



THE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

Attendance Policy

This Policy was agreed by the Full Governing Board of
The Valley Partnership

Date: 20th October 2020

Signed: *Emily Hooper*

Review Date: September 2021

Rationale

The Valley Partnership aims to maximize attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. We will operate a fair and consistent approach to the management of attendance and absence at school. It is the aim of each school to ensure punctuality and regular attendance which will help to raise achievement and enable students to realise their full potential.

Purpose

1. To provide a consistent message to pupils and parents/carers
2. To ensure continuity and progression in the learning process.
3. To ensure that a high standard of punctuality and attendance is achieved and maintained.
4. To provide a safe and secure environment for pupils.

Statutory Framework

Legal Responsibilities of Parents in Relation to School Attendance (Section 7 Education Act 1996):

The parent of every child of compulsory school age must ensure that he/she receives efficient, full-time education suitable to:

a his/her age ability and aptitude; and

b any special educational needs he/she may have;

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For pupils registered at a school, this means that pupils must attend regularly and punctually; failure to do so may result in their parents committing a criminal offence.

Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and un-authorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorize an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

Roles and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at The Valley Partnership is the responsibility of everyone in the school community, including pupils, parents and staff.

- Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their teacher and, if the need should arise, from the head.

- Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible, either in writing or by telephone call. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as **un-authorised** until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parents. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance. If possible, parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments during school hours.

Parents whose first language is not English, or who have literacy difficulties, will be offered appropriate support from the school in matters of communication.

- School

Staff encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality, and, liaising closely with parents, will promptly investigate all absenteeism. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently. School staff will receive relevant, regular training with regard to attendance.

Registration

Registers will be called promptly at 9.00am and at 1.00pm.

The registration periods end at 9.10am and 1.10pm. If a pupil arrives after the end of the registration period but before the close of registration, he/she will be marked as 'late before close of registration'. Registration closes at 9.30am and 1.30pm. If pupils arrive after the registers have closed, he/she will be marked as 'late after close of registration'.

Late arrival after the register is closed is an 'Unauthorised Absence' (coded 'U') which could provide grounds for prosecution. Where a pupil arrives after close of registration with a legitimate reason, the absence should be authorised using the appropriate code (for example due to an appointment with a doctor, though prior notice should have already been given by the parent).

All class teachers will take registers in each of their classes and send the register down to the administration office for transfer of information on to SIMs by 9:10am.

In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period. Late arrival during these periods will be coded as an 'Authorised Late' ('L').

Pupils who arrive or leave whilst the school is in session will register at the school office prior to entering/leaving the premises and need to be signed in/out by parents.

Authorised/unauthorised absence

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. The Valley Partnership will decide on how an absence is recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence' (DfES 1994).

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing board of the school'.) This is the Headteacher of the Valley Partnership.
- The pupil was ill or 'prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause' (solely affecting that child). (Schools will seek guidance from the school nurse and public health advice relating to contagious illnesses.)
- 'The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.'
- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for the child that that is entitled to for any of the following to a child:
 1. Child's transport to and from school
 2. Boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school.
 3. Enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.
- The pupil is a child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the guidance are met.
- There is a family bereavement.
- The pupil is attending a viewing for a place at another school.
- The pupil is attending an approved offsite activity or is receiving special offsite tuition
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending a graduation)

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances)
- The pupil is shopping during school hours
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- The pupil is away on holiday.

Holidays – term time holidays can be avoided, and are no longer permitted, illnesses cannot. There is no automatic entitlement for absence for holidays during term time (Amendment to the Education [Pupil Registration] [England] Regulation 2006), except for families serving in the Armed Forces.

For all absences, there should normally be formal notification from parents. Only the Headteacher (or delegated members of staff) can authorize any absence and may refuse to do so, unless it is felt that the absence is justified by one of the reasons stated above.

In cases of un-authorised Term-time holidays, the Headteacher will follow the Devon County Council protocol and apply directly to the Education Welfare Service to generate a Penalty Notice warning letter (without, necessarily, contacting the school's EWO). This will be done by completing Penalty Notice Certificate of Absence Form and returning it to:

Penalty Notice Officer, Babcock LDP, 2nd Floor, Milford House, Pynes Hill, Business Park, Exeter EX2 5TH

The Valley Partnership will liaise closely with parents advising them as early as possible if there are cases of suspected un-authorised absence, and persistent lateness, or their child's attendance falls below 96%.

Procedures for following up absence

- The Valley Partnership operates a 'First Day Response'. Parents are expected to contact the school on the first day of the child's absence. If by 9.30am, there has been no contact from the parents to the school; one of the administrative staff will contact the parents, enquiring the reason for absence, the expected day of return, and reminding parents of their duty to report to the school.
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will contact the parents.
- If a pupil is persistently absent, or late, and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful (parents of pupils with attendance below 90% are be sent a letter advising of poor attendance), the situation will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer during his/her consultation visit. If attendance does not improve, or falls below 85%, parents will be requested to meet with the Educational Welfare Officer.
- The Education Welfare Officer will be notified in the following circumstances:
 - Unauthorised absence by a student of more than 10 half-day sessions (in aggregate) in any one term
 - attendance of less than 90% by any pupil
 - where action taken at school level has failed to improve attendance/punctuality for a particular student
- When a pupil's attendance falls below 90% and they also have 10 or more un-authorised absences, unless there are extenuating circumstances, they will be considered for "Fast-track to Prosecution".
- Parents are to inform the school, in writing, if a child is to be removed from a roll. Details of the new school should be provided, if applicable.
- If a child leaves a school to be home educated, then Form EWS 10 must be completed and returned to:
Georgina Bennet, Babcock LDP, 2nd Floor, Milford House, Pynes Hill, Exeter, Devon EX2 5GF and to:
Irene Love, Babcock LDP, 2nd Floor, Milford House, Pynes Hill, Exeter, Devon EX2 5GF
- When a pupil moves from school and no notification has been received from another school, the 'old' school should complete a 'Children Missing from Education' form (S2s) and return it to:

EMS Data Team, ScoMIS Office, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton Industrial Estate, Exeter, EX2 7NL

(Where the 'new' school is known, as a safeguard, the 'old' school should make contact with the receiving school to alert them to the move).

Strategies for promoting attendance

- The Valley Partnership will work to provide an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed, that pupils feel their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be set targets for improvement. The Headteacher will monitor and review these targets
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period will, when appropriate, have work sent home to them, and will be given suitable support on their return to school
- Pupils who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period will, when appropriate, have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them
- The Headteacher will include attendance matters in reports to the schools Governing Board
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies – when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties
- The Headteacher will have regular meetings with the school's Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Schools will adopt a multi-agency approach in supporting children and their families to improve their attendance
- School will produce attendance records in all annual reports to inform parents of attendance rates.
- School will award attendance certificates to promote good attendance.
- Parents' meetings, and other occasions will be used to stress to all parents the importance and benefits of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Reminders will be given in newsletters of the importance of attendance.
- The school will display attendance reminder information as needed to promote good attendance.
- School will regularly update staff on attendance policy and procedures.
- School administration teams will also support identification procedures to help ensure good attendance by report generation for the Headteacher and Governors.

Attendance targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. We will analyse and benchmark our attendance levels and compare with local (Devon) and National levels.

Covid- 19

The federation will follow Department for Education guidance with regards to attendance codes and requirements during the coronavirus pandemic