Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Approved by:	Full Governing Body	**Date:** 27th March 2019
Last reviewed on:	July 2024	
Next review due by:	July 2027	

POLICY

The Governing Body of Radford Semele C of E Primary School adopted this policy in March 2019. It will be reviewed at least every three years.

This policy was updated in September 2023 to include key elements of 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (Department for Education, September 2022) and should be read in conjunction with this document. A full copy can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all children receive their full entitlement to education through teaching and learning by being punctual and maximising attendance.

As a school, we aim to:
- Promote and maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality
- Maintain parent and pupil awareness of the importance of regular attendance and arriving punctually
- Actively discourage lateness, poor attendance and any holidays during term time

This Policy sets out the framework for a clear and consistent approach to managing attendance and punctuality.

2. APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all pupils of Radford Semele Church of England Primary School.

3. WHY IS GOOD ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

Good attendance is important because evidence shows:
- A direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement
- Pupils who attend school regularly make better progress, both socially and academically
- Pupils who attend school regularly find school routines and work easier to cope with
- Pupils who attend school regularly find learning more consistent and satisfying
- Pupils who attend school regularly have an easier transition to secondary school

4. EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Parents should support their children and the school by:
- Ensuring that their child attends school every day
- Ensuring their child arrives punctually each day
- Taking holidays during school holidays
- Reporting all absences to school by 8.45 am, detailing the reason for the absence

- Keeping the school updated by telephone each day if a child has an extended period of absence, unless another frequency of contact is agreed
- Providing medical evidence to support any absence of 5 days or more.
- Where possible, arranging appointments out of school hours, for example, doctors and dentist appointments
- Notifying the school in advance of any impending absence from school, providing written evidence if appropriate/requested, for example, letter confirming a hospital appointment

5. EXPECTATIONS OF PUPILS

The school will encourage pupils to:

- Develop their own motivation to attend school regularly and punctually

6. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

The school will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, Warwickshire County Council's Attendance Service and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe
- Produce statistical data about attendance and punctuality rates and patterns of absence for Governors, the Local Authority and Ofsted and to inform the school's internal process of intervention strategies for school attendance improvement
- Ensure that term dates, including INSET days, are communicated to parents regularly via the newsletter and school calendar (on the school website)
- Respond to concerns over poor attendance and/or lateness with parents rather than directly with pupils.

7. GOVERNORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders to fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

8. PUNCTUALITY

School starts at 8:50am, and it is important that all children are in school promptly to ensure a calm start to the school day. The first few minutes of the school day are important as this is often when instructions are given and work organised. If a child is late, this can also affect a child socially and emotionally, which may have an impact on the rest of the day. In addition, late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class.

Children are permitted on site from 8:40am. Children are permitted in school from 8.45 am, when the outside doors are opened. Outside doors will be closed at 8:50 am, and any child who arrives after this time will be considered late. Any child who is late should be brought into school by an adult who should sign them into school at the school office, detailing the reason for the lateness. If a child arrives late unaccompanied by an adult, school will telephone the parent to: a) Inform them that their child has arrived safely, although late, at school b) To establish a reason for lateness.

All late marks are monitored, and parents will be contacted if persistent lateness becomes a concern. Where persistent lateness is an ongoing concern, the school may seek involvement from Warwickshire County Council's Attendance Service.

Late arrival at school may be marked as unauthorised absence, in accordance with DfE guidance.

9. AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Some absences are allowed by law, and are known as "authorised absences". For example, if a child is ill, a family bereavement or religious observance.

The school realises that there are occasions when there might be a particular reason that might cause a child to be absent.

Parents should communicate clearly with school to inform them why their child is absent, giving advance notice or requesting a leave of absence if relevant and when possible (see section 11 below).

10. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

There are times when children are absent from school for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence include, but are not limited to:

- Going for a family day out
- Because it is the child's birthday
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Unapproved holidays

Any unauthorised absences that occur may trigger involvement from Warwickshire County Council Attendance Service. Legal action may be considered if children have unauthorised absences. The Head Teacher may choose not to authorise absence where reasons given are unsatisfactory or there is doubt over the reasons given.

11. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Radford Semele Church of England Primary School recognises that absence during term time can seriously disrupt learning. As a result, parents are strongly urged to avoid any term time absence.

In 2013 the Government issued new regulations regarding Leave of Absence. The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The regulation states that:

- Head Teachers **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
- Examples of exceptional circumstances are detailed in Appendix A
- The Head Teacher will fully explore the reasons for any Leave of Absence request to consider any possible safeguarding risks, for example, Female Genital Mutilation and the PREVENT agenda
- If leave is granted, the Head Teacher will determine how many days the child may be absent from school
- The school can only consider applications for leave from the resident parent (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 parent(s)
- If an application for Leave of Absence is made in advance and refused, and the child is subsequently absent from school on those dates, this will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. This may result in legal action against the parent(s)
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence may be referred to the Warwickshire County Council Attendance Service
- The Attendance Service have the authority to consider taking legal action for Leave of Absence in line with Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (a copy of which can be found at http:\\www.warwickshire.gov.uk\pupilnonattendance)
- The school and Attendance Service protect pupils' right to an education and may use a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and, where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. See Section 14 (Legal Intervention) below.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 only allow Head Teachers to authorise Leave of Absence (for any purpose) in exceptional circumstances
- If the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Head Teacher will determine the length of the absence authorised
- Requests for Leave of Absence should be submitted in advance, and before any arrangements or money is committed
- Requests for Leave of Absence must be submitted on the Leave of Absence Application Form, available from the school office, before any request will be considered
- If Leave of Absence is granted, parents must contact their child's teacher to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the absence on the child's academic progress.

12. REMOVAL FROM ROLL

If a child is leaving school, other than at the end of year 6 to move to secondary school, parents must:

- Give the school full information about their plans, including the date of the move, new address, new school, and start date at new school. Parents must provide any other information upon request
- Inform the new school of the child's previous school so that contact can be established easily and records transferred
- Complete a 'Change of School' form, available from the school office or Warwickshire County Council

In the event of a school transfer, or a pupil moving to another area, the pupil will normally remain on roll until notification is received from the receiving school.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

13. CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are legally entitled to an efficient, full-time education, which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

For most children, including those that are vulnerable, attendance in school is a protective factor and is essential aspect of keeping them safe. Children who are missing education (CME) have increased vulnerability and can be at more risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation, radicalisation and mental health problems. Staff will also be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

When pupils are absent from school and the school receives no contact from parents, the school will attempt to make contact with parents by telephone.

Where absence from school has not been supported by contact with the school, i.e. If a child is absent from school and the school are unable to make contact with the parent (or an emergency contact on the child's record), the school may carry out 'safe and well' checks at the family home. If school are unable to make contact and are concerned about the family, they may make contact with other professionals already involved with the family or make referrals to external agencies, e.g. Social Care or the Police.

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence, without permission and their whereabouts is unknown, the school will take all reasonable steps* to establish their whereabouts. If unsuccessful, the school will make an immediate referral to Warwickshire County Council's Children Missing Education Team.

*Reasonable steps include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts. Parents and carers are asked to provide at least three emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergencies;
- Letters home (preferably by recorded delivery);
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered;
- Home visits where safe to do so;
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts;
- Enquiries with any other service known to be involved with the pupil/family;
- Consideration of information about the child in social media;
- All contacts and outcomes will be recorded on the pupil's file.

If the Local Authority is able to contact the pupil with the child/children and their parents and carers, arrangements will be made with the school and family for a return to education. This may include a re-

integration programme where necessary. If the pupil has registered at a new school, the previous school will delete the child's name from their roll and transfer the child's educational records to the new school in the normal way. Any child protection records will be transferred separately and securely for the attention of the DSL in the new school and a receipt secured.

Please refer to the following for more information and further detail regarding Children Missing from Education:

- Radford Semele C of E Primary School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

If no further information is received after 20 working days, the school may remove the pupil from its roll.

14. LEGAL INTERVENTION

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, the school will work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

The school will work alongside the local authority to make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. Legal interventions may be used in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

These include:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Attendance legal intervention will generally include all parents who have day to day responsibility for the child.

Detailed information regarding legal intervention can be found in the following publication:
Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, September 2022) and should be read in conjunction with this policy. A copy of this document can be found here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

15. REVIEW OF POLICY

The Governing Body will review the Attendance and Punctuality policy at least every three years, and will take account of current attendance and punctuality levels in the review. The policy will be revised as required to introduce any changes in regulation and statutory guidance to ensure that it is always up to date.

Appendix A – Examples of Exceptional Circumstances

Radford Semele Church of England Primary School describes Exceptional Leave of Absence Circumstances as:

- Holiday request by active Service personnel where tours of duty make one family holiday per year in the school holidays impossible and requests have been verified by the parent's employer
- Holiday requested by Emergency Services personnel where working arrangements prohibit one family holiday in the school holidays per year and requests have been verified by the parent's employer
- Leave requested following the death of a parent or carer
- If a professional working with a child who has a disability, covered by the Equality Act 2010, feels that in their professional opinion, the child would benefit from having a holiday outside of the formal school holidays, then school will consider authorising a period of time during the last week of the summer term, if attendance is over 95%
- Extreme safeguarding issues, for example, fleeing into a refuge situation until alternative schooling arrangements can be made
- Funeral of a parent, carer or other close family member
- Occasional education linked extra-curricular activities when all factors, such as the nature of the event/activity, frequency and the child's attendance, attainment, key stage and ability to catch up on missed schooling have been considered

Holidays taken in term time through parental choice for economic reasons, family weddings and family days out during term time will not be considered exceptional circumstances.