

Reedings Junior & Fawbert and Barnard Infants School

Attendance Policy.

Both schools are committed to raising levels of attendance for individual children. We believe that children must attend school regularly and punctually if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Aims and Objectives of Attendance Policy`

- To ensure that legal requirements are met
- To give a high priority to attendance and punctuality
- To identify clear channels of communication with parents
- To ensure that up-to-date attendance data is available
- To identify what is considered as authorised/unauthorised absence
- To make provision for first-day of absence contact
- To have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence
- To undertake early intervention
- To employ a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism
- To be sensitive to individual pupils' needs
- To maintain regular meetings between the school and its allocated Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)
- To establish clear lines of communication with outside agencies
- To ensure that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness
- To inform and involve governors
- To use the prospectus, induction meetings, parents' evenings and other communications with parents as opportunities for setting out our policy and expectations with regard to attendance and punctuality
- To review attendance policy at regular intervals
- To maintain registers in accordance with the principles and procedures outlined in the Department for Education Advice on School Attendance Oct 2014 (available on the Herts Grid).
- To make it clear to parents that it is the school - not the parent – who authorises an absence. Authorisation for absence is granted or withheld according to the criteria outlined in the Department for Education Advice on School Attendance Oct 2014 (available on the Herts Grid).
- To record and monitor lateness in accordance with the principles and procedures outlined in the Department for Education Advice on School Attendance Oct 2014 (available on the Herts Grid).
- To grant leave for absence during term time only in accordance with the principles and procedures outlined in the Department for Education Advice on School Attendance Oct 2014 (available on the Herts Grid).

- To consider attendance from a whole school perspective including the link between attendance and achievement
- To encourage all staff - including ancillary and administrative staff - to see attendance as part of their responsibility
- To actively address all issues - such as bullying – which may lead to non-attendance
- To notify their allocated Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly
- If appropriate, to address attendance issues as part of a pupil's Pastoral Support Programme
- To invite the AIO to planning meetings, if necessary
- Not to exclude pupils because of non-attendance
- To complete DfE absence proformas and return these to the DfE termly
- To provide attendance data, for the school as a whole, and for individual pupils as required
- To complete the Removal From Roll Form for every child removed from roll. Provide as much information as we have available and return the form to the Attendance Improvement Team
- To include in each pupil's annual report to his/her parents information relating to the number of unauthorised absences which the pupil has accrued during that school year and comment on levels of authorised absence where these are considered to be a cause for concern
- To publish in the prospectus information relating to levels of absence, both authorised and unauthorised.

Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:-

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and in a condition to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance

- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed in writing when the child returns to school
- ensure, as far as possible, medical/dental appointments do not take place during school hours
- ensure that they do not book holidays during term time

Parents/carers are asked to contact the school by phone or e-mail on the first day of absence following up their phone call with a note when the child returns to school. If there is no phone message the school will attempt to contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for the absence.

Responsibilities - Schools

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

Schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Responsibilities – Attendance Team

- The Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.
- The prime responsibility of the attendance team is to increase attendance levels for individual pupils, individual schools and for Hertfordshire as a whole.
- Each maintained school in Hertfordshire is allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who works in close partnership with the school.
- The Attendance Improvement Officer contacts the school on a termly basis

Attendance Registers

1. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases. They are necessary so that the school knows who is in school in the event of a fire or other emergency.
2. Registers are taken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
3. Registers must record whether each pupil is present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.
4. Registers open at 8.50am and 1pm at Reedings and 9am and 1.05pm at Fawbert & Barnard. There is a 10 minute registration period at the beginning of each session.

5. When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. See Appendix 1 for attendance codes.
6. When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as 'no reason given' (N) and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.
7. Entries in registers should be written in red or black ink and any correction made in such a manner that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable
8. A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register.
9. Registers are made available for inspection by the Attendance Improvement Officer when requested.
10. Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.
11. The office staff are responsible for checking reasons for absence and recording these. They consult the headteacher if in doubt about the legitimacy of a reason for absence.

First Day Absence contact

Registers and phone messages are checked at the close of registration and an attempt is made to contact parents/carers who have not informed the school of the reason for the child's absence.

Follow up notes

If a follow-up note is not received the office staff will send out a request slip where parents can detail the reason for the absence accompanied by a signature. If there is no response the office staff will make personal contact with the parent to ascertain the reason for absence.

Punctuality

1. We take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is monitored and followed up. Initially parents are spoken to by the headteacher and this is followed with a letter if the lateness persists.
2. The school policy, prospectus and induction information clearly state the time at which each school session begins and finishes, including the time at which registers open and close.
3. When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (see Appendix 1).
4. When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.
5. When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.
6. When a pupil arrives late, having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

Authorising Absence and Approved Educational Activity

1. Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised.
2. School policies with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence are communicated to parents through the school prospectus and induction information. Some parents, such as those whose first language is not English or who are illiterate, may experience difficulty in providing notes. In such cases schools we make alternative arrangements including writing out a note for parents to sign or engaging the services of an interpreter through the EMAG service.
3. All absence notes are kept with the pupil's records in the school office so that they can be referred to when necessary.
4. Absence should be authorised if:
 - the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
 - the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
 - the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
 - the pupil is the child of traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return
 - there is a family bereavement
 - the pupil is taking part in an approved public performance
 - the pupil is involved in an *exceptional* special occasion. In authorising such absences the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance should be considered
 - Absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
 - Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as approved educational activity. For statistical purposes such pupils may be counted as present even though they are physically absent. A pupil should be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is on a field trip or educational visit.

The key features of approved educational activity are that they are:

- i) educational and directly linked to the school's programme
- ii) approved by the school
- iii) supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school

Schools should ensure that in the event of a fire drill or other emergency evacuation they are able to carry out an immediate headcount as to the number of pupils physically present on-site.

Family Holidays and Extended Trips Overseas During Term Time

Time off school for **family holidays** is not a right. Changes to legislation which came into force in September 2013 make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin. Parents can be given a penalty notice or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised holidays.

School Procedure for following up unauthorised absence/persistent lateness

The school will follow procedures recommended by the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO).

A letter from the Headteacher is sent to the parent/carer detailing the unacceptable nature of the lateness/absence. Parents/carers are invited to meet the head to discuss the situation. Where parent/carers have reading difficulties a meeting is arranged. If there are language issues an interpreter from EMAG will be present.

From 1st February 2016, should your child have 15 or more unauthorised absences the school will apply to Hertfordshire County Council for a fixed penalty notice.

Attendance Improvement Officers can also apply for a fixed penalty notice or they can seek permission to prosecute.

Further information is available in the Department for Education Advice on School Attendance Oct 2014 (available on the Herts Grid).

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDREN, SCHOOLS &
FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

The Marking of Attendance Registers (Primary)

The regulations stipulate that schools should maintain an attendance register for each class containing the names of all pupils in the class. This should be marked during the time set apart for registration at the beginning of each morning session and once during the afternoon session. Schools must distinguish in the attendance register between pupils who are present, on an approved educational activity, authorised absent or unauthorised absent. Schools are encouraged to use the following symbols when marking registers. (Computerised registration systems may have their own set of symbols)

Present

- /\ The presence of a pupil who has arrived at school on time should be marked by a black oblique stroke.

- Ⓛ The presence of a pupil who has arrived at school late but while the register remains open, should be marked by the symbol 'L' within a red circle.

Authorised Absence (circle with appropriate symbol within it)

- The authorised absence of a pupil should be marked by a red circle containing a supplementary symbol recording the reason for the absence.

The following symbols should be used:-

- X Sickness or other unavoidable cause (including arrival with a satisfactory explanation after the registers have closed).
- E Excluded for a fixed term.
- H Annual family holiday or extended trip overseas for which leave has been granted.
- I Interview for a place at another school.
- M Medical/Dental.
- R Day of religious observance in the religious body to which the parents belong.
- T Traveller Child Travelling.

Approved Educational Activity (appropriate symbol only, no circle)

A pupil who is on an Approved Educational Activity should be marked in black ink with one of the following symbols. (The school have advance notice of these activities).

- B Receiving part-time/temporary education at an off-site unit or other than at the school where registered.
- P Approved sporting activity.
- V Educational visit. (including secondary transfer)

For statistical purposes pupils recorded as Approved Educational Activity may be counted as present.

Unauthorised Absence

- O The absence of a pupil from registration and subsequently from school should be marked by a red circle. (This absence can be subsequently authorised if the school receives a satisfactory explanation).
- Ø The absence of a pupil from registration and the subsequent arrival of that pupil without a satisfactory explanation should be marked by a black oblique stroke within a red circle.

Appendix 2

Reedings Junior & Fawbert and Barnard Infants School
Application for Leave of Absence

As a parent/carer you should fill in this form if you want to take your child out of school during term time.

After completing the form, please return it to the headteacher of your child's school no less than 3 weeks before the date when you want the period of absence to start.

We follow the County regulations when considering requests for leave of absence (see below):

Changes to legislation make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin.

If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request, please complete this form and make an appointment with the Head teacher to discuss your application.

If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and you may be fined or legal action taken against you.

I request that.....(name of child)

Class.....

Be granted leave of absence from.....

to.....

I enclose a supporting letter to outline the special circumstances that make it necessary for my child to have leave of absence

Signature of parent/carer.....

Date.....

Your request for leave of absence for

.....(name of child)

has been agreed/refused in line with DFES guidance. Thus any absence will be recorded as authorised/unauthorised in the pupil register.

_____ (Headteacher)

_____ (date)

If this application is refused, please confirm in writing if you still intend to take this unauthorised absence.