



Asquith Primary Attendance and Withdrawal from Learning Policy

September 2021

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INTRODUCTION

At Asquith Primary and Nursery School we believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. To do this it is essential that a child's time at school is maximised. Even short periods of absence can have a detrimental effect on children's learning. Any absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Nottinghamshire Local Authority is committed to working with, and supporting schools, parents/carers and children to ensure that every child achieves the highest level of attendance at school. The Local Authority is also committed to working in partnership with other agencies who can contribute to an holistic approach to improving school attendance.

Family Services will lead on school attendance for the Local Authority and will ensure that all other relevant agencies are engaged in the support of particularly vulnerable children and groups, including children in public care and Traveller children.

Children whose attendance is excellent will have their achievement acknowledged and celebrated.

EXPECTATIONS

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer. Any absences should be explained, verbally or in writing to the School Office.

At Asquith Primary and Nursery School, we believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. We strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Parents/carers should be aware that the more time a child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom partaking of the complete lesson sequence. Children can also suffer socially when absent from their peers for any period of time.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents / guardians. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

There is no automatic right to any leave of absence. Only in very exceptional circumstances will the school grant leave of absence during term time. Each request is individually assessed by the Head Teacher.

The Education Act 2002 places the responsibility for enforcing school attendance on the Local Authority. This responsibility is delegated to The Early Help Team.

Legal action will be instigated against parents/carers in relevant circumstances using the wide range of available options including:

- Penalty notices
- School attendance orders
- Section 444 (1) and (1) (a) of the Education Act 2002.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Although the law distinguishes between authorised and unauthorised absence, it is the overall attendance of pupils that is crucial. At Asquith Primary and Nursery School our current attendance target for children of compulsory school age is 96%. This target is reviewed on an annual basis. The Local Authority also has a target to reduce absence that will be monitored annually.

Asquith Primary and Nursery School, like all other schools, has a legal duty to publish figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with parents in order to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day. This document records whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory age is absent, every session of absence must be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not the parents/carers. It is, therefore, essential that information about the cause of each absence is required, preferably in writing.

Where no notification has been received by 9:30am a call will be made by a member of school office staff to ascertain the whereabouts of the missing child/children. If there is doubt about the whereabouts of any child/ children it may be deemed necessary to make home visits or to call the Police.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. In these situations, school will work closely with the family to nurture a better pattern of attendance. 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 perpetuate the

situation. Early poor attendance habits follow right through from primary to secondary school and into employment.

PUNCTUALITY

Children are expected to be at school and on time each day. School starts at 8.45am each morning and children are expected to be in their classrooms by this time. The school gates are open at 8.35am each day and children go straight into school.

The gates close at 8.50am. Any child arriving after this time will need to enter school through the front reception area and have their details recorded by the office staff. They will be recorded as being late. Any child arriving after 9.00am will also have their details recorded and will be recorded as being 'late after the registers have closed', this will show as an absence in overall attendance figures.

Persistent lateness may trigger intervention from the school, or outside agencies, and could result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

When a child is absent from school the parent/carer must inform the school office by 9.30am on each day of absence as to why the child is not at school.

If a child is going to be absent for a number of days, the parent/carer must inform the school office on the first day of absence and give a predicted date of return.

Where the absence is because of a pre-arranged medical appointment, the parent or carer should notify the school prior to the day of absence. The school will only approve the absence where evidence is provided such as an appointment card, prescription or letter and the child is in school before and after the appointment where possible.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised absence refers to mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or another unavoidable cause. Registers are marked with a relevant code to distinguish between the different reasons for non-attendance.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

In line with Nottinghamshire Local Authority Policies, the school will authorise up to 3 days in any one academic year for religious observance. Parents/carers should complete a withdrawal from learning form if leave for religious observance is being requested.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent or carer.

The following will not be authorised:

- Parents keeping children off unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained (documented evidence will be needed in the case of persistent illness)
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/carer; in this case the school will follow the LA procedures to locate the missing child/ren. In the case of children being absent for 10 days or more and whose whereabouts is known but there are general concerns about the absence a referral may be made to The Early Help Team.

An absence may be classified as unauthorised if there has been a consistent period of absence with the same verbal reason but no additional evidence provided or where a senior member of staff has reason to believe that the reason for absence given is inaccurate.

Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school, the absence is marked as unauthorised.

Where the parents keep the child away for longer than agreed then the extra time is also marked unauthorised.

If a child has any authorised absences the parents/carer may receive a letter advising them that their child's attendance will be monitored.

WITHDRAWAL FROM LEARNING

Withdrawal from learning covers all instances of children being withdrawn from school including holidays taken in term time.

Withdrawal from learning during the school day

Parents are expected to arrange medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays where possible. Children must not be taken out of school without prior agreement (unless in an emergency). Parents must report to the school office, enabling the school staff to collect children from the classroom.

On return to school during the day parents must inform the school office staff so that the register can be adjusted accordingly.

Parents should inform the school office of any unexpected events which may result in a delayed return to school.

When a child is required to attend a hospital appointment during school hours this will not be counted as an absence for the school's internal attendance reward procedures.

Withdrawal from learning during term time

We follow Local Authority guidance on parents taking children out of school for leave during term time, which is not to authorise, any absence for this purpose will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Any 'Withdrawal from Learning' will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances.

Requests for 'Withdrawal from Learning'

- Except in an emergency, permission must be sought from the school at least 4 weeks before the absence is due to begin and in advance of making any arrangements. The request must be made on a 'Withdrawal from Learning' Form which can be obtained from the school office.
- Parents/Carers will be asked to make an appointment with the head teacher (or member of the SLT) to discuss their request.
- Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school.
- Reasons for being withdrawn from learning will be logged on the child's records and will be shared as part of the transfer / transition process.

MISSING CHILDREN

If a child is missing and their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the Local Authority procedures in taking immediate steps to locate that child as soon as possible.

LONG-TERM ABSENCE THROUGH CHILD'S ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS

If a child is under the care of a hospital Consultant and a Consultant's letter has been produced, and the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or to be a repetitive absence, the school may contact the support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

ATTENDANCE MONITORING PROCEDURES

If a child is absent from school parents/carers are expected to phone school, or speak to office staff, by 9.30am giving a reason for their absence. If no call is received by the school, then office staff will attempt to contact the parent/carer. If there is no reply, then the PSA (Parent Support Advisor) will make a home visit. A record of phone calls and visits will be kept by the Attendance Officer.

The AO (Attendance Officer) will monitor attendance on a weekly basis. Where attendance gives cause for concern (7 sessions missed in the Autumn Term or <95% for the rest of the year) then parents/carers will receive a warning letter setting out the school's expectations regarding attendance and their child's current attendance. Parents/Carers will be invited to arrange a meeting with the head teacher to discuss any issues that might be affecting their child's attendance. If appropriate, support from the PSA will be offered and if needed a referral will be made to the Early Help Unit.

If there is no subsequent improvement and a child's attendance falls below 90% parents/carers will be informed that this could lead to a penalty notice fine being issued.

An unauthorised leave of absence may lead to a penalty notice fine being issued; non-payment of a fine could lead to enforcement in the Magistrates' court where the maximum fine for this offence is £1000 per parent, per child.

The Local Authority will not issue more than two penalty notices per calendar year to anyone taking more than two periods of unauthorised absence. Where further absences occur or where the local authority deem it appropriate, enforcement will be dealt with directly by the court.

Attendance will also be closely monitored if there is ANY instance of unauthorised absence.

If attendance at the end of any one academic year is below 90% then attendance for the child may be closely monitored during the following academic year.

CELEBRATING ATTENDANCE

Half Termly

- All children who have 100% attendance for the half term will receive a certificate and a wristband allowing them to wear their own clothes to school on a day of their choosing.
- All children with 96% attendance and over will receive a certificate.
- Classes with 96% attendance and over will receive tokens as part of the whole school class reward scheme.

Termly

- All children who have 100% attendance for the term will receive a certificate.
- All children with 96% attendance and over will receive a certificate.

Governors

The Governors will monitor the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy by;

- Appointing a governor as a link for Attendance

- Receiving regular Attendance reports detailing attendance statistics and the impact of the implementation of the policy

Appendices

Appendix 1: Attendance letter Templates

Appendix 2: Attendance Policy Summary for Parents/Carers