

Castor Church of England Primary School



Attendance Policy

'Let your Light Shine'

Date written:	September 2024
Written by:	Headteacher
Date approved:	September 2024
Review date:	September 2025
Signed Headteacher:	<i>Suzanne Phillips</i>
Signed Chair of Governors:	<i>Peter Ananicz</i>

Introduction

Castor Church of England Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of its pupils/students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based upon the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to identify everyone's part in this.

Ours is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to achieve excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day on which the school is open unless the reason for the absence is exceptional.

All staff (teaching and support) at our school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our pupils/students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Peterborough City Council: Penalty Notices regarding school absence Guidance for Parents and Carers

Regular school attendance and parent's/carer's legal responsibilities

At Castor CofE Primary School our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This guidance is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is clear that no child should miss school apart from in ***exceptional circumstances*** and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The important legal information – New from August 19th 2024

The Government have introduced a single national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England. This threshold is 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

In line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents have taken several term time holidays below the national threshold. The LA also retains the discretion to consider going straight to prosecution where appropriate.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. This period will start from the issue of the 1st penalty notice. The national Framework also sets out the escalation process which applies to such penalty notices. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Peterborough, where a pupil's

attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a criminal conviction and fine of up to £2,500.

A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child **or** who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent/s with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance or the parent/s who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for leave of absence).

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days.

There is no reduced sum available in this instance.

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

Requests for leave of absence

Working together to improve school attendance advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government 'does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance'.

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise schools will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider leave if an application was not made in advance. Please see section on this below.

A copy of Castor CofE Primary School's Leave of Absence form can be found at the end of this policy. Please complete and return to the school office for the Headteacher's attention **at least 15 school days before the absence is due to be taken**. The onus is on the parent/carer to ascertain whether the planned absence is authorised before making **any** travel plans.

Support with ensuring regular school attendance

A member of our staff will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance and issues are shared monthly with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils/students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half-termly. S/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and tis Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

If you require any support with your child's attendance, please contact Mrs Baxter-Edwards in the first instance.

Why Regular Attendance is so Important:

Learning:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the Curriculum
Anti- bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and rate of progress;
- Celebrate and reward good attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (more than just a bad cold), medical/dental appointments which cannot be arranged out of school time, emergencies or other exceptional cause.

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

- parents/carers 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;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time not authorised as an exceptional circumstance.

This type of absence can lead to the Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team, using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your 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 usually make things worse. If your child is showing a reluctance to attend school, please contact us.

Persistent Absence (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss **10%** or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need full parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is at risk of moving towards the PA level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we may also combine this with academic support where absence affects attainment.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible **on the first day of absence (there is an answermachine facility so messages may be left if the school phone is unanswered);**

If your child is absent and we have not heard from their parent/carer we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the morning of the first day of absence;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with us;
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of Penalty Notices issued to each parent/carer for each child.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The School Attendance Officer:

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Officer from Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team. S/he will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can recommend that the Local Authority use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is **not** acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for your child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school gate is opened and manned by a member of staff from 8.35am when children can begin to enter the school and their classrooms.

The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Children who arrive after 8.45am should be brought in via the school office entrance and will be marked as being late.

The registers are marked by 9am and any child arriving after it has been taken will be marked with the 'U' code which is an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with us to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Non-Collection at the end of day:

If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the end of the day (whether at after school club or being picked up from the classroom), their parent/carer will be contacted.

If the parent/carer responsible cannot be contacted, we will try alternative contacts from the child's file.

If no one can be contacted, the child will be placed in extended care provision (Castor Crew). Parents/carers are then charged for the session.

If no contact with parents/carers is made by 4.15pm then two members of staff will take the child to their home address.

If there is no one present or answering at the home address, the child is returned to school and social services/the police will be contacted as appropriate.

Leave of Absence:

Taking leave of absence without exceptional circumstance in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence **must** be made **at least 15 school days** in advance, using the form at the end of this policy. In making a decision about whether to authorise this leave the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. Please note that the onus is on the parent/carer to ascertain whether the leave they have requested is authorised **before** making any travelling arrangements.

It is important that you understand that school may **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional circumstances**.

Exceptional circumstances (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis.

This information seeks to help clarify the meaning of 'exceptional circumstances' and outline some guiding principles to aid the headteacher's decision-making process while giving parents a consistent and fair approach to requests for any term-time absence.

The headteacher may also consult with the school's Local Authority Attendance Lead for advice in individual cases.

Guiding principles

1. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The headteacher will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will **not** be granted during term time and will only be authorised in 'exceptional circumstances'.
2. The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request (and possible input from advice from the advice obtained from the LA Attendance team).
3. If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time then it would **not** be normal to authorise absence for such an event, for example:
 - a. Holidays or other travel, including as a result of parental work commitments, are therefore **not** considered 'exceptional circumstances';
 - b. Leave which is taken because of the availability of cheaper fares or other costs are **not** regarded as exceptional circumstances;
 - c. Claims of illness as a reason for a delayed return, particularly after normal school holidays will **not** be considered unless accompanied by travel tickets dated before the school opens or other agreed dates. Medical documentation from abroad will not normally be accepted unless accompanied by travel documents indicating travel dates prior to school reopening.
4. Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for a bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service and travelling time only, not for extended leave. Absence will only be authorized if the head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
5. Absences to attend parents' own wedding may be exceptional if the head teacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In

difficult family situations the headteacher may use her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

6. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account, but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events (please see section below).
7. The needs of the families of service personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time. Written evidence signed by the parent's Station Commander or similar will be required in this situation.
8. Reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be made and may result in a leave being granted as exceptional circumstance.
9. Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis, including 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.
10. When making absence-related decisions, the headteacher will consider:
 - a. A pupil's record of attendance for the current and previous academic years;
 - b. Time of absence being taken in the school year. If the request is made to extend the beginning or end of a school holiday period, it is unlikely to be considered exceptional.
11. The headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether a particular absence is authorised.

Religious Observance

As a Church of England School, we recognise that Peterborough is a diverse city that promotes equality and respect for all faiths and ethnicities. There are many religions celebrated within school and it is important that we recognise and respect them all.

The Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 state that absence for religious observance should be treated as authorised absence 'on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs'.

Peterborough City Council's guide for Headteachers and governing bodies is that only one day is authorised for each religious festival with a maximum of two days in any one academic year. Castor CofE Primary School follows this Local Authority guidance and any additional days for extended celebrations will be treated in line with the leave of absence process detailed within this policy and at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Deletions from Register

Under Section 8.-(1) (h), (i), (ii), (iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 should your child fail to return to school by the time that registration ends on the 20th day of absence the school is permitted to delete your child's name from their register.

This is possible if your child(ren) have not returned by the date specified because the following applies under Section 8 (h) - that he/she/they will have been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and

- (i) at no time was the absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6 (2);

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil(s) is/are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness, or any exceptional cause.

The staff responsible for attendance matters at Castor Primary School are:

Mrs Suzie Phillips – Headteacher

Mrs Cathie Baxter-Edwards – School Office Manager

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote good school attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Leave of Absence Request Form (NB: this needs to be completed & returned to school at least 15 school days before the planned absence starts):

Child's Name:		DoB:	
Class:		Year:	
Main Parent(s)/Carer(s)			
Surname:		First Name:	
Surname:		First Name:	
Date of Birth: (for legal purposes in the event of prosecution)			
Date of Birth		Date of Birth	
Address and Postcode			
First written language if not English:			
Telephone contact No's:			
Siblings / Siblings School (if different)			
Siblings / Siblings School (if different):			
Additional Parent/Carer (Please complete if parents live separately)			
Surname:		First Name	
			DoB
Address and Postcode:			
Telephone contact Nos:		Parent's Date of Birth	

Start date of absence:	
Last date of absence:	
Exceptional circumstance resulting in this request for absence, WITH supporting EVIDENCE ATTACHED : Types of evidence can include, booking details, flight documents, invitations, appointment letters, etc	

I/We understand that a penalty notice may be issued if this request is denied and my/our child is absent during this period. I/we understand that a fine will be payable **per child, per parent of £160 if paid within 28 days but reduced to £80 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days. Please read Attendance Policy (All parents/carers to sign where appropriate)**

Signed:		Full Name:		Date:	
Signed:		Full Name:		Date:	

To be completed by the school:

Date Received by School:		Total Number of Days Requested:	
Leave of absence AGREED / DECLINED for the following reason/s:			
Date of decision letter sent to each parent/carer:			
Headteacher:			
Signed:		Date:	