

Attendance

“All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.”

Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on managing pupil attendance

(DCSF September 2006)

Aims of the Attendance Policy

- to ensure that The Petersfield School is compliant with national regulations and guidance for recording pupil attendance and absence and for setting attendance targets;
- to ensure all students attend school for the maximum number of sessions possible;
- to ensure that students, staff and parents are aware of procedures to be followed as a consequence of absence;
- to ensure that any absence or late attendance is monitored and followed up according to agreed and consistent procedures;
- to ensure that any unauthorised absence is pursued, firstly by the school and if necessary, secondly by the Education Welfare Service;
- to ensure that students attending off-site activities are registered at all times according to the correct national codes and within the spirit of the policy;
- to ensure that incentives / rewards for good and maximum attendance are part of the school routine.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent.

The admission register and the attendance register of every school must be available for inspection during school hours by:

- any of Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools in England appointed under section 1 (2) of the Education Act 2005[11];
- any additional inspector assisting the Chief Inspector in accordance with paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 1 to that Act; and
- in the case of a school maintained by a local education authority, any officer of the local education authority authorised for that purpose.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

If computers are used for attendance registration, back – up copies (paper or electronic) must be made and, like manual registers, kept for at least three years.

Registers matter because:

- they are legal documents which may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance;

- they provide the daily record of attendance for all pupils and this information can act as an early warning system for issues which may affect a child's welfare including child protection, being a young carer, illegal child employment, truancy, disaffection with school, special educational needs, illness, problems in school:
- the information they contain can act as a useful monitoring system for plans which are developed to support children in school, for example Pastoral Support Programmes or Individual Education Plans where regular and punctual attendance may be part of the planned action, or to support children at home when regular attendance may be one of the goals set within a child protection plan for a child who is registered on the Child Protection Register;
- they contribute information to pupils' reports and to leavers' references.

Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Some children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

The school has a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent / child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These include:

- *parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;*
- *truancy before or during the school day;*
- *absences which have never been properly explained;*
- *children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.*

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the appropriate staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council. He / she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for attendance matters at TPS is allocated as follows:

- for making first day contact with parent / carer for all pupils absent without known reason (telephone, e-mail, text) – attendance officer;
- for analysing individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence which cause concern – Attendance Officer / SIMS Administrator / Form Tutor / HOY;
- for setting clear trigger points for higher levels of intervention which are consistently applied - HOY / Assistant Headteacher;
- for having school attendance panels for pupils causing significant concern – HoY / Assistant Headteacher / EWO;
- for a range of reward systems which are developmentally appropriate for pupils with high levels of attendance and those who are improving – the pastoral team / SLG;
- for a clear system for reporting concerns about non-attendance to the Local Education Authority – Assistant Headteacher / EWO;
- for a service level agreement (or equivalent) with the Education Welfare Service – Headteacher / EWS;
- for partnership working with the local authority to ensure appropriate use of legal interventions to reinforce parental responsibility - Headteacher / EWS ;
- for parenting contracts for non-attendance where parenting is thought to be a contributory factor to deteriorating attendance - Headteacher / EWS;
- for an overall lead on attendance and implementation of this policy - the named governor (link pastoral governor) and relevant Assistant or Deputy Headteacher.

Procedures

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

1. Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence by 9.30 am. Parents are asked to inform school either by letter or phone if a child is absent. When the pupil returns, he or she should also bring a written note, signed by the parent for each period of absence. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger children, day trips, hairdresser's appointments, etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which take place during school time.

2. First Day Contact

If a pupil is absent for the first session of the day and the school has not received an explanation for the absence, the attendance officer will contact the parent by telephone that day as a matter of concern.

3. Holidays

The Department for Children, Schools and Families strongly advises against parents taking children out of school in term time. Pupils get 13 weeks' holiday per year and are expected to be in school for 39 weeks per year. Education is vital and should not be halted to go on holiday.

Any holiday leave in term time is at the discretion of the Headteacher, who has the right to grant exceptional leave of absence for up to ten school days provided the request is made in advance in writing (application forms are available from the school office). Requests for leave beyond 10 days will only be granted in exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Pupils who take a holiday in term time will be expected to complete extra work to make sure they do not fall behind.

If a parent makes a request to take a child out of TPS to go on holiday during term time, certain factors will be taken into consideration:

- The year group of the child
- Previous attendance record
- Whether there is coursework outstanding
- The reason given for the holiday

Amongst the times when the Headteacher will not authorise a holiday are:

- any time in the first few months of Year 7 when children are forming relationships and settling down
- in the run-up to public examinations – e.g. Year 9 SATS, Year 11 GCSEs
- at the beginning of Year 10 when pupils are just starting their Option subjects
- when Year 7 are on camp
- before and during Year 11 mock GCSEs in December

Among the reasons for going on holiday in term time might be:

- because parents/carers have been on a military posting and have only just returned home
- where trying family circumstances (e.g. a break-up, illness etc) mean a break would be beneficial
- where cultural/faith observances mean a child might need to visit family abroad
- where a child gets a “once in a lifetime” opportunity e.g. sailing round the world, elite sports coaching etc

Holidays will not be authorised for the following reasons:

- a cheap travel deal
- someone's birthday
- because it's too hot in the summer
- because it's the last family holiday together before the children grow up
- parental work commitments
- inconvenient flight times

or where

- the child's attendance record falls below the average attendance level of the school (95%)
- the child owes outstanding coursework or homework
- the child has outstanding detentions

Should a holiday not be authorised and a parent chooses still to take it, according to Government guidelines they open themselves up to the possibility of receiving a Penalty Notice monetary fine. The Governors of TPS have voted to enable the Headteacher to levy such notices if he feels it appropriate. Furthermore, pupils can be deleted from the school register if they fail to return from extended leave of absence:

within 10 school days; and

without good reason.

4 Lateness

Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Lateness will also be recorded and, again, will be recorded as unauthorised unless the school has been informed of, and agreed to authorise the reasons given. All late arrivals must report to the main school office. Parents are expected to ensure that pupils are present for the first session of the day. A late mark is awarded if arrival is between 8.35 and 9.00 am. After 9.00 a.m. lateness without an explanatory letter counts as unauthorised absence. Year teams will follow up persistent lateness to school involving a stepped level of support culminating in a meeting with the Assistant Headteacher, HOY and EWO.

At TPS data and other information will be used to improve school and pupil performance by:

- benchmarking overall school absence against other schools in similar circumstances;
- regularly monitoring progress towards attendance targets;
- collecting and analysing attendance data frequently (e.g. weekly) to identify causes and patterns of absence;
- understanding and using data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions;
- considering the link between an individual's attendance and their attainment;
- using good practice from other schools and sharing our own good practice;
- using LA / Ofsted advice on improving attendance;
- using all the materials and expertise available through the national behaviour and attendance strategy.

Pupil attendance will be reviewed every half term. Pupils of concern will be identified and contact with home will be made by the school. Pupils with attendance of less than 90% or with three or more broken weeks will receive a letter of concern. If the school intervention does not cause significant improvement and an individual pupil's attendance remains below 90% without good reason, a referral to the EWS will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or, ultimately, a prosecution.

The school has set individual and school targets for attendance. All pupils that achieve 95% attendance (without any late arrivals) will receive recognition at the end of each term. Any pupil achieving 100% attendance for each term will receive a certificate and a letter home. Pupils who have significantly improved their attendance will also receive a letter home at the end of each half term.

Attendance Targets

	Statutory Target set by HCC	Upper Target Range set by TPS
2007 / 2008	6.2% Absence / 93.8% Attendance	5% Absence / 95% Attendance
2008 / 2009	5.5% Absence / 94.5% Attendance	4.5% Absence / 95.5% Attendance

Monitoring and Evaluation

The policy will be regularly reviewed using the DCSF Behaviour and Attendance Audit document and will be monitored by the School Committee of the Governing Body. All incidents relating to the behaviour policy (including examples of racism and homophobia) are recorded, and data on both rewards and punishments are collected to monitor the application of the policy with respect to particular groups of students including details of gender and race. Rates of attendance and absence will be reported regularly to the Governing Body, which will monitor progress against overall attendance targets.

Sponsored by: *C Raeside*

Date: *October 2007*

To be reviewed: *every 2 years*

Approved: *School Committee 01/11/07*