



# **Attendance Policy and Procedures**

Approved by Staff:	<b>January 2022</b>
Approved by Governors:	<b>January 2022</b>
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Review Date:	<b>January 2024</b>

***“The roots to grow, the path to follow and the wings to fly.”***

# Pathfinder CofE Primary School Attendance Policy

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our policy aims to:

- emphasise the importance to all pupils and families that maximum attendance at school is vital for achieving their full potential
- reinforce the notion that every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled and that parents are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child
- make explicit to all (pupils, parents/carers, teachers) the school's expectations on attendance levels and support strategies to help pupils maximise their attendance.
- stress the need for home and school to work in partnership to achieve high attendance
- promote a consistent approach across the school towards attendance matters
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties linked to attendance at school and in the Local Authority

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*. It is a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing lessons and not achieving their potential.

## Purpose

National data shows a clear correlation between high attendance rates and good performance at school.

The aim of this policy is to promote regular attendance for all pupils at school and to ensure that effective systems are in place for dealing with absence. Promoting regular attendance is part of creating an effective school, which is committed to raising the levels of achievement for all of its pupils. This policy was drawn up following consultation with the attendance team and the school Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and is based on the most recent guidance from the Department of Education and Cambridgeshire County Council.

The school strives for all pupils to have 100% attendance and sees **95% attendance as the minimum expectation** for all pupils. Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and November 2016 make clear that Head teachers may not authorise holidays (or other leave of absence) in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school upholds these regulations and supports the use of financial penalties and court action where necessary.

For further information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> and <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/school-attendance>

## Roles and Responsibilities

**Parents** have a legal duty to make sure that children attend school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence under Section 444/441(a) of the Education Act 1996.

Pathfinder Primary aims to establish a partnership with parents to promote good attendance. Any concerns around attendance are shared with parents and may also be discussed at parent consultation appointments or an attendance meeting if necessary. Parents should not keep their children away from school whilst a problem is being resolved. Families in particularly challenging circumstances may receive support from the Education Welfare Officer or the school's Family Worker.

**Pathfinder Primary School** expects all children to attend school regularly and punctually. The school encourages good attendance and will investigate every unexplained or unjustified absence. This involves following up all pupil absences where parents/carers have failed to inform the school of the reason why the pupil is absent. This may take the form of a telephone call home or email contact if a parent/carer has not made contact about the absence.

### **Encouraging Attendance**

At Pathfinder Primary, we take a number of measures to promote good attendance and punctuality:

- we ensure that the children follow an exciting, engaging curriculum that is relevant to the needs of individuals
- attendance data is collected for all children and used to inform our practices
- communications sent to parents about good attendance and the link with good academic achievement
- structured meetings with our School Attendance Officer in order to identify and support those children whose attendance/punctuality causes concern
- attendance/punctuality included in the Headteacher's report to the Governing Body at least termly
- ongoing concerns about a child's poor attendance/punctuality to be investigated by the class teacher and the Attendance Team.

### **Monitoring and Evaluating**

Attendance figures are reported to the Governing Body each term as part of the Headteacher's report. An annual return is also made to the Department for Education.

Registers are monitored by the Attendance Team in the school office and overseen by the Office Manager. Any concerns are raised swiftly to the Family Worker for advice and support as needed.

### **Unauthorised term-time leave (including holidays)**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, Headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term-time *unless there are exceptional circumstances*. Exceptional circumstances are one-off events which are unavoidable and examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral or a housing crisis which prevents attendance. **Holidays during term-time will not be authorised**. Parents must apply in advance for any absence from school and the Headteacher will consider each case on an individual basis.

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term-time leave of 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by school, will be referred to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice. **A Penalty Notice may be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional or unavoidable**. For further information:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/term-time-holidays>

Please note that the Local Authority cannot override the decision made by the Headteacher to unauthorise the absence. If you have any reasons to believe the Penalty Notice should not have been issued, please contact the school within 10 working days. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Registration Practice**

- The school day starts at 8:50am for all children and children should be in school at this time
- The register is taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions
- Morning registration closes at 9:00am and afternoon registration at 1:00pm

- School uses the Pupil Asset Attendance system and registration is usually completed online. Teachers mark the child as present or absent with the appropriate code
- Codes for absence are inserted by the Attendance Officer during the daily check of registers. Staff should make a note of any relevant information provided by a parent on the attendance sheet in Pupil Asset.
- Children who arrive after the close of registers should report to the school office to be signed in
- Any child leaving the school for a medical appointment, illness or other reason will be signed out at the school office so we have an accurate record of pupils on site for fire and evacuation purposes. Pupils will have an M, I or other appropriate code entered on the electronic register.

## **Absences**

Absences from school may be authorised or unauthorised, depending on the circumstance.

**Authorised absences** are where a pupil has been absent from school and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school (via the class teacher or the school office) or the child is representing the school or is on an educational visit. Other reasons include: genuine illness, days of religious observance, unavoidable medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (bereavement/marriage of immediate family member or traveller children going 'on the road'). The school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum and therefore, routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during the school holidays wherever possible. **Where absence through illness has led to an attendance of below 90%, parents and carers will be expected to provide evidence of illness and/or appointments.**

**Unauthorised absences** are when no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents or carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school. Examples of these may be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, minding a house, caring for a sibling, lack of childcare, shopping/a day out, visiting relatives or going on holiday.

The Headteacher, or Attendance Team, using DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as authorised or unauthorised. Parents who wish to request absence may do so by completing a 'Leave of Absence' form, which is available from the school office. This should then be returned to the school office **before the absence occurs**.

## **Term-Time Holidays**

The school cannot authorise holidays being taken during term-time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. Pathfinder Primary School follows DfE guidelines from September 2013 that states that requests for long-term leave can only be granted in 'exceptional circumstances' and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No term-time leave will be granted, or deemed granted, without a formal request on the appropriate form (as indicated above) being received and a written response given. Interviews following a request may be conducted prior to any decision being made and further evidence may be requested. The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow-up any reported illness that we feel may have been a term-time holiday.

## **Illness**

Parents are asked to notify the school by 09:00 on the first day of their child's absence from school. A record of the reasons for absence is made on the school attendance system and teachers are able to access this information in the classroom. Such absence should be reported by 09.00 on a daily basis unless there are circumstances where the duration of absence is known in advance

- If a child is absent for more than 3 days, school may request supporting evidence from a doctor or ask to see an appointment card or prescription. The absence can then be authorised. If there is a query about whether to authorise an absence, the office staff will check with the Headteacher.

### **Unreported Absences**

Once all registers have been completed, a printout is produced showing which children are absent from school that day. A phone call is made to a parent or carer where a child is absent and a reason for absence has not been received.

- If contact cannot be made by phone, the office will follow this up as follows until contact has been made:
- A second phone call will be made 30 minutes after the first
- A text and email will be sent asking the parent/carers to contact the school office
- Phone calls will be made to the rest of the child's contact list on file
- A home visit will be carried out by the school
- A further telephone call will be made
- A further email and text will be sent
- If we are still unable to make contact, we will escalate the absence to an external agency (Social care, Police, Attendance Officer etc) for a safe and well check to be performed

If a child with a safeguarding concern is absent, the office staff will inform a Designated Person who will contact the relevant social worker.

### **Lateness**

It is vital that children arrive on time for school, which starts at 8:50am. Learning begins as soon as the children arrive in the classroom and important information is often given out at the start of the day.

If a child is not present when the register is taken in the classroom, he/she is marked as absent with an 'N'. This will then be followed up by the office staff (in line with the Safeguarding Policy) by phone call or email to the parent to obtain a reason for absence.

All registers will be coded in line with CCC guidelines, according to the time of arrival.

If a child arrives after 8:50am, they should report to the school office with their parent/carers, who will then sign the child in. They should also indicate their choices of dinner for the day. The child will then walk to their classroom by themselves. Children in reception will be escorted by a member of the office staff.

If a child arrives after the close of registration (9:00am), he/she must report to the school office and be signed in. A note will be made of the reason for lateness. The office staff will then decide whether to code the lateness as authorised (medical appointment before school) or unauthorised (no reason given or reason unsuitable).

If a child is regularly late, the class teacher will contact the parents/carers to discuss this further and suggest ideas for improving the punctuality. If the punctuality does not improve, a late letter will be sent and the parents/carers will be asked to discuss this with the Family Worker or Headteacher.

### **Following up on absence**

- Any member of staff who has an ongoing concern about attendance or patterns of absence of a pupil should raise their concerns with the Attendance Team so appropriate enquiries may be made
- The Attendance Team will complete regular check of the registers in order to note any patterns of absence / lateness. Standard letters are sent to families where absence is causing a concern. An attendance meeting may follow if appropriate to discuss the situation (see attendance letters in the appendix)
- If no explanation for an absence has been received, the above unreported absences procedures will be applied.
- The school works closely with the Education Welfare Officer who advises the school on the most appropriate action to take to improve attendance
- Attendance under 90% is deemed to be Persistent Absence and parents / carers will need to provide medical evidence for their child's illness (medical appointment cards and prescriptions are acceptable)

## **Monitoring Attendance**

From September 2015, the DfE defined 10% of absence as persistent absence. For example, if your child is absent for 3 days or more within 4 weeks without a valid reason (unauthorised absence), this would reach the persistent absence threshold. Each day has 2 sessions, the morning and the afternoon, so if a child has a medical appointment they are encouraged to come in to school for the other session that day.

Attendance of all children is monitored by the Attendance Team. If a child's attendance starts to fall, individual circumstances will be taken into account and the class teacher will contact the parents in the first instance to discuss their concerns and offer support.

If the attendance continues to fall, letters one and two may be sent and parents / carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss the concerns. Support and/or advice may be offered and targets set for a period of time in order to see if an improvement has been made to the child's attendance rate. A lack of any relevant medical evidence will mean the absence will be unauthorised.

If a child had 6 or more unauthorised sessions over a half- term period or their attendance is 90% or below, then a referral for a Penalty Notice can be made.

If a parent/carers fails to pay a Penalty Notice requested by school, the EWO will be instructed by the Local Authority Legal Panel to prepare a court statement for prosecution at Cambridge Magistrates Court. If a parent is issued a Penalty Notice and pays it within the 28 day period, the school can request a further one penalty notice. On the request for a third penalty notice, the Legal Panel will request a court statement to be prepared for Cambridge Magistrates Court. If the Legal Panel agreed to prosecute, and after investigating the case, the EWO may request a formal meeting to be held or a PACE meeting to take place in preparation for the prosecution.

*School would prefer to work with parents and carers to improve poor attendance and to avoid the need for a Penalty Notice to be issued.*

### **Please Note:**

- If a child has a genuine reason for absence, the above procedures will not be implemented. However, if there are concerns about the *pattern* of a child's attendance, then the parents may be contacted to discuss this and offer support and advice
- If a child has ongoing health issues, the parents may be contacted to decide whether any additional support can be given

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Letter One

Appendix 2 – Letter Two

Appendix 3 – Late Letter

Appendix 4 – Leave of Absence form

## Appendix 1

The Pathfinder Church of England Primary School  
Pathfinder Way, Northstowe, Cambridgeshire. CB24 1AA

Telephone: 01954 584801  
Email: [office@pathfinderschool.org.uk](mailto:office@pathfinderschool.org.uk)  
[www.pathfinderschool.org.uk](http://www.pathfinderschool.org.uk)

Headteacher: Mrs Stephanie Lockwood BA(Ed) NPQH



Date:

Name and address of parents

Dear XXXX

Re: XXXX

D.O.B.: XXXX

School: Pathfinder C of E Primary School

I am writing to advise you that XXXX's school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to XX% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of XXXX's attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor XXXX's attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, **and again** if it is medical, please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Stephanie Lockwood  
Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

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The Church of England  
Diocese of Ely

## Appendix 2

The Pathfinder Church of England Primary School  
Pathfinder Way, Northstowe, Cambridgeshire. CB24 1AA

Telephone: 01954 584801

Email: [office@pathfinderschool.org.uk](mailto:office@pathfinderschool.org.uk)

[www.pathfinderschool.org.uk](http://www.pathfinderschool.org.uk)

Headteacher: Mrs Stephanie Lockwood BA(Ed) NPQH



Date:

Name and address of parent

Dear XXXX

Re: XXXX Dob: XXXX School: Pathfinder C of E Primary School

We are writing to inform you that XXXX's attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting XXXX's progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

Mrs Lockwood would like the opportunity to discuss this matter with you further. Please contact the office on 01954 584801 or [office@pathfinderschool.org.uk](mailto:office@pathfinderschool.org.uk) to make an appointment.

Should XXXX's attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority could be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 Education Act 1996 and a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to discussing any concerns you may have so we can continue to support XXXX to make good progress and to improve their attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Stephanie Lockwood  
Headteacher

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## Appendix 3

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Email: [office@pathfinderschool.org.uk](mailto:office@pathfinderschool.org.uk)

[www.pathfinderschool.org.uk](http://www.pathfinderschool.org.uk)

Headteacher: Mrs Stephanie Lockwood BA(Ed) NPQH



Date:

Name and address of parent

Dear XXXXX

Re: XXX DOB: XXX School: Pathfinder C of E Primary School

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Stephanie Lockwood  
Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer

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## Appendix 4

The Pathfinder Church of England Primary School  
Pathfinder Way, Northstowe, Cambridgeshire. CB24 1AA

Telephone: 01954 584801

Email: office@pathfinderschool.org.uk

www.pathfinderschool.org.uk

Headteacher: Mrs Stephanie Lockwood BA(Ed) NPQH



### PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

Name of Child	
Class	
Parent / Carer	

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

I am requesting that the above named child is permitted to be absent from school during the below times:

Date(s) of Leave Requested: from ..... to ..... Number of School Days: .....

Time: from ..... to ..... (if less than one day)

Reason: .....

Please give details\* .....

*\* If you are requesting time off for a routine appointment, please explain why this could not be arranged outside of term time.*

Signed: ..... Date: .....

#### HEADTEACHER TO COMPLETE AND RETURN A COPY TO PARENT/CARER

AUTHORISED

NOT AUTHORISED

Reason: .....

Signed: ..... Date: .....

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