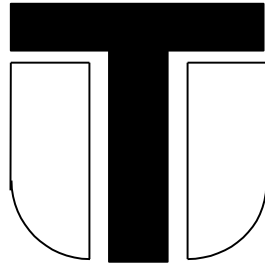


Theale CE Primary School



Attendance Policy

Updated: Autumn 2018

Next review: Autumn 2020

Principles

A child should come to school every day.

A child should only be absent if the reason is unavoidable. Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents can be fined up to £1000. Every half-day absence from school 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 absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason: e.g. illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no request for absence has been granted. This includes:

- keeping children off school for trivial reasons
- truancy
- absences which have never been properly explained
- late arrival at school too late (half an hour after the register closes)
- absences (for example a holiday) taken in term time, that are not an exceptional circumstance.

Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not “unavoidable”. Children should never be kept off school for reasons such as a birthday, absence of other children, or for a ‘treat’, problems with travel arrangements.

If there are attendance problems, the school will refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (E.W.O.) from the Local Authority. The E.W.O. will try to resolve the difficulties by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve a child’s attendance have failed, the E.W.O. can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

Parents may wish to contact the E.W.O. themselves for advice. They are independent from the school, and their telephone number is available at the school office, or from the Local Authority.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Illness and other legitimate reasons:

If a child is absent from school, parents should contact the school by 9.30am on each day of absence, in person or by telephone. If a child is absent and no reason has been given, the school will contact the parents as soon as possible, always on the first day of absence. This is a safety measure. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. Absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments unavoidably arranged in school time, provided a written explanation is received. When a telephone message has been received, the correct absence will be recorded in the register by the Office Staff. When a letter has been received from parents, the reason for absence will be noted in the register.

Requests for Leave of Absence during term time

From the 1st September 2013 amendments were made to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations that removed the right of the Headteacher to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. This includes the right to absence for holidays.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make clear that headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The New Code sets out 3 circumstances in which a **Fixed Penalty Fine** may be issued.

These are:-

1. Where a pupil is present in a public place during school hours during the first 5 days of being excluded from school.
2. Where the pupil has had 10 or more school days of unauthorised absence within any 10 week school period.
3. Where a pupil has had 5 or more school days of unauthorised absence in a 10 week school period and the unauthorised absence relates to a planned leave of absence e.g. holiday.

A Fixed Penalty Fine may be issued to each parent liable for the offence. Where a Fixed Penalty Fine is issued, payment will be £60 if paid within 21 days. If not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not made within 28 days, each parent or carer will be summonsed to appear in Court for an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The full Code of Conduct is available to view on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk (schools section).

The school's policy is to only authorise requests for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and only for pupils whose attendance in the previous twelve months was above 96%. All requests for leave must be made in person completing Appendix A at least three weeks in advance. A meeting may be held with the Headteacher to discuss the request if necessary.

The Headteacher has full authority to grant or deny a request based upon previous attendance and potential impact on the child/ren's attainment. Parents will be informed of the decision in writing.

Exceptional circumstances (although not an exhaustive list) could include:

Family circumstances (compassionate leave which could include:

- Parents returning from an overseas posting (service and civilians)
- Parents who are serving members of the armed or civilian services (e.g. police)
- Formal Respite for vulnerable families involving children being away from home
- Bereavement
- Life limiting illness of either a pupil or close family member.

Examinations – e.g. ballet or music

Religious/cultural reasons

Visiting a new school

Significant family events – for example a wedding of immediate family member. Please note in the case of a family event or religious observance only the day of the event will be authorised.

The Headteacher reserves the right to refer to the Governors for consultation. The Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer will talk to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding them of the disruption to their child's education.

No leave of absence will be granted during assessment periods.

Extended Periods of absence:

Extended periods of absence beyond six weeks can result in pupils being taken off roll and the Local Authority being informed that the child is missing from school. If children are taken off roll parents, on return, will be required to re-apply for a place through West Berkshire Admissions.

Persistent absence:

1. The Headteacher will write to parents to inform them that their child's attendance has fallen below 90%. Parents will be reminded of their legal duty and of the school's policy and expectations.

2. If attendance does not improve the Headteacher will invite parents to a meeting to discuss ways in which the school can support the family in getting the child to school every day.
3. If persistent absence from school continues, the Headteacher has the right to not authorise any absence without the support of medical evidence.
4. The Headteacher will refer the family to the Education Welfare Officer when a child continues to be absent (unauthorised) for:
 - 9 full days over a 6 week period
 - 18 sessions over a 6 week period
 - 15% unauthorised absence in an academic year
 - 10 consecutive days with no reason for absenceThe Education Welfare Officer will take the absence issue on as a case and investigate why a child has been absent on the dates given. This investigation could result in parents receiving a warning notice. Alternatively a fixed penalty fine could be issued per child to each adult who has parental responsibility.

Punctuality/lateness:

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. A record will be kept in the School Office of all latecomers. The Headteacher will write to parents of children who are persistently late, in order for them to come to school on time and this may result in referral to the EWO.

The registers will remain open until 9.00am each day. Where a child arrives after the register has been taken in class but before 9.30am the session will be marked as late. For children arriving after this time without an authorised reason, the session will be marked as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence:

Where the school has been informed that a child is sick, but information later becomes available to suggest that the child was actually on holiday or celebrating an event, the school reserves the right to query the exact reason for absence with the parent. Where the child was on holiday then the school will mark the absence as unauthorised retrospectively. This may trigger a referral to the EWO if the school deems the level of unauthorised absence unacceptable. The school reserves the right to issue a fixed penalty notice for periods of unauthorised absence.

Refer to point 2 of the Fixed Penalty Notice code

2. Where the pupil has had 10 or more school days of unauthorised absence within any 10 week school period.

Communication:

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents on the school website. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying the school of their child is absent for any reason.

At the parent consultation and induction meetings held each year the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, as children can be very upset if they are the only ones left at the end of the day.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make a visit to the school. At this meeting the importance of punctual and regular attendance is discussed and explained.

At this initial meeting parents are also asked to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted.

Authorised and unauthorised absences are explained to parents through this policy.

The Legal framework:

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents and carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education, whether by regular school attendance or otherwise. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time.

The Government has introduced new provisions, contained in section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 for use by LAs to tackle poor attendance at school. Parents/Carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice, as an alternative to prosecution, if their child has unauthorised holiday absence of 10 half day sessions or more during a 10 school week period or 20 half day sessions from school in a 10 school week period and these absences are unauthorised. The fine is £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. Fines are issued per parent/carer per child. Failure to pay could/will result in summons to court.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. The school has a duty to make your child's time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to make sure their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents as to the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Last reviewed: Autumn 2018

Next review: Autumn 2020

Appendix A

Theale C of E Primary School

Request for Term time Holiday Leave

Please Note
Extra work will not be given to children not in school.

To be completed at least three weeks before the proposed holiday.

Education is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

The DFES has recommended that holidays should not be taken in term time. The DFES recommends that Headteacher's consider the following points when deciding whether to authorise the holiday request.

- Approval will not be given for pupils with poor attendance records.
Approval will not be given for holidays in SATs week or during examination weeks. Please check with the school for more specific dates for examinations.
Long weekends and days off will not normally be authorised as term time holiday.
Approval will not be given on the basis of the cost of the holiday.

Parent to complete:-

Form with fields: Name of pupil, Form, Purpose of Absence, Reason for absence during term time, Proposed start date of absence, Date on which child will return to school, Signed: Parent / Carer, Date.

Headteacher to complete:-

Form with fields: Number of day's absence requested, Percentage of attendance (12 school weeks prior to request), Has holiday during term time been requested previously and if so when?, Headteacher's approval / reason for not approving absence, Signed: Headteacher, Date.