

# Stratford Rural Schools' Federation



## Federation Attendance Policy

This version	September 2016
Ratified by the Governing Body	12-10-16
Review date	September 2017

## Introduction

Good attendance means that children are more likely to make good, consistent progress in their learning. The schools within the federation expect good attendance from their pupils, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents to ensure that this is achieved.

## The Law

The Education Act (1996) states that parents/carers have a duty to ensure that every child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education.

Once a child is registered in school, attendance is compulsory. The federation considers that parents/carers who take their child's education seriously will seek to ensure that their child arrives on time and will discuss absences with the school.

***Only the Head of School/Executive Headteacher can authorise your child's absence from school.***

It is our expectation that parents will:

- Notify the school on each day of their child's absence from school
- Follow the Leave of Absence procedure (see below) to request approval of planned absences

Attendance records are provided for each pupil within their annual school report each year. Along with other reports, attendance records are passed on to receiving schools when a child moves schools.

**The schools within the federation have set an attendance target of 95% for the academic year 2016-2017.**

## The School Day and Punctuality

At Loxley School the school day starts at 8.55am and finishes at 3.10pm. At Snitterfield and Wilmcote the school day starts at 8.55am and finishes at 3.15pm.

If a child arrives in school after the rest of the children have gone into class, the child must be taken to the school office by a parent/carer and be signed in. We do record the 'minutes late' and this is monitored. Registers close at 9.25am and any child arriving after this time is marked as unauthorised absence.

Being on time is really important. Our schools concentrate on the key skills such as literacy and numeracy at the beginning of the school day and children who arrive late can miss important learning. They might also miss out on important information about what is happening during the school day, which can leave them confused and distressed. Late arrivals cause disruption for the rest of the class and embarrassment for the child.

## Authorised and unauthorised absence

The law requires that all schools must show the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence.

## Illness

- If a child is too unwell to come to school we ask that parents contact the school by 9.30am. This could be by phone or email to the school office.
- Our schools operate a policy of First day Absence calling – this means that if we have not heard from a parent regarding their child's absence we will contact parents by phone or text.
- Once a child has recovered it is important that they come back to school as soon as possible, even if it is at the end of the week.
- In certain circumstances we are able to administer medication during school hours. Please discuss the protocol for this with the Head of School or Office Manager. Our Medications Policy is available on the schools' websites for reference, or parents can request a copy from the office manager.
- If a child has a recognised contagious illness the school office will be able to advise how long a child should be kept off school.
- If a child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue this should be discussed with the Head of School to ensure that we are doing all we can to support the child with their learning.
- If a child's health related absences mean that their attendance is causing concern, the school may ask the parent to provide evidence – this could be appointment cards, prescriptions or a doctor's note.

## Medical Appointments

We expect parents to make routine appointments outside of school hours. If this is not possible then please inform the school as soon as possible. We always expect children to attend school before and after appointments.

Children should be collected from the office and signed out by a parent or carer.

**Unauthorised** absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. In addition, schools will not authorise unapproved Leave of Absence requests.

## Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Government 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.

Headteachers are not permitted to authorise absence for holidays taken in term time. Leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and it is for the Head of School/Executive Headteacher to determine what is 'exceptional'. There are 13 weeks school holidays during the year and it is hoped that parents could take their holidays in those periods.

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 Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence request (form available from the school office) without delay and before arrangements are finalised or money committed. If the Head of School/Executive Headteacher authorises the leave he/she will determine how much absence will be authorised.

Where applications for leave are not granted, the child will be required to be in school as usual. If a child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

It is important to note that, where issued, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent of each absent child**. Please note that if a leave of absence is **not** granted the school is required to make a referral to the local authority. They will then review the case and this may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.

The schools in the federation understand that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is requested for the following reasons are unlikely to be authorised (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
- Family birthdays

#### **Leave of Absence for Religious Observance**

Where parents wish to take their children out of school for religious observance we would respectfully ask them to complete a Leave of Absence form and discuss the matter with the school. Absences not requested in advance may be unauthorised.

Please see **Appendix B** for more information about Leave of Absence and the role of the ACE (Attendance Compliance Enforcement) Service.

### **Monitoring Persistent Absence and Poor Punctuality**

**We expect all our children to have good or outstanding attendance across the school year and to arrive on time for school each day.** The federation considers outstanding attendance to be 97% or above and good attendance to be 95% or above. If a child's attendance is 90% or below, they are regarded by the government to be a 'persistent absentee'.

The Office Manager is able to produce attendance statistics and these are monitored regularly by the Head of School and the Executive Headteacher.

Where a child's attendance or punctuality starts to cause concern, we will instigate the following procedures:

- Attendance in any given period falls to between 97% and 95%
  - The Executive Headteacher will send a letter expressing the school's concerns and an opportunity will be offered to the parents to come into school to discuss.

- Attendance falls below 95%
  - Parents will be invited in to meet the Head of School and an attendance monitoring period will be set
- Attendance fails to improve during the monitoring period
  - Parents will be invited in to meet the Executive Headteacher and the Attendance Governor. A representative of Warwickshire County Council's Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service (ACE) will be invited to be present and will be able to explain the legal requirements. An action plan will be agreed and an internal attendance target will be set.
- Attendance is 90% or below
  - The school will make a referral to its ACE Casework Officer, requesting a formal intervention process.
- Attendance is 85% or below
  - The school will make a referral to the ACE statutory service according to the agreed referral criteria. If a parent does not ensure that their child attends school regularly, ACE may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or proceed to prosecution.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Class teachers will:

- Register pupils accurately at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- Encourage good attendance
- Report any issues which may affect a pupil's attendance to the Head of School

The Office Manager will:

- Ensure that the school's data management system for attendance is kept up to date
- Keep a late book and records of reasons given for pupil absence
- Contribute to monitoring activities as requested by senior leaders

The Head of School/Executive Headteacher will:

- Set an Attendance target for the school, and for individual pupils in accordance with this policy
- Ensure that Parents or carers are contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised
- Ensure that school attendance statistics are reported to the Governing Body and Department for Education
- Participate in meetings with ACE and ensure that LA is provided with registers of attendance as requested
- Enable pupils, where attendance is a concern, to receive any support that may promote and enable attendance at school
- Monitoring and evaluation - The Head of School/Executive Headteacher will consider data on pupil attendance and will provide comparisons with previous terms and years. The data may be analysed by groups (e.g. gender, year group and ethnicity) as appropriate

The Governing Body will:

- Appoint a named Attendance Governor whose role includes: to gain a detailed understanding of attendance issue affecting the schools in the federation, to offer support to staff when dealing with attendance issues, to keep the governing body informed of attendance issues and to ensure that the Governing Body carries out its statutory duties related to attendance.
- Ensure that attendance targets and persistent absence targets are reviewed and set annually
- Evaluate attendance data and decide if any further action is required

## Specific Groups

### Children who are Flexi – Schooled

There are a number of children within the federation who are flexi-schooled (educated partly at home and partly at school). We expect parents wishing to flexi-school their children to agree to regular liaison with the local authority home-school education officer and to provide regular evidence of educational activities out of school. The federation has its own policy for the provision of flexi-schooling which can be found on schools' websites or is available on request from school offices.

Our schools specifically monitor the attendance of flexi-schooled children.

### Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

There are a number of children in the federation that come from a traveller heritage. It is important to note that:

- The duty of parents to ensure their child receives efficient full time education applies to families of traveller heritage
- The federation have the same expectations for attendance, reporting of absence and punctuality as outlined in the rest of this policy
- The federation expects that families who do travel for occupational purposes will be dual registered to ensure continuity of education
- Families are expected to inform schools in advance of their intention to travel for work purposes
- The schools seek to actively engage with families to promote good attendance and will liaise with other schools to ensure continuity of education
- Leave for **any other purpose** should be applied for in the same way as detailed above.

Children from traveller families who do not travel for occupational circumstances (i.e. with a permanent base) are expected to attend school as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Further legislation can be found at Appendix A

We work closely with the Warwickshire's Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) to support families with improving their child's attendance.

Our schools specifically monitor the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

## **Appendix A**

### **Government Guidance: School Attendance, Departmental Advice For Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools And Local Authorities.**

October 2014:

#### Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

## Appendix B

# Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service

### *Leave of Absence*

The Government 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

- 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.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council’s Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- 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 proceedings 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.**