



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

At Arundel Court Primary Academy & Nursery our school values are integral to everything we do and we believe that for a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance and punctuality for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to children and their parents and carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

#### 1. Legal Framework

Attendance at school is a statutory requirement and subject to various education laws. The school's attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DFE) and Portsmouth School Attendance Team.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility for children of compulsory school age (5-16). The 1996 Education Act defines "parent" to include:

- a) all natural parents, whether they are married or not, and;
- b) any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person, and;
- c) any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

#### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents, carers and school staff all share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality.

##### 2.1 Responsibilities of Attendance Officer:

- co-ordinating the school's work in promoting and improving attendance;
- promote and reward good attendance and punctuality at all appropriate opportunities
- ensure that attendance and punctuality is recorded accurately and absence procedures are implemented daily
- will send termly attendance reports to parents and carers
- ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and write to parents explaining concerns over level of attendance if falls below 95%
- carry out home visits or meet with parents where appropriate for safeguarding purposes
- liaise with other members of staff or outside agencies to support families in improving their child's attendance
- liaise with the School Attendance Team at Portsmouth City Council to consider whether legal action with regard to a child's irregular attendance is appropriate
- analyse attendance data and submit reports to Headteacher, Governing Body and School Attendance Team.
- ensure the attendance policy is updated and applied throughout the school every year;

## 2.2 Responsibilities of Staff:

- ensure that all children are registered accurately every day
- promote and reward good attendance and punctuality at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with the attendance officer on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence to parents and the attendance officer
- support children with their learning once they are back in school after an absence

## 2.3 Responsibilities of Children:

- attend school every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence agreed
- arrive in school on time
- take responsibility for registering at the office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours

## 2.4 Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence;
- discuss with the attendance officer any planned absences in advance or any problems that may be preventing a child attending school regularly and on time;
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance every year;
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence
- supply medical evidence where appropriate to support any absences through the minor ailments scheme, GP or hospital
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointment
- if an appointment is unavoidable their child should attend school before and after the appointment to minimise the impact on attendance
- only request a leave of absence if it is for exceptional circumstance
- get their child to school on time
- register their child at the office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours
- take an active role in improving their child's attendance if informed of any concerns and attend any requested meetings in relation to their child's attendance

## 2.5 Responsibilities of Local Authority:

- Preventing poor school attendance and truancy across the city
- Monitor every schools' response to individual pupil absence and ensuring they have plans in place to improve a pupil's attendance and establish their safety
- Taking action to trace pupils whose whereabouts are not known

### 3. Monitoring Attendance

#### 3.1 Registers

Legally the register must be marked twice daily by the class teacher. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session.

##### Start and finish of school:

- Gates will be opened at 8.40am children. They will shut at 8.55am.
- Year R enter with parents.
- All children will enter school by themselves.
- Registers will be completed at 9am.

##### Staggered school finish:

Year Groups	Time	Location
Year R and 1	3pm	Parents pick up from classrooms
Year 2	3.10pm	Parents pick up from outside designated Year R classroom
Year 3	3.10pm	Parents pick up from designated Year 1 classrooms
Year 4	3.15pm	Parents pick up from designated area in school Staircase 1 or 2 and main hall
Year 5 and 6	3.20pm	Leave independently or arrange a spot to meet parents

Registers are legal documents and may be used in evidence in cases where parents/carers are being prosecuted for attendance offences. They are retained in school for a period of three years.

See Appendix 1: SIMS Codes

#### 3.2 Lateness/Punctuality

It is important to be on time every day at school. The start of the school day is used to give out instructions for the day ahead, if late it can be embarrassing for the child, disruptive for the rest of the class, or it could even mean a child misses going on a school trip.

We expect children to be in class at these times ready for the register to be taken. If they come in after these times but by 9.15am they will receive a late mark (L) and will be required to sign in at the late gate. The time of arrival and reasons for lateness are recorded on this system.

If late after the registration period has closed they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site (U). This will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence therefore will affect their overall

attendance percentage. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persisted.

- If a child is late they are prevented from receiving weekly, termly and yearly attendance rewards which can be disappointing for the child.
- The attendance officer will monitor lateness on a daily basis and will contact parents of persistently late children to obtain further reasons and offer support around good time keeping and this might be achieved
- If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has more than 10 or sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any full term (code U), the school will be required to issue parents or carers with a Penalty Notice Warning (*see Section 5*).

It is equally important that children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. This can be very upsetting for children and disruptive for staff who often have meetings after school or their own commitments. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected children to a place of safety and share concerns, if necessary, with other agencies. If available, the school may place a child into an after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill. The attendance officer will contact parents who are persistently late collecting their children to discuss future arrangements.

### 3.3 Understanding Types of Absences

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. The register must show whether this absence was authorised or unauthorised.

- Authorised Absence

The DFE states that it is only the school which has the authority (not parents) to determine whether an absence is authorised or not. An absence will be authorised when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. Parents are expected to complete a Leave of Absence Form (*see Section 4*) for all absences other than sickness. If no explanation is received, absence cannot be authorised.

- Unauthorised Absence

This is when the school has not received a reason for the absence, the explanation given is not satisfactory or a child's leave of absence from school has not been approved in advance (*see Section 4*). The following reasons for absences are **unacceptable** and will be **unauthorised**:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily or indulging a child who wants to stay home
- truancy
- absences which have not been explained properly
- a holiday taken without notifying the school or has not been agreed
- children who arrive at school after registration has closed
- illnesses where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- shopping
- the child's or family member's birthday
- parent or siblings being unwell
- parents/carers work patterns
- day trips
- extended appointments
- visiting family

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

### 3.4 What to do if my child is absent?

- First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter and this is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent parents must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence with a full explanation
- or, parents/carers can call into the school office and report the absence in person

If a child is absent the attendance officer will:

- send a text message to main parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 10.00am; this is because we have a duty of care to ensure every child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- if we still do not receive a reason for a child's absence we will ring the main parent/carer or if regularly absent we may visit the family home
- an absence remains unauthorised until we have received a satisfactory reason
- if a child's attendance is low we may ask for medical evidence for the absence before we authorise it

- Third Day Absence

If a child is absent for 3 days or more we would expect parents to provide medical evidence when they return to school.

If a child has not been seen and no contact has been with or by parents after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing education procedures and will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact. This could include contacting friends and wider family, or the attendance officer and a member of the pastoral team visiting the family home.

- Ten Day Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. The local authority will then visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. This is why it is important to make sure we always have an up-to-date contact number.

### 3.5 Medical Appointments

Arundel Court Primary School recognises that from time to time a child may need emergency dental or medical appointment, but it is expected that routine appointments be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

If appointments are made unavoidably during the school day parents are expected to provide evidence (an appointment card/letter/text) and are expected to bring their child in to school before and after the appointment where appropriate to minimise the impact on attendance using the signing in and out system in the office.

### 3.6 Persistence Absence

If a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason (authorised and unauthorised absences combined) they are defined as a persistent absentee. Absence at this level has been proven to disadvantage a child by creating gaps in his or her learning and attainment. We have a duty to monitor

attendance thoroughly at this point, and data is shared with the School Attendance Team, University of Chichester Multi Academy Trust and the DFE.

The following steps will be taken:

Step 1:

Arundel Court Primary School monitors Persistent Absenteeism by sending parents a letter with the child's attendance report rated as follows:

PERSISTANT ABSENTEE	LOW	GOOD	HIGH
Below 90.0%	90 – 95%	95 - 97%	Above 97%

If a child's overall attendance has fallen below 95% a letter will be sent to the parent or carer to inform them that we will be monitoring their child's attendance closely with the expectation that it will improve.

Step 2:

If following the initial letter the child's attendance has continued to fall or has not significantly improved, a second letter will be sent to parents/carers requesting all future absences to be supported by medical evidence or otherwise the absence will be unauthorised. It is at this stage a meeting with the attendance officer and other appropriate staff members may be arranged with parents/carers to create a plan to improve attendance and provide further support if necessary.

Step 3:

If after both warning letters the child's attendance continues to fall and/or there are 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days) in the current term and evidence is not being provided, then the attendance officer is required to request a fixed penalty warning from the local authority to be issued to the parents/carers for irregular attendance (*see Section 5.1*).

### 3.7 Rewards

Children at Arundel Court Primary Academy are dependent on their parents and carers, who are ultimately responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality however it is vital that children enjoy coming to school and are not to blame. Therefore, we actively encourage and celebrate children who attend school regularly and punctually through various incentives. There are rewards for individual children to work towards on a half termly basis, class rewards for the highest weekly attendance. 100% attendance for the whole school year will be rewarded with a certificate and pupils will have their name entered into a raffle to win a Bike. We may reward good attendance or significant improvement in attendance in other ways and may hold specific attendance drives to promote good attendance at school. These will always be clearly communicated to children, parents and staff.

## 4. Leave of Absence (Holiday)

Here at Arundel Court Primary Academy we expect parents to help the school to achieve their child's potential by not taking children out of school during term time. As a school we do not have to agree to a leave of absence during term time, in fact the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 makes it clear that **Headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Holidays cannot be taken in term time unless there are extenuating circumstances.**

The school term dates are set well in advance by the local authority with only 190 school days out of 365 days there is 175 non-school days for holidays, to visit relatives, return to home countries and take trips. Therefore, the need to take a leave of absence during term time should only be in exceptional circumstances.

If after careful consideration parents still feel a leave of absence is unavoidable the request should be made on a Leave of Absence Form (LOAF) available from the school office at least 10 days in advance and before making any travel arrangements. We ask that as much evidence as possible is provided in advance to support that the request is for exceptional circumstances.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school or has not been agreed, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set (5 days or more) and the child is statutory school age the matter may be referred to the School Attendance Team at the Local Authority for consideration of a Fixed Penalty Notice (*see Section 5*)

**Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.**

## **5. Legal Action**

Parents and children are supported at school through a wide continuum of intervention and strategies to overcome barriers to regular attendance and establish reasons for absence. In law parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school. Therefore, sanctions of any nature are for use only when all other methods to resolve the problem have been exhausted.

The following circumstances may result in further legal action being taken:

### **1. Irregular Attendance**

If the efforts of the school for persistent absence and irregular attendance have been exhausted and there has been no significant improvement in a child's overall attendance despite warning letters from the school, then the School Attendance Team is required to be informed. This could result in a Penalty Notice Warning (PNW) being issued for irregular attendance, when in any one term a child has had at least 10 sessions (5 school days) recorded as an unauthorised absence (coded 'O') or late after registration has closed (coded 'U').

If a PNW is issued by the School Attendance Team (SAT) then the child will still have 30 school days to make a significant improvement. During this time it is expected that the child attends school every day on time, however if the child is absent during this review period then it will remain unauthorised until medical evidence is received by the school. At the end of the 30 days the SAT will decide whether to proceed with issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

A SAP could be held instead of a PNW being issued where there have been 15 or more unauthorised sessions cumulative in an academic year and it has not been appropriate to request a PNW after 10 unauthorised sessions through the normal process. Circumstance where just a PNW may not be appropriate could include:

- where pupils have a history of irregular attendance
- where there has been previous legal action against the parents
- where there is multi agency involvement and/or interventions such as SAF's have failed to improve the child's attendance

If the SAT and the school agree a SAP is the appropriate way forward a meeting will be arranged to agree any action points and a 30 school day review period will be set. At the end of the 30 school days review the child's attendance will be reviewed by the school and the SAT with recommendations to the SAT Legal Panel to either take no further action or proceed with a prosecution.

### **2. Unauthorised Leave of Absence**

When a child has an unauthorised absence due to either the schools non approval of a parent or carer's request for leave of absence during term time or a leave of absence that has been taken without permission or notification (coded 'G'), and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any full term then a penalty notice will be requested.

For each case the school or the School Attendance Team will decide whether a penalty notice is issued to one or more parent or carer for each child. This for example could mean the issue of two penalty notices per child who has taken an unauthorised leave of absence or who has irregular attendance at school.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Portsmouth City Council will consider prosecution for non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are paid to Portsmouth City Council, not the school itself, and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by Portsmouth City Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not paid.

Further guidance regarding legal measures for school attendance is available upon request.

## **6. Other**

### 6.1 Leavers (Removal from Roll)

If a child is leaving the school (other than when transferring to a Junior or Secondary School) parents are asked to give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans in writing, including any dates of a move, new addresses and telephone numbers, child's new school and start date if known.

If children leave and we do not have the above information or without notifying the school, then the child will be considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, Police and other agencies.

When a child leaves Arundel Court Primary Academy they will not be removed from school roll until they have been accepted onto the roll of another school or until we have authorisation from the School Attendance Team to remove the child from the school roll. The child's name will then be placed on the School to School (S2S) site for missing children.

### 6.2 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the 'T' code.

### 6.3 Religious Observance

School must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body as whole to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance, for example one day can be authorised for EID.

### 6.3 Sporting Activities & Public Performances

Parents of a child performer or sport participation can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance or competition. They must contact the Headteacher or Attendance Officer to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence, and supply any qualifying evidence they may have to support the absence from school.



## Appendix 1: SIMS Codes

/	Present (am)
\	Present (present pm)
-	All should attend no mark recorded
#	School closed for all pupils
B	Educated off site(supervised)
C	Other authorised circumstances including authorised leave of absence
D	Dual registration ( attending other establishment)
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday not agreed or days in excess
I	Illness( not medical or dental)
J	Interview
L	Late before register closed
M	Medical/dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence ( not covered by any other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late after register closed
V	Educational visit
W	Work experience
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Y	Enforced closure

Signed: Revd. C Hetherington  
Chair of Governing Body

Ms K Stocks  
Headteacher

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