



ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL POLICY

Introduction

The Government set clear targets for attendance for all primary schools and the governors support the drive to make every lesson count and every day count.

Absence from School during Term Time

1. Legal Background and DfE Guidelines

Whilst schools are required to **consider** parental requests for absence from school in term time, it still remains the legal duty of parents to ensure the regular attendance of a child of compulsory school age. Failure to do so could result in the Local Authority issuing a penalty notice or prosecuting the parents in the Magistrates Court.

DfE guidelines clearly state that absence from school can be taken in exceptional circumstances and this means that the parent must make a strong case for taking a child out of school in an academic year. Exceptional circumstances must be explained fully to the school who will then consider the request. Any medical appointments/procedures during school time are always authorised but school does require evidence such as appointment cards or letters.

Parents should not expect that schools would automatically agree to an absence from school during term time. All requests are at the discretion of the Principal and can only be authorised by the Principal or member of staff with designated authority in the absence of the Principal.

2. Consideration of Absence from School Requests

The Principal or delegated member of staff is advised to treat each application individually and will consider the following factors when making a decision.

- The child's overall attendance record
- Whether the absence falls during a year when public examinations are due or government tests.
- The effect on the child's continuity of learning
- The family circumstances

When an absence is approved then it is an **authorised** absence. Should parents keep their child away in excess of the agreed period, then the extra time will be treated as an **unauthorised** absence. Where parents take the child out of school without permission, the absence will be

recorded as unauthorised. Parents will be informed in writing that such an absence is recorded as unauthorised and a fixed penalty fine will be issued.

An absence request can only be made by the parent with day-to-day care and in some circumstances this parent may have to request an absence on behalf of other adults. This safeguards against an estranged parent making a request without the knowledge of the parent who has care and control

If an unauthorised absence is taken, the school will refer the paperwork to the Education Welfare Officer Local Authority and a fixed penalty notice may be issued. Currently this is £60 per parent per period of absence. The money is collected by Swindon Borough Council and is used to improve school attendance across the Borough.

(If the fine is paid within 21 days then it is £60, within 28 days then £120)

For example, if 2 parents take 2 children out of school for a holiday for 2 weeks, it would be a fine of £240 if paid within 21 days and £480 within 28 days.

The Government states that 94% attendance per school year is acceptable and that any attendance below 85% will be classed as persistent absence.

The school reserves the right to remove a child from the school roll if they are absent for a period of 10 days or more. It will then be the parents' responsibility to contact school admissions to find a place at a school for their child.

3. Daily absence procedures

It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school if their child is unable to attend school. This can be done by telephoning the office on the first day of absence.

A failure to inform the school will result in either an automated telephone call system asking the parent to call school or a member of the school office staff will phone to ask the reason why the child is absent. The school has a duty of care to all pupils and will make first day absence calls for all children for whom no explanation has been received on the first day.

When a child returns to school, they should bring in a written explanation for the absence. All letters received are filed in the child's personal file.

A failure to explain absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school has a duty to monitor patterns of absence and reasons for absence. The school reserves the right to refer a child who has a pattern of unauthorised or authorised absence to the Education Welfare Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued. This could be the issuing of a Penalty Notice or prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

4. Arriving late for School/Leaving early

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure their children are at school on time and ready to learn.

It is not expected that children should need to arrive late for school or to leave early. Parents should try to make appointments for dentists and doctors and opticians etc outside of school hours.

All children arriving late must be signed in to the main school office and a reason must be given as to why the child is late.

A failure to explain a late arrival will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

All reasons are recorded and monitored every 6 weeks as part of our normal school practice.

In some exceptional circumstances, children may have to be collected early from school.

Parents who wish to collect their children early must inform the school by telephone or in writing, stating clearly the reason why the child is leaving school.

Requests and collections may only be made by the parent with day-to-day care. This safeguards against an estranged parent making a request without the knowledge of the parent who has care and control.

If another adult is to collect the child, the school must be informed and that person must be a named adult on the contact list.

It is the responsibility of the parents to keep the school fully aware of contact details of named and responsible adults.

When the child is collected, they must be signed out and the person collecting them must write the reason for the early collection in the school record book. This allows the school to protect the child and to ensure robust procedures for health and safety and well being as well as safeguarding against an estranged parent making a request without the knowledge of the parent who has care and control.

The school reserves the right to refer a child who has a pattern of late arrivals or persistent early finishes with or without explanations, to the Education Welfare Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Signed

This policy was reviewed in April 2013