is not granted, then subsequent term time holiday absence will be reported as a matter of course to the Education Welfare Service; we are under a duty to do this.

Head Teachers may only grant leave of absence where an application has been made in advance and consider that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application in line with government guidance.

Where unauthorised leave is taken, the Governing Body, in line with government guidance, will support the imposition of a fixed penalty fine. This can be very expensive (see below).

Approved Public Performance

Where children are invited to perform in a licenced show or concert (e.g., orchestra, pantomime), families are asked to consult with the class teacher about how much time away from school is required. Where possible, such requests will be granted - provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer. The school will also be sympathetic towards leave to participate in a recognised city, county or national sporting event.

What we are aiming for?

Average attendance is determined as around 95% for the year, with outstanding attendance above 96%.

What is considered as poor attendance

Anything below 95% is weak and under 90% is poor; and is regarded as persistent absence by the DfE. In this school, we are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 96%. We monitor attendance and provide termly reports on each pupil's attendance. At the end of each half term we identify all those pupils who attendance has fallen below 90% and issue a courtesy letter. We then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing.

Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence Threshold

From September 2015, the Government reduced the threshold from 15% to 10%. A pupil with attendance below 90% is now classed as a persistent absentee, compared with the previous figure of 85% - regardless of whether the school has authorised or unauthorised the absence. This equates to 38 sessions or 19 days of absence across the year.

Schools are no longer judged solely on their overall attendance figures but also on the number of pupils who fall into the persistent absence category.

The department for Education has published data on their website that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment. This highlights the fact that there will be an impact on a child's education and exam results if their attendance is not consistently above 95% throughout their schooling.

Minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold, are not acceptable reasons for failing to attend school. Repeated absences may require the school to request medical evidence from a child's your doctor's surgery or local pharmacy as recommended by the Government.

Persistence Absence Monitoring

For those children whose attendance is below 90%, we will be monitoring their attendance patterns and reporting to you on a termly basis. We are confident that you will be keen to work with us to ensure that your child meets the threshold requirements, since this will have a positive effect on their learning.

Our duty of care

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance and to liaise with the Local Authority for Safeguarding purposes.

Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (judged by the Education Welfare Service, not the parent or carer) for a pupil's frequent absence or where parents/carers condone absence (e.g., by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays), then parents render themselves liable to a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. This could mean a fine of £360 for two parents of three children. This would be doubled to £720 if the fine is unpaid within 21 days and could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen but we need to be very clear about the issue.