



## Policy status

title:	<b>Attendance</b>		
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owner:	<b>Head Teacher</b>		
nominated governor:	<b>Chair of Governors</b>		
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Head teacher (signature if required):		Date:	
Chair of governing body (signature if required):		Date:	

## Background

This policy provides a framework for ensuring that our children are safe, attend school regularly and punctually. It is written for the benefit of all members of our school community, to allow each and every one of us to know our responsibilities and to ensure we comply with the law.

### Our aim

At Preshute Primary School, we believe that pupils can only take full advantage of their education – and thereby maximise opportunities in school and later life - if they attend school regularly and punctually.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- promoting good attendance and punctuality; and reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and to encourage and support punctuality in attending lessons. Attendance information is also included on our school website at [www.preshute.wilts.sch.uk/Parents/Attendance](http://www.preshute.wilts.sch.uk/Parents/Attendance).

### How do we achieve this aim?

Maximum attendance rates will only be achieved if the school works closely together with parents/carers and the Local Authority – each group being fully aware of their responsibilities.

## **Expectations and responsibilities**

### **School**

Parents/carers and pupils can expect the following from Preshute Primary School:

- to complete the registers regularly, accurately and efficiently;
- to take prompt and confidential action in response to any problem notified to us, including any issue which may lead to a pupil's non-attendance, irregular attendance or arriving late;
- to ensure early contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school without good reason;
- to liaise with the Education Welfare Officer (Wiltshire Education Welfare Service) and seek advice and support on any concerns regarding attendance and issues of punctuality;
- if there is no communication from parents/carers about their child's absence, to phone them by 9.30am (or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter) to ensure the child is safe and that the absence is recorded appropriately;
- if no explanation for an unauthorised absence is received within 10 days, to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer;
- to provide a quality education; and
- to submit pupil attendance termly for publication at national and local authority level through the Department for Education's school absence national statistics releases.

### **The Legal Framework**

This policy is written in the light of guidance from the DfE 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (November 2016) which in turn is informed by national legislation and therefore reflects the school's statutory duties. It also reflects the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy (Revised November 2019).

The school recognises the responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service and supports them in the discharging of the statutory duty of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.

By law, schools are required to:

- take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon; and
- report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten school days or more without known reason.

By law, the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Authorised absence is where the school has:

- given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away; or
- has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence.

All other absences are unauthorised.

### **Specific responsibilities in school are as follows:**

#### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, having particular regard for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children 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;
- explaining to their class the importance of good attendance and promptness;
- in liaison with the school office and Head Teacher, following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register; and
- discussing attendance issues at parent consultation evenings where necessary.

#### **Head teacher**

The Head teacher is responsible for:

- overall monitoring of school attendance and trends in authorised and unauthorised absence;
- contacting parents where concerns are raised about absence, including organising meetings to discuss attendance issues;
- monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised;
- making referrals to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service;
- providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Education Welfare Officer; and
- liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

#### **Administration officer**

The administration officer (school office) is responsible for:

- collating and recording registration and attendance information;
- receiving and recording messages from parents regarding absence;
- contacting parents of absent children where no message has been received by the school;
- ensuring the Absence Diary is promptly completed for any child who is recorded as absent, together with any reason provided;
- recording details of children who arrive at school late or leave early during the school day in the Late Arrivals folder and Early departure folder respectively;
- keeping an overview of class and individual attendance - looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual; and

explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers, and reporting concerns to the Head teacher.

### **Parents**

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- to ensure that their child arrives at school regularly and punctually, appropriately dressed, properly fed and ready to learn;
- to encourage their child to appreciate how important it is to attend school regularly;
- to contact the school in confidence if problems arise that affect – or may affect – their child's performance or attendance at school;
- to work in partnership with the school and the Local Authority to resolve any non-attendance issues;
- to notify the school if their child is absent by 9.15am on the first day of that absence, and provide an explanation for that absence. If necessary, a message can be left on the school answer phone;
- wherever possible, avoid making medical/dental appointments during school hours; and
- not to book holidays in school term time as these can incur a penalty fine and impact their child's performance at school.

### **Pupils**

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- that they will attend school regularly and punctually;
- that they will arrive appropriately dressed and ready to learn; and
- that they will inform a member of staff if there is any reason or problem that may prevent them from attending school.

### **Responsibilities of the Governing Body**

The Head Teacher will ensure that the school's attendance figures are reported to the Governing Body who will monitor progress against annual attend targets and will, in turn, report figures to the Full Governing Body (once a year).

### **Wiltshire Local Authority responsibilities**

- to promote excellent attendance in all Wiltshire local authority schools through its Education Welfare Service;
- to work in close partnership with Preshute Primary School to ensure high attendance and help and support in cases of poor attendance levels; and
- to thoroughly investigate persistent absence.

## **School Procedures**

### **School session times**

Pupils must be in school between 8.45am and 8.55am for a 9.00am start. The school gates (to the playground and mobile classrooms) and the school door (to the main school) will open at 8.45am. The school gates and main door will be closed at 9.00am. After that time, all children must enter the school by ringing the bell at the main door.

### **Procedures for reporting absences**

In the event of illness or any other reason for absence, parents/carers will telephone the school office before 9.00am on the first day of the absence.

Parents/carers should provide an explanation for the absence, which should then be confirmed in writing when the child returns to school.

If the absence is to continue for more than one day, parents/carers should telephone the school on subsequent days, again before 9.00am, unless they are able to give an exact length of time on the first day of absence. There is a dedicated messaging service to report absences that can be accessed 24 hours a day. Parents should notify the school by telephoning the school office (01672 512754) or sending an email to the school office on [admin@preshute.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@preshute.wilts.sch.uk).

Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to some traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively so that the school can respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the child on their return to school.

Where the school has not been notified of a child's absence, parents/carers will be telephoned to confirm that a child is absent and the reasons for that absence.

Where the school has not been notified and it is not possible to contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence, the school is obliged to mark the child's absence as 'unauthorised'.

Parents/carers should ensure that their child is signed in or out (as applicable) if they arrive at school outside normal hours or are taken out of school before the normal end of the day, giving the reason to the administration officer for lateness or early withdrawal from school. The Late Arrival and Early Departure folders are kept in the main school office and updated by the administration officer.

Parents are asked to ensure that their child is fully aware of the procedures they must follow in the event that they are late for school.

### **Procedures for requesting 'authorised absence' from school**

Parents/carers must seek permission from the Head Teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application in advance of any request for leave of absence. This could be for the purpose of a family holiday or family occasion, such as a wedding or funeral or for any other reason. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstances of being 'exceptional'.

Inevitably, there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable or justifiable. These will include:

- illness
- bereavement
- medical/dental appointments
- days of religious observance
- visits to other schools (secondary transfer, entrance exams)
- education at another establishment (e.g. referral unit)
- approved sporting activity / performance
- annual family holiday in exceptional circumstances.

Where an absence is unavoidable or unplanned, then parents/carers are asked to follow the procedures for reporting absences as outlined above.

Where an absence is for anything else apart from an annual holiday (in exceptional circumstances), the school needs to be informed in writing.

Where a request for absence is for a holiday in term time parents/carers need to complete an 'Absence from School' form which is available from the school office. The form can also be downloaded from the website: [www.preshute.wilts.sch.uk/Parents/Attendance](http://www.preshute.wilts.sch.uk/Parents/Attendance)

Completed forms need to be handed into the school office **at least 5 working days in advance** so that they can be processed.

### **Marking the attendance register**

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on that register.

At Preshute Primary School there is a separate register for each class which must be marked by the class teacher at the beginning of the morning session (9.00am) and, again, at the beginning of the afternoon session.

Absences must be marked in the register using the agreed codes (see list in front of registers) to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences, as termly/annual data is collected by the Department for Education, and monitored.

Lateness is classed as any child coming into school after 9.00am (for the morning session). Records are kept of those pupils who are late. This is documented in the attendance register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for that session (Attendance Code U).

Children who have attended a dentist's, doctor's or other medical appointment and subsequently come to school will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Registers are monitored by the administration officer in the morning after registers close. If at afternoon registration a child is absent, the class teacher (or other staff member responsible for registration) will immediately contact the administration officer to confirm that the absence is justified (eg where a child has become ill during lunchtime and has been collected by a parent/carer before afternoon registration, and this has been duly recorded by the administration officer) or so that prompt action can be taken if the child cannot be located (see the procedures for dealing with missing children below).

### **Lateness**

Any child arriving late must report to the school office to ensure their attendance is recorded.

### **Logs**

The following attendance logs are maintained by the school:

- A folder kept in the office to be completed for each child who arrives late for a session, stating the time they arrived and the reason for the lateness (Late Arrival folder).
- A folder kept in the office to be completed for each child who leaves school early, stating the time they left and the reason for leaving (Early Departure folder).

## Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not, and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If a child has not arrived at school by 9.15am (by which time all morning registers have been returned to the school office) the administration officer must check the absence telephone line and for any other messages (written or verbal) given by parents/carers for that child (for example messages given to the class teacher). If there is no message explaining why the child is absent, then the administration officer must promptly telephone the parent/carer to let them know that their child has not arrived at school, to find out why the child is absent, and to ensure they are safe.

The administration officer will also promptly relay any messages received regarding pupil lateness/absence to the relevant class teacher (and, in the event of any issue of concern, also directly to the Head Teacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead).

Each class teacher must be responsible for following up lateness and absences by talking to parents/carers, liaising with the school office, and by alerting the Head Teacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead to any potential issues.

In the absence of any urgent issues, absence data will be monitored termly by the Head Teacher.

## Authorised absences and unauthorised absences

### Authorised absence

- 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.

### Unauthorised absence

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

Examples of unauthorised absence include absence for holiday (see further below), shopping, persistent illness without a doctor's note, "seen out and about", late after registration has closed with no valid reason, or absent for a birthday treat.

## Concerns over attendance, punctuality and 'unauthorised absences'

Early identification is crucial and communication with parents/carers needs to begin as soon as the problem is detected. Initial concerns will either be communicated in person, by phone or by letter (and, if in person or by telephone, this should be followed up by a letter), explaining the actions that might be taken should the problem persist and seeing if the school can offer any support to the parents/carers to resolve the problem.

We will make every effort to work constructively and sympathetically with parents/carers to respond to their individual circumstances.

Where appropriate, the school may request that the parents/carers enter into a 'parenting contract' which sets out what is expected of the parents/carers, pupil and school.

The school is obliged to report any concerns regarding attendance (including persistent late arrival) and absence to the EWS.<sup>1</sup>

### **Legal sanctions**

By law, parents may be fined for the unauthorised absence of their child from school where the child is of compulsory school age.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March, they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December.

The Local Authority can issue a Penalty Notice in the following circumstances:

- overt truancy
- absence from school, either when a parent continually fails to provide an explanation or the school considers the absence to be avoidable.
- holidays taken during term time where the absence has not been authorised by the school.

Penalty Notices are also issued for absence taken during term time where the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school, or an absence has not been requested in advance and the pupil has had at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

A Penalty Notice can also be issued to the parent/carer of an excluded child in the event that their child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is one of the first five school days of that exclusions or, where the exclusion is for a fixed period of five days or less, any of the days of that exclusion period.

If issued with a Penalty Notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

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<sup>1</sup> When making referrals the school must use the referral form CME1 – Appendix 6

## **Reintegration planning and procedures following a significant period of absence**

Preshute Primary School will develop an individual reintegration plan for any pupil who returns to school after any significant period of absence.

The reintegration plan will:

- be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of the returning pupil;
- inform/involve all staff of/in the reintegration plan;
- provide opportunities for feedback and counselling;
- consider peer support, and, if appropriate, mentoring;
- involve parents/carers as far as possible;
- establish a timeframe for review of the reintegration plan; and
- include the Education Welfare Officer, any family liaison worker; parents and pupils in the reintegration plan.

## **Procedures for dealing with Missing Children**

In the event of a child going missing during the school day the following procedures apply:

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will co-ordinate searches and ensure effective lines of communication between people.

As soon as a report of a missing child is received, the school must contact the parent/carer.

The police should be informed as soon as possible and before it becomes a full-scale incident.

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head teacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Board of Governors.

## **Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## **Statutory guidance and legislation**

- [School attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE)
- DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

Please refer to the above DfE documents for an up to date and comprehensive list (with links) for all relevant legislation and regulations, including the following:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)