



Underley Garden

School Attendance Policy

Created:	January 2017
To be reviewed:	September 2022

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children and young people (CYP) need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. At Underley Garden we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for CYP. We will encourage good attendance for all children and young people, by offering an environment in which they feel valued and part of the school community.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child/young person has good attendance, the Principal and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children and young people are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

We will:

- Make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school; including CYP, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve CYP's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all CYP, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and CYP of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of their education.
- Work in partnership with CYP, parents, staff and the Local Authority Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which CYP feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in CYP a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Children and young people who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Those who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A CYP whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at school, have missed two whole terms of learning, therefore having potential impact on their learning.

Principal

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to Local Authority Educational Welfare Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Local Authorities Educational Welfare Services
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Parents and carers

- Ensuring that their CYP attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment (which should be made out of school hours where possible).
- Contacting the school office in the event of absence due to illness or other unplanned absence as soon as possible and **no later than 9.30am** on the day.
- Providing school with a letter explaining the reason for their CYP's absence on the first day back in school.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary and using the Leave Request Form and submitted to school prior to the proposed date.
- If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any CYP's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

School staff

Registers **MUST** be completed each day for all CYP in school. Any absences should be recorded for **both residential and day pupils** with an explanation. If an unexplained absence occurs this should be reported to the Education Administrator to follow up.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by CYP and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness

- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at parent/carer consultation evenings where necessary.

Administration staff

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent CYP where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of CYP who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by CYP and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Principal
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Registration

Registration begins at 9am and ends at 9.15am. Class Registers can be found on the shared drive and must be completed each day. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Authorised Absence

Definition:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Examples of authorised absences

- Leave in term time (you should ask permission first, by law, the school can only authorise in exceptional circumstances)
- Short term emergency
- Certain days for religious observation
- Bereavement
- Dentist or doctors' appointment (try to make appointments outside school time)
- Hospital treatment
- Medical Needs

If possible, notify the school of any issues that may affect your child's attendance before the absence occurs

Unauthorised Absence

Definition:

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

Unacceptable reasons for absence include;

- Shopping
- Holidays in term time which are not authorised by school
- Hair cut
- Truancy
- Airport visits
- Birthday treats
- Days out / trips
- Non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Oversleeping
- Working

Please note that the decision to authorise absences rests with schools and not parents.

Leave of Absence

With effect from September 2013, the Government abolished the right of Principals/Head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, they will only be allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the CYP normally resides, and
- the attendance lead considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

Medical Absence

It is recognised at Underley Garden and Holly Trees School that our CYP have medical needs and this is taken into consideration when recording absences.

Illness

When CYP have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact support services to see if arrangements can be made for the CYP to be given some home tuition outside school.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning

Underley Garden and Holly Trees School will use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual CYP and whole school level. We will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In school we rely upon parents/carers to ensure their CYP attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a CYP's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authorities Educational Welfare Services.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Local Authorities Educational Welfare Services contact Underley Garden regularly to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify CYP with low attendance (usually below 85%). They then work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Systems for dealing with absence

Persistent Absence

The minimum attendance level which is expected at our school is **95%**. It is when attendance falls below this level that school will consider whether it is appropriate to offer support in order to improve the situation. Schools, local authorities and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of CYP who fall into the persistent absence category (PA). From September 2016 a CYP becomes a persistent absentee when their attendance falls **below 90%** at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level CYP miss significant amounts of schooling; meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. We need parents' full support in ensuring that attendance does not reach this level.

Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and action planning

If for any reason a CYP's attendance does fall into this category parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation with support from school where necessary.

Furthermore, absence data for individual CYP who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to local authorities; along with whole school absence figures.

Appropriate alternative curricular arrangements and exceptional circumstances

Appropriate support will be given in order to ensure the best possible attendance at school so each CYP can learn to their potential.

Review of Whole School Attendance Policy

Underley Garden will review this policy and the associated procedural framework annually.