

Harbury Church of England Primary School



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Harbury CE Primary School

Attendance Policy – Pupils

Originator: Kate Guymer

Date: February 2016

Introduction

- At Harbury Primary School we expect children to attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.
- Excellent attendance and punctuality is important if children are to benefit from everything school has to offer. Harbury Primary believes that regular attendance is vital for children to be successful.
- School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life and research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance, punctuality and educational progress and attainment.
- Parents/carers and the school staff are partners in making this a success and this partnership is very important to the school. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that your child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.
- As parents/carers, it is your responsibility to ensure your child/children arrive at school and return home safely.

Aims:

Our attendance policy aims to :

- Support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- Enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

Expectations:

We expect that all children will:

- Attend school every day as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Ensure that they contact the school on the first day of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details

We expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's/carer's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents on the first day of absence when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the Headteacher can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality with a system of rewards
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the % attendance of all children
- Make initial enquiries regarding children that are not attending regularly
- Make referrals to the Attendance Compliance Enforcement (ACE) Service.

Definitions:

- Every day counts as two sessions
- Every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of each absence is always required.
- Regular attendance means that your child must attend school every day unless there are justified reasons, and arrive at school on time.

Authorised Absence:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. The Headteacher authorises the absence.

Unauthorised absence:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given.

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

100% - Gold 96% + Silver	Well done! This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. Your child's attendance is at or above the school target
93%-95% Bronze	Below expected – strive to build on this. Your child's attendance is below expected and will be monitored. A letter may be sent to you to inform you of your child's attendance.
86%-92%	Poor – Absence is now significantly affecting your child's attainment and progress. This is cause for concern and will be closely monitored. The school will meet with you to review the particular context and to plan for improved attendance and/or punctuality. The EWO may be involved at this stage.
85% and below	Unacceptable – absence is seriously affecting attainment and progress and disrupting your child's development. Your child's attendance is not a major concern. It is probable that a referral to EWO will be made and a meeting will be convened at school to put in place strategies to improve attendance rapidly.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

See appendix for staged letters

Rewards

- The main benefit from regular and punctual attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.
- As a school we acknowledge good attendance with 100% certificates at the end of the year.

When to report absence to the school

All absences must be reported on the first day of absence.

- Please telephone the school on 612656 at the earliest opportunity to let know why your child is going to be absent. Please try and phone by 9.20 at the latest.

- If medical appointments are necessary, please wherever possible bring your child to school for the rest of the day.

If we have not heard from you, we will call you on day 1 to check reasons. If a child is absent from school with no explanation offered by parents/carers within two weeks, it becomes an unauthorised absence.

If a child is absent due to illness, a doctor's certificate should be submitted to school on the 6th day of absence.

Where pupils do not return to school on the agreed date, the school will follow the child missing education procedures which may result in the placement being withdrawn.

Registers, punctuality and lateness:

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. For school children, neither playground is supervised until 9.00 am.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 9.05
- Afternoon registration takes place at 1.10 pm.
- Persistent lateness will be dealt with through external agency support.
- Children's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

Pupils leaving during the school day

During school hours, the school staff is legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and expected return time.
- Children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a child is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.
- If a child leaves the school site without permission, their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate in certain circumstances, to contact the Police.

The Law:

By law, parents and carers must ensure that all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) receive a suitable, full-time education (Education Act 1996).

Leave of Absence

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued at £120 per parent per child, payable within 28 days.

Fixed Penalty Notices that are issued but not paid within the allocated time frame will be referred to the Warwickshire County Council legal department.

GUIDANCE ON AUTHORISED ABSENCE IN SCHOOL FROM NAHT – OCTOBER 2014

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for students during term time. We believe it is valuable to have some guiding principles to back schools in their decisions and provide consistency. This guidance has no statutory authority and is not imposed upon schools.

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules of the subject.
2. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
6. Absence or bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
7. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather regular or recurring events.
8. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
9. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
10. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.
11. It is acceptable to take a student's precious record of attendance into account when making decisions
12. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Background

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also stated that headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

The DfE advice on school attendance (November 2013) should also be considered and read in conjunction with the 2013 regulations.

We believe the guidelines in this document to be compatible with the above policy. They clarify the definition of external circumstances; they do not change it.

Ofsted have confirmed that their focus is on whether recurrent absence is being addressed. Headteachers are under pressure to meet overall thresholds however.

Appendix:

Warwickshire County Council
Communities Group

**APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR A SCHOOL PUPIL IN
TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY**

Important Information for Parents/Carers

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 only allow Head Teacher to authorise leave of absence (for any purpose) in **exceptional circumstances**
- If the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Head Teacher will determine the length of the absence authorised
- Requests for Leave of Absence should be made in advance and before any arrangements confirmed or money committed
- If Leave of Absence is granted please contact school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the absence on your child's academic progress
- This form **MUST** be completed by the resident parent(s)/carer(s) before requests will be considered
- Please complete a Leave of Absence form for each child
- Failure to make a request for a Leave of absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised

Please note: Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time.

I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:

Name of Child: _____ Form Group: _____

First Date of Proposed Absence: _____ Last date of Proposed Absence: _____

Expected date of return to school: _____

Reason for Proposed Absence – please provide reasons to support the application including evidence *(they can only be exceptional circumstances) (see overleaf before completing)*

.....
.....
.....

Total Days Requested On This Occasion

(For siblings) I have also applied to _____ School/Academy for leave of

absence for _____ *(Insert child/children's name)*

Signature _____ of _____ resident _____ Parent/Carer:

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

For school use only: NAME OF CHILD: _____ Date received by school: _____

Absence Authorised: Yes/No

The reasons for this decision are:.....

- **LOA record sheet to be completed by school and submitted where verbal requests made/ for other relevant information**

1st date of absence: Last date of absence:.....

Expected date of return to school:

Head Teacher/Attendance Lead: Date:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 state:

Head Teachers **shall not grant any** leave of absence during term time **unless:**

A) An application has been made in advance, by the parent with whom the child normally resides

AND

B) They consider there to be exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

The Head Teacher must be satisfied that exceptional circumstances warrant the granting of a leave of absence.

The Head Teacher can determine how long an absence should be and any additional absence will not be authorised.

-
- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full time education through regular attendance at a school or otherwise (ie home education) (Section 7 Education Act 1996).
 - If a child who is of compulsory school age, who is registered at school and fails to attend regularly, it is the parent that will be guilty of an offence (Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996).
 - Parents whose children have unauthorised absence may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or prosecution.
 - Any Fixed Penalty Notices issued and/or prosecution will apply to each parent for each child who fails to attend school.

Parents:

- a. The application must be made in advance by the parent(s) that the child normally resides with.
- b. Any leave of absences taken which have not been requested in advance will recorded as unauthorised.
- c. Parents can be issued with a Fixed [Penalty Notice or prosecuted](#) for unauthorised absence including holidays.

We have a shared responsibility to ensure that the law is upheld and that your child achieves to his/her full potential. We look forward to your co-operation.

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DATE

«address_block»

Dear «salutation»

«forename» «surname» «year_reg»

Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time in Exceptional Circumstances **Leave of absence period between <<date 1>> and <<date 2>>**

An application/request for a leave of absence has been received in respect of the above named child.

I have carefully considered the application/request and reviewed the exceptional circumstances outlined.

As you are aware Government regulations prohibit schools from authorising absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **In this instance only** I consider that there are exceptional circumstances and the school is prepared to authorise the absence (***please see attached Leave of Absence form for details***). Any extension to this request without authorisation or further absence will be unauthorised and as parent(s) you may be liable to further action including the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution through the court.

Failure to secure a child's regular attendance at school may be a criminal offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. If a leave of absence is not authorised this could result in:

- **The issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice to you (£120.00 fine to be paid within 28 days of issue, which reduces to £60.00 if paid within 21 days); or**
- **A criminal prosecution against you**

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in respect of EACH absent child, so the fine will apply to EACH parent in respect of EACH child as set out in the fixed penalty notice(s).

If the Fixed Penalty is not paid then the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's legal department to consider instigating a criminal prosecution against you under the Education Act 1996. If criminal proceedings are issued and you are found guilty, the court could sentence you to a fine of up to £1,000 for a Section 444(1) conviction; or £2,500, a community sentence period or a custodial period of up to 3 months for a Section 444(1A) conviction.

This decision is not made lightly. Our school is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes that regular attendance through the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

Please contact the school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the leave of absence on your child's academic progress.

If you have any concerns about the content of this reply please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

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Leave of absence period between <<date 1>> and <<date 2>>

An application/request for a leave of absence has been received in respect of the above named child.

I have carefully considered the application/request and reviewed the exceptional circumstances outlined.

As you are aware Government regulations prohibit Head Teachers from authorising absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

In this instance the school **will not** authorise this Leave of Absence request. Your child is therefore required to be in school on these dates.

Any absence taken during this period will be recorded as unauthorised (***please see the attached Leave of Absence form for details***).

As parent(s) you have a legal duty to ensure that your child receives a full-time education (section 7 Education Act 1996). You may be liable to further action including the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution through the court if your child is absent during the period requested in your application.

Failure to secure a child's regular attendance at school may be a criminal offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. If a leave of absence is not authorised this could result in:

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Evidence shows that pupil absence has a negative impact on pupil performance and social development. We urge you to consider this matter very carefully before making a decision to take unauthorised leave of absence.

If you have any concerns about the content of this reply please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely