



Attendance Policy

Reviewed:	October 2018		
Next review:	October 2020		
Signed:		Diane Osborne	Chair of Management Committee
		S Pritchard-Jones	Head Teacher

“The 1996 Education Act states that it is the PARENTS’ responsibility to ensure that their child receives efficient full time education.”

The Shepwell School provides alternative education for pupils who are unable to attend mainstream school for medical, psychological or emotional reasons. The pupils however will remain on roll at their mainstream school, and will be dual registered.

The pupils attend the Shepwell School full time (25 hours per week) and their attendance is regularly monitored.

Introduction

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all pupils to attend every day, when the school is open as long as they are able to do so.

Attendance and punctuality - we encourage pupils to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- attainment in school

- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others

The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote excellent attendance at school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk. The school share the attendance percentage with parents at regular pupil review meetings and more frequently where there are concerns.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent.

This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that your child is safe.

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.30am and 8.45am for the Ready to Learn/Breakfast session and registration.

96%+	Excellent attendance. This helps all aspects of a child's education and life in school. This will give pupils a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
94-95%	Average attendance. At this level we will work with parents to promote full attendance to move to 96%+
85-93%	Poor attendance. Absence will effect attainment and progress at school. This figure is a cause for concern and we will work with parents to seek ways of working together to improve attendance. A referral will be made to the EWO service and a warning letter sent to parents.
Below 85%	Unacceptable attendance. This is serious cause for concern and will seriously disrupt a child's progress at Shepwell. Regular meetings and communication between school and home to share strategies for improvement will be implemented. If improvement is not achieved a referral will be made to the EWO service and Penalty Notice considered where absence is not authorised. The child may be referred back to mainstream school in order to offer the place to another child.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness/Absence

If there are 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed in a term the school will

make a referral to the Attendance Service for a Penalty Notice Warning Letter

The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded. If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)

Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 42 days of issue, the Attendance Service may instigate court proceedings

Definitions

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 cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.
- Holidays not agreed.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted]
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Late (after registration – 9.30am)

Excellent attendance is encouraged as our pupils have a background of non-attendance, many having been out of school for months due to their anxiety. Excellent attendance is celebrated at our weekly rewards Assembly, and at our annual Celebrating Success afternoon where certificates and Shields are awarded individually to pupils for:-

- A week 97-100%
- A term 97-100%

When a child is absent from school it is important that the School is informed promptly. If pupils do not arrive at the School, staff have no way of knowing where they are or if they are safe. Parents or carers are provided with an information sheet which gives details of our opening times and telephone numbers so that we can be contacted.

Parents are asked to:

- Make every effort to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence.
- If their child is going to be absent for some time, they should ensure the school is updated everyday.
- Ensure their child attends school regularly.

Parents and carers who persistently fail to inform school about their child's absence will be contacted by an Education Welfare Officer.

Regular Absence or late arrival

All schools have to closely monitor attendance and the arrival of pupils, and should a concern arise then we have to notify Education Welfare Service and arrange a meeting with parents and pupils mainstream school. Attendance is also discussed at the six weekly pupil progress review meetings. May I please remind you of the process when a student is regularly absent from school:-

Step 1

A telephone call followed by a letter will be issued to inform you of the school's concern over your child's regular late arrival.

Should the letter not lead to an improvement in attendance or punctuality then the school will move to Step 2.

Step 2

A meeting will be called and you will be invited to explain the reasons for the absence and the regular late arrival of your child. The meeting will aim to agree a way forward to ensure your child is in school on time.

Should this not lead to an improvement then the school will move on to Step 3.

Step 3

A further meeting will be called involving the Headteacher, Parents/Carers, the School Education Welfare Officer and a mainstream school representative. The meeting will identify the reasons why. The EWO, together with the school will then regularly monitor any improvement.

Catch up Sessions

Pupils who are away from school will stay behind after school for up to an hour to catch up on work missed due to illness, or if pupils have been at mainstream school. Staff will give you 24 hours notice either in writing, text message or telephone call.

On the first day of absence the Pastoral Manager will ring if the parent/carer has failed to contact the School. In case of illness the parents should contact us again everyday. Or if not, the secretary will follow up with a phone call. If we are unable to make contact then a referral will be made immediately to our Education Welfare Officer who will make a visit.

The Education Welfare Officer will report back to the School. The Education Welfare Officer visits the School on a weekly basis to exchange information on attendance and any problems which are preventing pupil's from attending regularly.

Absence by any pupil must be confirmed with a note or letter from the parent/carer on their return.

Attendance/Absence will be discussed at every Pupil Review Meeting held at the Shepwell School.

There are times during a school year when a child may experience particular problems if leave is taken, such as:

- During exams or tests.
- During GCSE courses, or similar
- During the first year at a new school
- At the beginning of a new term

The Headteacher will not authorise a request for term-time leave, but the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, and will result in the matter being referred to the Education Welfare Service.

If a pupil does not attend for a continuous period of eight days (not due to illness or anxiety) then their name will be removed from the Register, and their place will be offered to another student. The mainstream school will be informed.

As a means of high profiling attendance, the pupil's attendance is rated on a "Attendance Board" with the top rate being 100%, full attendance.

100%	-	Full Attendance
80%	-	Four Days
60%	-	Three Days
40%	-	Two Days

20% - One Day

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan negotiated with external agencies and the parents or carers.

All PA cases are automatically made known to the relevant authorities.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICE

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason).

Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice enables parents/carers discharge what is potentially the liability for a criminal conviction.

A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will consider taking legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer.

Only the headteacher can authorise absence and I will only do so if there is a clear medical reason why the child cannot attend Shepwell.

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DURING TERM TIME

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and preferably at least 6 weeks before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the mainstream school and Shepwell School's permission before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances; otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right. The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

Please note: Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional

This is not an exhaustive list and Headteachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Where a Headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term-time without the permission of the school risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application form parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

Appendix 1

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Name of pupil(s):

Mainstream School:

Year Group:

Address:

Telephone No:

I request permission for my child to be absent from school

From.....To.....

Total school days.....

Exceptional circumstances for request:

Signature of parent/carer.....Date.....

For school use only

Seen by Headteacher

(signature).....Date.....

Decision reached.....

Date reply returned to parent (s).....

Appendix 2 - Letter not authorising leave.

Dear (*insert full name of parent/carer/s*)

Refusal for exceptional leave in term-time.

RE: (insert pupil name)

Thank you for your recent request to take *name* on a family holiday.

I have carefully considered your request for leave in term-time and on this occasion I will not be able to authorise your child's absence. This is due to a new law which came into force on 1st September 2013, and which gives no entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on holiday during term time.

If your son/daughter does not attend school during the dates you requested (*insert dates*) the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a request to issue you with a penalty notice will be made to the local authority

A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will consider taking legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer.

Should your child still miss school, the school will continue to help them to catch up with missed work on their return from holiday, but it is your responsibility to ensure that such work is completed in order to minimise the negative effects of this absence. I trust that you will be able to help us with this.

Completion of work is especially important in Years 10 and 11 where the work may be vital to coursework which is assessed for final examination.

A copy of this letter will be placed on your child's school file.

Kind Regards

Mr S Pritchard-Jones
Headteacher

Appendix 3 - Letter authorising leave

Dear (insert full name of parent/carer)

Request for exceptional leave in term-time.

RE: (insert pupils name)

Thank you for your recent request to take *name* out of school for *number of days*, commencing *dates*.

A new law came into force on 1st September 2013, and which gives no entitlement to parents/carers to take their child out of school during term time.

However, I am happy to consider this as exceptional circumstances, and I am therefore able to authorise your child's absence for these five days.

Please note, any further absence taken without permission beyond these dates will be recorded as unauthorised absence and could result in a penalty notice being requested from the Local Authority.

The school will continue to help (insert pupils name) to catch up with missed work on *her/his* return, but it is your responsibility to ensure that such work is completed in order to minimize the negative effects of this absence. I trust that you will be able to help us with this.

A copy of this letter will be placed on *name's* school file.

Yours sincerely

Mr. S Pritchard-Jones
Head teacher

Appendix 4 – Concern re. Attendance letter

Dear

(insert pupil name) currently has a cumulative attendance of ____% for this academic year.

Evidence shows that good attendance maximises learning opportunities and that pupils who attend school regularly make better progress, both academically and socially. Any absence from school, other than planned educational activities, will affect a young person's academic achievement, which will in turn have a negative effect on life chances.

To put attendance in context, 90% attendance is the equivalent of half a day missed every week, four whole weeks over a school year or half a school year missed over 5 years at secondary school.

With this in mind, I would ask you to review attendance with Kam Tiwana and/or to discuss any circumstances we need to know about, or if there is any support we can offer in school.

If the absence is due to an ongoing medical or dental problem I would be grateful if you could provide further evidence, ie. appointment cards and written information from the relevant medical practitioner, to support the absences.

Kind regards

Mr S Pritchard-Jones
Headteacher

Appendix 5 – Continuing concern re attendance – warning of penalty notice letter

Dear

We are writing to inform you that we are concerned about (insert pupil name) current attendance record.

(insert pupil name) has a cumulative attendance of ---%.

This level of attendance is likely to have a negative impact on academic performance, routines and school friendships.

If this is due to an on-going medical or dental problem please provide further evidence to support the absence; for example appointment cards and written information from the relevant medical practitioner.

I would like to remind you that if (insert pupil name) is absent from school due to illness, you are required to contact the school between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. on every day of the illness and send a note in on the first day you child returns with an explanation of the absence. Failure to provide the school with a reason will result in the absence being recorded as a truancy/unauthorised and may result in the school being obliged to issue a fixed penalty notice.

We will continue to monitor attendance over the next week, and would like to offer the following support to enable attendance to improve:

Walsall Council Educational Welfare Officer. The EWO will work with pupils in school or can carry out home visits to discuss any attendance issues and offer support.

Sharon Wilson – Inclusion and Welfare Manager. Mrs Wilson mentors pupils in school and will meet students to discuss their well-being and any medical concerns. She is also responsible for pupils with SEN

Kerry Cockroft– Teenage Counselor. Kerry works with students in school once a week and will meet students to discuss their well-being and personal and confidential issues and concerns.

Thank you for your help and support.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Pritchard-Jones
Headteacher

Appendix 6 – Continuing concern re attendance letter

Dear

I am becoming increasingly concerned as (insert pupil name) attendance has not significantly improved since we last contacted you and, as yet, we have not received any further medical evidence attendance.

(insert pupil name) is currently _____%. This falls short of the agreed target..

As a school, we wish all our students to succeed academically and socially, and this is much harder to achieve if attendance is poor.

We are monitoring this situation closely and we will be referring (insert pupil name) unsatisfactory attendance record to the EWO service. This may result in the school requesting that a Penalty Notice is issued

Only the headteacher of a school can authorise absence and I will only do so if there is a clear medical reason why the child cannot attend Shepwell.

A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will consider taking legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer.

Please note, if attendance does not improve I will offer the place at Shepwell to another pupil.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Kind Regards

Mr S Pritchard-Jones
Headteacher

