

# Stratford Rural Schools' Federation



## FEDERATION POLICY FOR PUPIL ATTENDANCE

(including Leave of Absence)

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## 1. Introduction and Aims

**Regular attendance at school means that children are more likely to achieve well and make good progress.**

Our schools have high expectations for excellent attendance from all our pupils and are committed to our ethos which values attendance. We believe that working in a positive partnership with parents is key to achieving this aim.

Our aims:

- Promoting and celebrating excellent attendance
- Reducing all absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Acting early to support families where attendance is a concern

## 2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education 2022 (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

Once a child is registered at a school, attendance is compulsory. The federation believes that parents/carers who value education will seek to ensure that their child arrives on time and will discuss planned or reactive absences with the school.

Attendance records are provided for each pupil within their annual school report each year. Along with other reports, attendance data is passed on to receiving schools when a child leaves.

**The schools within the federation have set a whole school attendance target of 95%.**

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

**Promoting excellent attendance is everyone's responsibility.**

***Parents and Families will:***

- Help children to arrive on time at school every day, ready to learn, and with the right equipment
- Ensure that children attend school every day unless they are too ill
- Talk to the school if there are barriers to good attendance and work with the school to make improvements

***Class teachers will:***

- Register pupils accurately at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- Encourage and incentivise good attendance within their class
- Report any issues which may affect a pupil's attendance to the Head of School
- Speak informally with parents if attendance is affecting pupil performance

***The Office Manager will:***

- Ensure that the school's data management system is kept up to date and accurate
- Contact families the first day where no reason for absence has been given
- Record reasons given for pupil absence and punctuality
- Contribute to attendance monitoring activities as requested by senior leaders
- Provide annual registration certificates for parents

***The Head of School and Executive Headteacher will:***

- Ensure that recording and reporting procedures are followed
- Ensure that school attendance statistics are reported regularly to the Governing Body and the Department for Education
- Work with families in which there is an attendance concern to receive the support they need to improve attendance
- The Head of School and Executive Headteacher will consider data on pupil attendance and will provide comparisons with previous terms and years. The data may be analysed by groups (e.g. gender, year group, ethnicity) as appropriate

***The Governing Body will:***

- Appoint a named Attendance Governor whose role includes: to gain a detailed understanding of attendance issues affecting the schools in the federation, to offer support to staff when dealing with attendance issues, to keep the governing body informed of attendance issues and to ensure that the Governing Body carries out its statutory duties related to attendance
- Set an Attendance target for the school, and for individual pupils (when required in accordance with this policy)
- Attend meetings with families if requested by the Head of School/Executive Headteacher
- Ensure that attendance targets and persistent absence targets are reviewed and set annually
- Evaluate attendance data and decide if any further action is required

**The designated senior leader for Attendance is the Executive Headteacher.  
Contact can be made through the Office Manager at any of our schools.**

#### **4. The School Day and Punctuality**

**Being on time for school is really important.**

Our schools concentrate on the key skills such as literacy and numeracy at the beginning of the school day and children who arrive late can miss important learning. They might also miss out on

important information about what is happening during the school day, which might make them confused and upset. Late arrivals cause disruption for the rest of the class and embarrassment for the child.

### **School is open from 8.45am and finishes at 3.15pm.**

Lateness is arriving anytime after 8.55am. In accordance with DfE guidance, pupils arriving late:

- Before the register has closed, will be marked as late
- After the register has closed (9.25am) will be marked as absent.

## **5. Recording Attendance**

**By law we have to record all pupil absences and the reasons for absence.  
This includes whether any absences are authorised or unauthorised.**

We keep an attendance register which is taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. We use the DfE register codes (see Appendix 1).

We also record whether the absence is authorised by the school, the nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity or the circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### **5.1 Illness**

- If a child is too unwell to come to school we ask that parents contact the school by 9am. This could be by phone or email to the school office.
- Our schools operate a policy of first day absence calling – this means that if we have not heard from a parent regarding their child's absence we will contact parents by phone or email.
- Once a child is better it is important that they come back to school as soon as possible, even if it is at the end of the week.
- In certain circumstances we are able to administer medication during school hours, especially if this enables the child to come back to school after illness. Please discuss the protocol for this with the Head of School or Office Manager. Our Medications Policy is available on the schools' websites for reference, or parents can request a copy from the Office Managers. Parents will need to complete a form giving the school permission to administer medications.
- If a child has a recognised contagious illness the school office will be able to advise how long a child should be kept off school.
- If a child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue, this should be discussed with the Head of School to ensure that we are doing all we can to support the child with their learning. A Healthcare Plan should be completed with the Head of School and updated when necessary. This will also be taken into account when the school monitors attendance records.
- If a child's health related absences mean that their attendance is causing concern, the school may ask the parent to provide evidence from medical professionals – this could be appointment cards, prescriptions or a doctor's note.

## 5.2 Medical Appointments During the School Day

We expect parents to make *routine* appointments outside of school hours. If this is not possible then please inform the school as soon as possible. We always expect children to attend school before and after appointments.

Children should be collected from the office and signed out by a member of staff.

## 6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

***Only the Head of School or the Executive Headteacher can authorise a child's absence from school.***

### 6.1 Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments. (see section 5.1 for more details)
- Religious observance - Where parents wish to take their children out of school for religious observance we would respectfully ask them to complete a Leave of Absence form and discuss the matter with the school. Such leave will only be considered where it is known that the family are regular practising members of their faith.
- Traveller pupils – Absence will only be authorised where a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and this has been discussed with the Head of School or Executive Headteacher in advance. (see Appendix 2)

**Unauthorised** absences are those absences for which the school receives no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. In addition, schools will not authorise unapproved Leave of Absence requests (please see below).

### 6.2 Applying for a Leave of Absence in term time

**Any absences on school days which are not due to illness are a *Leave of Absence* and should be applied for at least 4 weeks in advance.**

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

- Heads **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- The Executive Headteacher will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parents, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parents, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council’s Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

**Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits. Parents should submit all Leave of Absence requests via the school office for the attention of the Executive Headteacher.**

The schools in the federation appreciate that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but do not consider this as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is requested for the following reasons are unlikely to be authorised (please note that this is not an exhaustive list):

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not *immediate* family
- Family birthdays

**Absences not requested in advance will be unauthorised**

## **7. Monitoring Absence and Poor Punctuality Procedures**

**We expect all our children to have good or outstanding attendance across the school year and to arrive on time for school each day.**

The federation considers excellent attendance to be 98% or above and good attendance to be 95% or above. If a child's attendance is 90% or below, they are regarded by the government as a 'persistent absentee'. Absence rates of below 50% are regarded as a 'severe absentee'.

The Office Managers are able to produce attendance statistics from our data management systems and these are monitored half termly and termly by the Head of School and the Executive Headteacher.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and submitted to the DfE via the school census. Data is published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing body each term.

Where a child's attendance or punctuality starts to cause concern, we will instigate the following procedures:

<b>98-100%</b>	<b>Excellent</b> Children are accessing all learning opportunities. 0-4 days absent over the year.	Praise and rewards in class.
<b>95-97%</b>	<b>Good</b> Very few learning opportunities are missed. 5- 9 days absent over the year	Class teachers have informal conversations with parents and children (if appropriate). Praise and reward for improved attendance.
<b>92 - 94%</b>	<b>Causing concern</b> Risk of underachievement. Up to 10 school days absent over the year.	Letter from school expressing concern and offering support to families. Monitor moving forwards.
<b>90-91%</b>	<b>Poor attendance</b> High risk of underachievement Up to 15 school days absent over the year.	If no improvement, school will write to invite families to attend a meeting. School will instigate formal support, which may be an Early Help assessment.
<b>85-90%</b>	<b>Persistent absence</b> Severe risk of underachievement Up to 19 school days absent over the year.	If no improvement, school will start a formal 6 week Attendance Action Plan.
<b>&lt;85%</b>	<b>Chronic absence</b> Achievement severely affected by high absence. Upwards of 22 school days absent over the year.	If no improvement, school will make a referral to the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

- Attendance in any given period falls below 95%
  - Class teachers are provided with pupil attendance data for Parent consultation meetings. They speak to parents informally and ask if support is needed.
- Attendance in any given period falls below 92%
  - The Head of School will send a letter expressing the school's concerns and the offer to the parents to come into school to discuss barriers and support.
- Attendance falls below 90%
  - Parents will be invited in to meet the Head of School and Executive Headteacher and school will consider more formal support, possibly through an Early Help.
- Attendance falls below 85% or fails to improve during the Early Help process

- Parents will be invited in to meet the Executive Headteacher and possibly the Attendance Governor. A representative of Warwickshire County Council's Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) may be invited to be present and will be able to explain the legal requirements. A 6 week Attendance Action Plan will be implemented and an internal attendance target will be set.
- Attendance during the Attendance Action Plan monitoring period is 95% or below
  - The school will make a referral to WAS. If a parent does not ensure that their child attends school regularly, WAS may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or proceed to prosecution.

## 8. Promoting Attendance

Within the federation we encourage and promote good attendance as well as celebrating improved attendance.

This could be through personal praise from staff, positive postcards, certificates in assembly and mentions in newsletters.

## 9. Specific Groups

### 9.1 Children who are Flexi-Schooled

There are a number of children within the federation who are flexi-schooled (educated partly at home and partly at school). We expect parents wishing to flexi-school their children to agree to regular liaison with the local authority elective home education department and to provide regular evidence of educational activities out of school where requested by the school. The federation has its own policy for the provision of flexi-schooling which is available on request from the school offices.

Our schools monitor the attendance of flexi-schooled children as a specific group.

### 9.2 Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

There are a number of children in the federation who are from a traveller heritage. It is important to note that:

- The duty of parents to ensure their child receives efficient full time education equally applies to families of traveller heritage
- The federation have the same expectations for attendance, reporting of absence and punctuality as outlined in the rest of this policy
- The federation expects that families who do travel for occupational purposes will be dual registered (on roll at another school) to ensure continuity of education
- Families are expected to inform schools in advance of their intention to travel for work purposes, and to request authorised absence using the Leave of Absence Request Form
- The schools seek to actively engage with families to promote good attendance and will liaise with other schools to ensure continuity of education
- Leave for **any other purpose** should be applied for in the same way as detailed above.

Children from traveller families who do not travel for occupational circumstances (i.e. with a permanent base) are expected to attend school as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.



Further legislation can be found at **Appendix 2**.

We work closely with the Warwickshire's Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) to support families with improving their child's attendance.

Our schools monitor the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children as a specific group.

## Appendix 1

### DfE Register Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

## Appendix 2

**Government Guidance: School Attendance, Departmental Advice For Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools And Local Authorities.**

October 2014:

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.