

"We all play our part in achieving excellence in everything"

Attendance Policy

Statement of intent:

The federation aims to work together with parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually.

Parents' responsibilities:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, by letter or in person. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a child-minder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence - subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted.
- Parents may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason; the school will record such absences as unauthorised. In some cases, this may be retrospective and authorisation may be withdrawn should circumstances arise leading the school to decide that the reason given was not truthful. If this occurs, this will be discussed with the parent.
- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration. Children arriving after should report to the front office and the parent should sign the Late Book. (In the case of older unaccompanied children, the child should follow this procedure).

School responsibilities:

- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.
- Registers will be taken twice daily. Any child arriving after the close of the registration period will be recorded as "late" for that session.
- Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will inspect registers weekly in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems at an early stage. Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Headteacher must be informed. This can be done in person or via a note in the register.
- Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation have been received, the class teacher will inform staff in the office or the Headteacher, who will endeavour to make contact with the parent.
- All absence notes from parents should be dated and initialled by the class teacher and returned to the office with the register, where they will be stored. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents.

Persistent absentees:

Persistent absentees are defined by the DFE as children whose attendance is below 90%.

The Executive Headteacher will write to all parents/carers at the end of each term to inform them of their child's attendance percentage. See Appendix 1.

First Day Contact Guidelines:

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at The Pilgrim Federation of schools is as follows:

1. As soon as the registers are returned to the office, staff check absentees against messages received.
2. For pupil's for whom no message has been received, staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
3. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
4. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. *(NB - if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence, for example, children should stay away from school for 48 hours following sickness and diarrhoea).*
5. Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, a note should be sent.
6. Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

Attendance at school and legal intervention letter to all parents

[Research](#) commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At The Pilgrim Federation our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

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

In the DfE policy document entitled, 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' it states, '*Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. **The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.***

If the school does not receive a request for leave, the head teacher will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. There will be no obligation on the head teacher to reconsider authorising the leave if an application has not been made in advance.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

1. 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time (for absences from 1 September 2017); or
2. 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday.

The intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Any pupil at The Pilgrim Federation who meets either of the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment in 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice for £60 per parent per child is issued; both individual invoices would then

have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

This policy should be looked at in accordance with the Federation Safeguarding policy.

Appendix 1: Sample Purple, Green, Amber and Red attendance letters for parents/carers

Purple letter

Dear

I am delighted to inform you that is currently at 100% attendance. This is an outstanding level of attendance that will help ensure thathas a successful education.

Thank you for your support.

Green letter

Dear

I am pleased to inform you that is currently at % attendance. This is a good level of attendance that will help ensure thathas a successful education.

Thank you for your support.

Amber letter

Dear

For your information, for the school year to date, ???'s attendance is ??%.

A good level of attendance is 95% or above.

A child with attendance below 90% is considered by the Local Authority to be a persistent absentee.

If you wish to discuss the content of this letter then please contact the school.

Red Letter

Dear

As at today's date, ??? is currently at ??% attendance and is now considered to be a persistent absentee.

Poor attendance like this may have a serious impact on your child's education and life chances. Any further absences will require medical evidence (i.e. medical prescription, doctor's appointment card) in order for the school to authorise them, until the attendance percentage is above 90%. Unauthorised absences can lead to legal intervention from the County. At this point it is vital for us to work together to help show significant improvement in attendance to avoid Fast Track meetings with the Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer from the County Council. There is a real danger of parents being prosecuted and incurring fines or penalties if attendance isn't improved quickly once the Fast Track meetings are started.

If you wish to discuss the content of this letter then please contact the school.

