

Attendance Policy

FREQUENCY OF REVIEW:	Every 2 years
RATIFICATION:	Summer 2019
APPROVED BY:	
REVIEWED:	Summer 2021
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	Summer 2023 Unless there is a material change
AUTHOR:	Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral)

The Department of Education states:

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full time education. It is also vital that they encourage their child's regular and punctual attendance at school. If a child is registered at a school then it is vital that they attend on a regular basis.

Principles

Staff and Governors expect full and punctual attendance from all students.

Parents/carers of registered students have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents/carers could be reported to the Education Access Service of the Local Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always requested.

Staff and Governors believe that:

- There is a link between regular attendance and academic achievement.
- Regular attendance encourages students to benefit from the whole range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities on offer.
- Full attendance is a duty, and a crucial factor in determining personal responsibility and a good work ethic.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy and absences which have not been properly explained.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, parents/carers and student. Students who are regularly absent will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. Outside agencies may also be involved. Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with Key Stage leaders and the Attendance Officer in resolving problems together. If all ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed, the Education Welfare Officer can use court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order.

Procedures

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

1. Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons

If a student is unfit for school parents/carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence by 9.00 am. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school on a case by case basis. Notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing a valid reason for absence. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger children, day trips, hairdressers appointments, etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which take place during school time, for which an appointment card or letter is required.

When the student returns, he or she must bring a written note, signed by the parent/carer, for each period of absence. These should be handed into the Attendance Officer who is located in the main Reception office. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances further evidence of a student's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested.

2. Absence Without Explanation

If a student is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation by 9.05 am the Attendance Officer will contact the parent/carer the same day by text, telephone or email.

3. Holidays

The school is proactive in discouraging parents/carers from taking students out of school for holidays during term time. We consider this action inappropriate and harmful to the education of the students.

With effect from April 2018 there has been a change in the School Attendance Regulations. Where there used to be the option for Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during the term time in "special circumstances" this has been removed.

Headteachers are now only allowed to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; an annual family holiday is not deemed an exceptional circumstance, nor is cost or convenience.

Advice from Shropshire Council's Education Access Team is that "exceptional circumstances" include circumstances where:

- It is unlikely that the event will occur again in a child's school life
- It is necessary for the child to be in attendance at the event
- The event cannot be organised outside of the school term
- The event is necessary to the health and wellbeing of the child
- Taking part in the event will be of greater educational value to the child than attending school

All applications for leave in term time are considered by the Attendance Officer in consultation with the Assistant Head of Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes. However only in very exceptional circumstances will time off be authorised. Requests for leave which have not been authorised will be recorded as "unauthorised" on a student's registration certificate. This will then be followed up by the Education Welfare Officer who could issue a warning notice or fine.

Requests for leave in term time must be submitted on the Application for Leave of Absence Form (available from Reception or on the school's website) well in advance of the requested date(s). Accommodation, flights or other arrangements should not be booked until authorisation has been confirmed.

4. Lateness

Students must attend on time to be given a mark for that session unless the lateness is unavoidable (e.g. late bus or medical appointment). Parents/carers are expected to ensure that students are on time for registration. Students arriving after 8.50 am will be marked as late. Students arriving after registration has closed at 9.05 am will be marked as absent/late after registration has closed.

5. Truancy

Truancy from school is treated as a serious issue and will always be communicated to parents/carers.

6. Attendance Monitoring

The Attendance Officer monitors students' attendance on a regular basis and will contact parents/carers if attendance falls below 96%.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) monitors attendance weekly, meeting with Heads of Key Stage and the Attendance Officer to identify any particular causes for concern, and as a result may contact the parent/carer. If non-attendance continues the Local Authority may prosecute or issue a fixed penalty fine.

Parents/carers are required to inform the school of the reasons for their children's absence. Failure to provide a reason for absence will be followed up by the Attendance Officer who will write requesting the reason for absence.

Attendance Communication Procedure

The school will contact parents/carers as a pupils' attendance percentage declines to the following levels:

1. 96-94% Green school letter sent to parents/carers or Year 11 attendance letter
2. 94-90% Red school letter sent to parents/carers or Year 11 attendance letter
3. <90% EWO 11 – first letter noting concern if the school letters have not improved attendance
4. <90% EWO 19 – second letter noting there is no improvement/ongoing concern
5. First home visit by appointment by EWO
6. EWO 5 – prosecution trail, fast track, parents called in, given 6 weeks to improve.
Final warning if there is no improvement. If a further 10 sessions of absence are accrued parents/carers are to attend ASAP meeting at Shirehall, which is a pre-court hearing. If there is no improvement over 3 weeks, this progresses to court or a fixed term penalty.

Covid-19

During the Covid-19 pandemic there have been various changes as to how the attendance of students is to be recorded. Those students who have tested positive, have a house-hold member who has tested positive or have been told to self-isolate by NHS track and trace service will be X coded. This will not affect their percentage attendance. If a student shows any of the main symptoms of Covid-19 they are requested to undertake a Covid test and should not return to school until they receive negative result. This will also be marked as an X attendance code.

Additionally, if a year group bubbles is sent home to self-isolate due to a positive test in school or the the school is closed due to a national lockdown, students would receive an X code for attendance. During a national lockdown, vulnerable students who are expected to attend school will be marked as present and those who do not attend would receive a C code.

Appendix A: Application for Pupil Leave of Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances.



Church Stretton School, Shrewsbury Road, Church Stretton, Shropshire, SY6 6EX

Request for Pupil Leave of Absence in Term Time in Exceptional Circumstances

Headteachers can only authorise any absence when an application has been made in advance by the parent/carer with whom the child is normally resident and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance. An annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance.

Full name of child(ren) _____ Address: _____

Reason for application and dates _____

Parent's forename _____ Surname _____

Parent's forename _____ Surname _____

Signature of parent(s)/carer(s) _____ Date: _____

The Headteacher may take into account:

- It is highly unlikely that the event will occur again in a child's school life.
- It is necessary for the child to be in attendance at the event.
- The event **cannot** be organised outside of the school term.
- Taking part in the event will be of greater value to the child than attending school.

Office use only Authorised Unauthorised

Signed(Headteacher) Date:

WARNING

If this requested period of absence has not been authorised, details will be passed to Shropshire Council's Education Access Service. The Council may, in the following circumstances, issue a formal Warning, serve a Fixed Penalty Notice or take court action in respect of non-school attendance for this and any future unauthorised absence:

- Parents have not sought permission from the Headteacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term time.
- The Headteacher has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway; or
- A pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation