



Attendance and Punctuality **Policy**

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Rationale

To ensure through robust systems and procedures, all PACT pupils are adequately safeguarded. The content of this policy is in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022.

Development of good practise

- To develop supportive strategies to encourage regular, punctual attendance
- To maintain parents, pupils, and staff awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- To develop strategies to improve punctuality
- To raise levels of pupil attainment
- To maximise opportunities both in school and later life
- To develop strategies to reduce authorised and unauthorised absences
- To develop an efficient monitoring system that can be reviewed through procedures and practice
- To develop and communicate procedures for attendance and punctuality to all staff at The Prince Albert Community Trust, including Committee members and Trustees
- To develop and create opportunities for both parents and pupils to raise concerns and work together in addressing attendance issues.

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable pupils to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all pupils is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained.

To encourage maximum attendance levels, both staff and pupils will work within a framework of good practice that both supports and motivates pupils and is consistent across the trust.

It is important that each child attends school regularly and on time. Parents have a vital role to play in order to support and encourage good attendance & punctuality, fulfilling their legal responsibility. Parents must work in partnership with the school to ensure pupils' have access to a full education.

Notes of Guidance and Good Practice

- Regular attendance at school is an important legal responsibility which is shared amongst schools, parents and the LA. This is further emphasised by the Pupils Act 1989 which highlights the need for schools to work in partnership with parents and the support services of the LA to promote and maintain the regular attendance of all pupils.
- New 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance (September 2022) gives even tighter guidance regarding pupils who are missing from education and refers to the Pupils Missing from Education Guidance 2022:
- This includes pupils, where the school has not been informed of their whereabouts and it is ongoing or a regular occurrence. It states:

If a child is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown, schools have a duty to carry out a reasonable enquiry jointly with the local authority to ascertain their whereabouts.

Keeping Pupils Safe in Education, September 2022 also refers to Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities (September 2022).

This guidance summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils, and parents. These requirements are contained in:

- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007
- Section 10 of the Pupils Act 2004 5 Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996
- Section 437(3) of the Education Act 1996
- Section 443 of the Education Act 1996
- Prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and penalty notices under section 444A (as amended by section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003)
- Section 447 of the Education Act 1996
- Section 47 of the Pupils Act 1989
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996

Pupil Registration: The Statutory Requirements

Parents, schools and the LAs share legal responsibilities in respect of school attendance:

- Parents of pupils of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (Section 7 Education Act 1996)
- All schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session, a pupil should be marked present or absent. (Pupils, Registration Regulations 1995)
- LAs must ensure that parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their pupils' education including, where necessary, by action through the Courts. (Sections 437- 448 Education Act 1996)
- Schools should ensure that registers are properly kept (Pupils' Registration Regulations 1995)
- Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of all absences for the preceding year. "All schools must distinguish in their attendance registers between authorised and unauthorised absences of pupils of compulsory school age; school prospectuses and annual reports must include specified information on rates of unauthorised absence." (The Pupils' Registration Regulations, the Education (School Information) Regulations 1981) (The Education (school Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989)
- Staff can find more information on pupil registration within the Prince Albert Community Trust journal.

Early Intervention

Encouraging attendance & good punctuality is an integral part of the class teacher's role. Class teachers will receive support from the school Pastoral Leader, Assistant Head Teacher, Head of School or Deputy Headteacher, if necessary.

It is acknowledged that an early response to developing patterns of absence can be most effective. The circumstances of the individual pupil or group of pupils must determine the nature of communication regarding attendance. The Prince Albert Community Trust will be particularly sensitive to issues of linguistic differences in matters of communication, and of cultural differences in perception regarding attendance.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (i.e. birthday treat, shopping trip etc.)
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school late, 30 minutes after the register opens, without good cause.
- Holidays or extended leave in term time (please see guidance below)

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9am on the first day of absence. This is a safeguarding matter so that the school knows that the child is safe.

As part of schools safeguarding procedures, they will endeavour to contact the parent/carer if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence. If school fail to contact the parent/carer within 3 days, a home visit will be carried out by 2 members of staff. If there is still no contact with the parent/carer, and school have not been able to establish the safety of the pupil, they may ask the police to complete a safe and well check at the home. For pupils with safeguarding concerns, this may be done on the first day of absence.

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours
- An appointment letter is required
- If it is necessary for a pupil to be out of school for this reason, they should be returned to the school directly after the appointment.
- If a pupil is absent due to a virus causing vomiting, they should not return to school for the next 48hrs after the last bout of sickness.

Term time leave policy

The PACT has adopted the new LA guidelines (Updated September 2022). We UNAUTHORISE ALL term time holidays or extended leave. This is due to the significant negative effect these have on a child's progress. All requests will be looked at on an individual basis and in some exceptional circumstances, some days may be authorised by the Head of School.

The pupils only attend school for 195 days out of 365. This leaves 170 days for holidays. We encourage parents to take their holidays during these 170 days. If parents do take their child on extended leave, this will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a parent plans to take their child/ren out of school for extended leave, then parents will need to fill in an extended leave contract (available from the main school office) in addition to speaking with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If the pupil is female and from a female genital mutilation (FGM) practising or affected community then the Head of School or Pastoral Leader will use direct questioning to ascertain whether 'cutting' of the girl will be undertaken during this leave. The Head of School or Pastoral Leader will then take the information from this meeting and refer to the police and Children's Services, if needed.

In some circumstances, if a pupil does not return to school in the timescale originally given by parents, or there has been no return date given, a letter will be sent advising a date that we expect them to return by. If the pupil does not arrive back on this date, and we have had no contact from parents, then we refer them to the LA Child Missing in Education Team.

A penalty notice will be issued if a child is taken on unauthorised extended leave.

Lates

If pupils arrive at school after the opening of the register, the lateness will be recorded. An unauthorised absence will be given to children arriving 30 minutes or more after the register is opened unless there is an evidenced medical appointment or an exceptional circumstance through the Head of School's discretion, that may require a more suitable authorised mark.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

It has been proven that attendance and punctuality directly affects attainment. We have many strategies in place to promote good attendance and punctuality and expect all staff to promote these strategies within their classroom. Remember pupils can only be taught if they are here.

- Talk regularly to the class about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Promote the school rewards for attendance and punctuality – gentle competition between classes and individuals will help to ensure regular attendance and punctuality.
- Refer any concerns to the Pastoral Leader as soon as possible so support can be offered immediately.
- Inform parents that dental and medical appointments should be made out of school hours wherever possible.

Role of Pastoral Leader and Attendance Team

The Attendance Team and the Pastoral Leader monitor attendance regularly, looking closely at lateness, absences in each year and persistent absentees, through information given on the registers and through communication from members of staff, parents, and pupils in school.

Phone calls and/or text messages are made every morning of absence. If no contact is made with the parent/carer within 3 days, a home visit will be carried out by 2 members of staff. If there is still no contact with parent/carer and school have not been able to establish the safety of the pupil, the police will be contacted to complete a safe and well check at the home. If a child is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown, we have a duty to carry out reasonable enquiries jointly with the local authority to ascertain the whereabouts. This may include a Child Missing in Education referral.

If there are any on-going absence or punctuality concerns, the pupil's home is contacted either through a phone call, a home visit or by sending a letter. These can be conducted by the Attendance Admin or Pastoral Leader. For families with safeguarding concerns, home visits and intervention will be conducted by the Pastoral Leader. This may be on the first day of absence. If there is no improvement in the pupil's attendance or punctuality, parents are asked to come in and see a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

School has in place the Fast-track process which fines parents for persistent unauthorised absence. Each parent or person with parental responsibility may receive a Penalty Notice for each child. (A copy of this information can be found on the school's website). If there is still no improvement, a referral may be made to Social Services on the grounds of neglect. In some circumstances, if a pupil does not attend school for a period of time, and after checks, school are unable to locate where they are, they will make a referral to the Children Missing in Education Team as stated in the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance.

Strategies for Improving Attendance and Punctuality

Pupils with an absence percentage of under 90% will be monitored and parents/carers may be invited in for a meeting to discuss their child's attendance. The Pastoral Leader will communicate and support the families in trying to bring about an improvement. Failure to improve following all avenues of support may result in Fast-Track intervention.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the development of a child, and they should be allowed to take in full, the educational opportunities available to them by law.

The role of the parent/guardian in supporting the school's efforts in securing high levels of attendance and punctuality is critical. Prince Albert Community Trust intends to maintain close, effective, and positive links with parents and ensure that they are contacted at an early stage to deal with unexplained absences of their child. Parents will receive advice and support from the school where appropriate from the Pastoral and Inclusion Team.

Parents need to support the school by:

- Informing school of any absences by a telephone call, messages, notes, or visits to the school
- Parents can leave a message on the school answering machine, clearly stating their child's name, class and reason for absence
- Discussing with the school any concerns or difficulties that may affect their child's attendance or punctuality
- Take holidays during non-term time periods
- Work with their children to support the attendance policy and other related policies
- If unsure discuss with the school their parental, legal responsibilities regarding school attendance and punctuality

Ensure pupils are collected on time at the end of the day. If school can't contact parents/carers after 1 hour, they will contact Children's Services. If a child is regularly picked up late, this is a cause for concern, and school may make a referral to Children's Services on the grounds of neglect.

Role of pupils

- Be aware of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Be engaged in improving their own attendance and punctuality
- Be aware of the expectations, incentives, and the supportive role that the school offers regarding regular attendance and punctuality

School and Board of Trustees

The school will provide a supportive environment which welcomes all pupils regardless of language, culture, religion, gender, or special educational needs.

There should be a consistent approach to all attendance & punctuality procedures.

- The school will inform The Trustees, teachers, parents, and pupils of strategies used to maintain and improve attendance & punctuality.
- Provide information in relation to attendance matters for Trustees, parents, DFE, LA and School Admissions (Fair Access and Attendance Service).
- Set targets for attendance, annually, regarding the reduction of all authorised and unauthorised absences.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Review and evaluate the policy annually.
- Regularly analyse attendance and punctuality data.
- Monitor the effectiveness of long and short-term interventions.
- Present attendance figures on a regular basis to Trustees, parents, and whole staff.

- Be aware of factors that will affect the attendance figures, such as Eid and unauthorised absences.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly in the light of any statutory updates or in response to changes in guidance.