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ATTENDANCE AND EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY FOR PENN WOOD PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

May 2017

To be reviewed every 3 years

Attendance Policy to be read in conjunction with Extended Leave Policy

This policy reflects the advice in the 'Department for Education advice on School Attendance – Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and Local Authorities' (November 2016) (Appendix A) and the 'National Association of Headteachers' Guidance on authorised absence in schools' (October 2014) (Appendix B). It is also in line with Slough Borough Council's 'Attendance – A Guide for Parents' (Appendix C).

Please be advised that some significant changes were made by the government in September 2015 as to how attendance figures are gathered and then grouped. Children with 10% of absence or more will become officially grouped as persistent absentees. Our ambition as a school is to have less than 1% persistent absenteeism to stay in line with the national average.

Penn Wood School conveys its positive regard for regular attendance to parents, pupils and teachers. Children quickly pick up the message that their presence is important. The twice-daily requirement to register pupils is perceived as an opportunity for the school to receive children formally from home, and serve as an introduction to the session.

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves the pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where the school will not approve the absence)

Parental responsibility for school attendance is detailed in the DfE publication 'School Attendance – Parental Responsibility Measures' (Appendix D).

If a child is absent, parents should call the school on each day of the absence stating a reason. A note, telephone call, text, or a brief meeting regarding the absence is required in order to authorise the absence. Ideally, a note should be sent on the day the child returns to school explaining the absence with proof where required. The school can then decide whether to authorise the absence. If authorisation were to be refused, for instance if a child was kept off school for a birthday, then the parents would be informed.

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents or carers, then the school will contact the home by telephone on the initial day (first day response). All conversations with parents and carers regarding attendance must have the child and his or her health and wellbeing as the priority. This means sensitively gathering information about the child's health, demonstrating the care and concern we have for the child and offering any support available to the family that will enable the child to attend school whenever he or she is well enough.

School will enter into discussions with parents /carers when the reason provided for absence is deemed insufficient and or the circumstances surrounding the situation are regarded as ambiguous.

Where children present with non-school attendance of 20 school days, Penn Wood has a duty to inform Slough Borough Council, who will be notified using a CME (Children Missing in Education) form (in accordance with Appendix E and G).

After periods of illness and/or attendance concerns, you may be contacted by letter as a supportive measure. If problems persist, you may be requested to attend a meeting where this will be discussed and measures put into place to support your child's attendance. Please see Appendix F for more information regarding what triggers letters or/and meetings.

The classes in EY/KS1 and in KS2 with the best attendance or least number of late arrivals will be awarded with a certificate and 'Spencer Bear' (our attendance bear) each week.

Attendance Award

Bronze, Silver and Gold Attendance Medals



In addition to the extensive steps we already take to encourage good attendance, we run an incentive 'Attendance Award Scheme', giving the children the opportunity to achieve Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals. We will record every week that your child has 100% attendance. For completion of every term of full attendance they will receive a medal. If their attendance continues consecutively they will then progress through to a Silver and then Gold Medal.

We believe that praise and reward are very effective in encouraging children to do well, and hope that they are motivated by these medals.

Completing the Register

The marking of registers can sometimes become so routine that its importance is lost. However, incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents **that may be required in a court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They may also contribute to a pupil's end of term report and to records of achievement. For these reasons registers are required to be marked promptly in the morning and afternoon sessions.

Family Holidays during Term Time & Leave for Exceptional Circumstances

Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time, leave will not be granted. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday. In line with Department for Education guidance, only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence and the school will take into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request, for example, a child's attendance pattern. All such cases **will be** discussed with the Head Teacher or other Leadership Team member.

Leave of absence forms can be obtained from the school office, and all requests should be submitted to the School Office at least two weeks before the first day of intended absence.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on them after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which we must seek to avoid.

With regard to the well-publicised Isle of Wight court case, the Supreme Court ruled in April 2017 that any adult with parental responsibilities must ensure that their child attends every school day in full as defined by section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. More detail about this case can be found via the following news piece: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education - 39504338](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39504338).

Lateness

School begins at 8.50 a.m. and all pupils are expected to be in school for Rise and Shine activities at 8.50 a.m. Any child arriving later than 9.00 a.m. should enter school via the main entrance reporting to the School Office. If accompanied, a parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness, which will be added to the register. The child will then be sent to their classroom.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action may be taken.

What can parents do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is away.
- Send a note when your child returns to school explaining the reason for their absence.
- Try to make appointments outside of school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school what can you do?

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the Attendance Leader, Class Teacher or Head Teacher at the school.

If it continues...

- The school may refer to the Attendance Leader.
- You may contact the Attendance Leader, who will work with you and the school to resolve the situation (phone number available from the School Office).

Slough Local Authority Procedures for Requesting and Granting Limited & Extended Leave

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and leave will be granted for exceptional circumstances only (Appendix C).

If children have unauthorised absence from school, or in some other circumstances, e.g. if a child is found in a public place when they are subject to a school exclusion, there is a possibility that penalty notices could be issued.

Nursery Attendance

Although Nursery-aged children are non-statutory school age, parents/carers are requested to make their best possible efforts to achieve good attendance. Any child who misses 5 or more sessions in a short period of time will receive an attendance information letter initially. Meetings may be held thereafter if problems persist. If a child suffers from ongoing illness problems, concern will be raised to ascertain that there are no underlying health conditions. The family would then be given further support, advice from school and other outside agencies invited to be involved, for example the school nurse. Parents will always be notified of potential interventions of this kind in advance, and permission would be sought. Persistent lateness will be dealt with in the same manner as the main school. Initial late concern letters will be sent and or meetings held where a cause for concern is noted.

Parents /Carers will be required to meet with an Attendance Leader to discuss and complete any application for extended leave when making an enquiry before the absence occurs. Thereafter no further action/involvement will be taken with the local council regarding this matter. An information letter regarding how the child's attendance has been affected will be sent upon their return to school. Where 20 sessions of non-school attendance occur, school will consider removing the child from the school roll.