

Robert Arkenstall Primary School

Attendance Policy

It is the aim of Robert Arkenstall Primary School to provide a broad curriculum and education of the highest quality within a happy, safe, secure and stimulating environment, which enables each child to experience success; to equip them with skills as thoughtful, caring and active citizens, eager to explore the possibilities of the world.

pursue possibilities; love learning

This policy is published on the School website, stored on the Staff Shared Drive and is available on request from the school office

Governor Committee	Full Governing Body
Reviewer	K Bonney
Ratified	March 2022
Review period	2 years
Next review due	March 2024

Our school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Every School Day Counts

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 The school aims to work together with Parents/Carers to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both every day and punctually.
- 1.2 Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with:
 - 1.5.1 Safeguarding and Child protection Policy
 - 1.5.2 Missing Children Policy

2. Parents/Carers' Responsibilities

- 2.1 Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age (the term after that in which they are five) attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- 2.2 Parents/Carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reasons such as sickness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, but by 9:15am, on the first morning of absence. They may contact by telephone and leave a message or speak to staff who will record the absence in the absence folder, they may use Parent Mail, which is checked first thing each day, or they may send a written note.
- 2.3 Parents/Carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of morning registration (gates are opened at 8.40am, doors open at 8.50am, Registers open at 9.00am). If a child is late they should report directly to the school office with their parent if appropriate. If the parent is unaware of the lateness, then they should be contacted by an appropriate member of staff. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised.
- 2.4 We are keen to ensure that we promote the highest attendance possible for all our young people as this is a fundamental life skill that will ensure young people's future success. Not only is it vital that our young people establish the very best habits and routines to ensure their success as future employees but there is also very clear national data that clearly shows the impact that poor attendance has on young people achieving the best possible outcomes and educational achievements. In short, if children are not at school we cannot teach them and this will affect their academic achievement at all levels. As a result of this we are taking a very firm and consistent view when parents

seek permission for an absence from school for their child due to circumstances other than genuine illness. **All parents can expect that all requests from parents seeking permission for leave of absence for their child will be refused and therefore unauthorised.** Permission may be sought where there are exceptional circumstances such as attending the funeral of a close family relative.

2.5 Should parents need to take longer leave of absence (e.g. for work commitments or sabbaticals), the parent should inform the school of their plans to educate their child whilst away. Following the local authority guidelines (e.g. 20 days of absence), the child will be taken off role. Following the extended period of absence due to the parent working abroad, the parent should apply for a school place via the local authority. The school is unable to hold spaces for children who are travelling with their parents due to their work commitments. Our oversubscription criteria will apply (see our website).

3. School Responsibilities

3.1 The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

3.2 Registers will be called twice daily and will close at 9.10am and 1.25pm. Any child arriving to school late but **before registers** are closed will be **coded 'L' for 'Late.'** Late arrivals **after registers** close will be coded **'U' for 'Unauthorised.'**

3.3 Teachers will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained in the register. The School administrator reviews attendance with the Headteacher regularly. Registers are reviewed with LAAO (Local Authority Attendance Officer) whose responsibility is attendance, at regular intervals.

3.4 Should a class teacher have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, their concerns should be brought to the Headteacher.

3.5 If a child is absent the class teacher / office staff will enter the appropriate code in the register. If no explanation has been received by 9:15am from the child's Parents/Carers then, on safeguarding grounds for a child missing from school, the school will endeavour to make contact with the parent after which an appropriate judgement regarding authorisation will be made.

3.6 The Headteacher will regularly collect attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the school's LAAO. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and the LAAO. Headteacher routinely reports attendance to governors.

3.7 The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- the Headteacher and class teachers will communicate regularly with Parents/Carers on attendance matters;
- the School Administrator will inform the Headteacher of any attendance which is of concern, in order that the Headteacher can take follow-up action to support the return to good attendance.
- ***appropriate personal encouragement or congratulations may be offered to individual children and classes;***

- clear attendance information will be entered in the school new Intake and new-to-school packs, website and newsletters.
- Local Authority Parents/Carers leaflets will be sent to all new Parents/Carers.

4. Authorised Absence

4.1 An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate, acceptable reason and the school has received an appropriate notification from the parent/carer. For example:

- should a child be unwell and the parent/carer writes a note of explanation and/or telephones the school to explain the reason for absence;
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointment;
- Days of religious observance;
- Travel for economic reasons (in the case of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families);
- Exceptional family circumstances

4.2 Only the Headteacher or a properly designated member of staff may authorise any absence. Parents do not have the authority to do so. Consequently, not all absence supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

5. Penalty Notices for Non-School Attendance

5.1 Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 local education authority officers, Headteachers and the police have the discretionary power to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

5.2 The new Power provides an alternative to prosecution of parents under Section 444 of the education Act 1996 and enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction by paying a penalty of £60 if paid within 21 days or £128 if paid within 28 days.

5.3 Should the Penalty Notice remain unpaid or have been paid only in part at the end of the 28-day period Cambridgeshire County Council must prosecute the parents for the offence to which the notice relates, or, in special circumstances, withdraw the notice.

5.4 Penalty Notices may only be issued in Cambridgeshire in accordance with the Cambridgeshire County Council Local Authority Code of Conduct

(<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/non-attendance-and-the-law/>)

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that the power is applied fairly and consistently across the County Council and that suitable arrangements are in place for the effective and efficient administration of the scheme.

6. Circumstances in which Penalty Notices may be issued

Penalty Notices may be considered as an alternative to prosecution for failure to ensure regular school attendance in any given period of unauthorised school attendance as below:

6.1 Unauthorised Absence

6.1.1 An absence is classified as Unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and the parent/carer or if the child is away from school without good reason even with the support of a parent/carer (e.g. shopping or a birthday).

6.1.2 As the Government changed the Persistent Absence threshold to 90% (in effect from Sept. 2015), the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice in relation to a child whose attendance at school is less than 90% over a given period. To allow time and opportunity for early intervention work with the family, attendance will be monitored by school and the Local Authority before enforcement actions are considered. Such a fine is intended to offer a rapid intervention which may be used to address non-school attendance before it becomes entrenched.

6.2 Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAO) thresholds for attendance concerns

6.2.1 The Education department of Cambridgeshire County Council has a structured system for managing school absence. It means that if a child has too many **unauthorised** absences or **authorised** but requiring support absence, there will be a system of letters, meetings, fines and up to court proceedings organised by the LAO Officer.

6.2.2 If a child has attendance which is:

- below 96% parents and carers will be sent a letter about their child's attendance.
- below 94%, a second letter will be sent to invite parents to a supportive meeting whether the child's attendance is authorised absence or unauthorised. This meeting will establish what pastoral or health support may be needed and set monitoring period target for improvement. Non-attendance at a meeting may still result in a target being set. Lateness after registers close will count as unauthorised.
- 90% or below school may send a 3rd letter to notify parents of a referral for Penalty Notice. Referrals would be made in the absence of medical evidence, or the involvement of other agencies

6.2.3 At all times in the warning process, school will communicate with parents. The school website and newsletters, Bromcom My Child at School, as well as Parent Mail and direct mail for individual parents constitute the warning system by which school communicates with parents. Parents are encouraged to meet with the Headteacher to discuss their child's attendance and consider strategies for improvement.

6.2.4 Here is a breakdown of what attendance looks like in terms of days.

- There are 190 days in the school year.
 - 190 days at school means 100% attendance and is excellent.
 - 186 days at school means 98% attendance and is good. This is only 4 days off school in a year.
 - 180.5 days at school means 95% attendance and is becoming unsatisfactory. This is 9.5 days off in a year and will trigger a letter of concern from the school.
- 171 days at school means 90% attendance and is a real cause for concern. This is 19 days off school in a year. Action will be taken by the school in the absence of other evidence and the involvement of other agencies.

6.3 Unauthorised Term Time Leave

6.3.1 Holidays taken within the school term (except in exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head teacher) will be deemed as unauthorised absence. The expectation of the Local Authority is that term time holidays should not be planned or booked as they are likely to lead to the issuing of a penalty notice. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as Unauthorised Absence. However, in very exceptional circumstances schools may authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include; a family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, military R&R, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.

6.3.2 These cases should be discussed with the Head Teacher in advance. In very exceptional circumstances, absence may be authorised; however, a family holiday will not be authorised for the following or similar reasons:

- The availability of cheap holidays
- The availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced during school holidays at home
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or end of term
- Exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis but the following will NOT meet the criteria:
 - Cheaper holidays in England or abroad
 - Visiting family/ friends who have different half /term holiday dates
 - Family weddings for more than 2 days or visits to see family abroad
 - Relatives coming to visit

6.3.3 Any parent who takes a child out of school for Term Time Leave of more than 6 consecutive sessions or more over a 4-week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. **Therefore, Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days* or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with a 'G code in the register.** Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. *(The Supreme Court Judgement in the case between Isle of Wight Council v Platt (6th April 2017) clarified the meaning of regular school in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996. To Attend school "regularly" means "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.")*

- The fine for a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child(ren), which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months (per parent).
- Schools may issue a suspected holiday letter if they have good reason to think an absence has been an unauthorised holiday.

* For the avoidance of doubt this can mean school days either side of a weekend or a holiday period or across school years that represent consecutive registrations.

Appendix A

Form for Application for Leave of Absence due to Exceptional Circumstances

***[this can be found on the school web site under Parents / Absence and Sickness
or please ask for a hard copy at the school office]***