

17th November 2017

Important letter to parents/carers about attendance

Dear Parents/Carers,

School Attendance

Following a review of our Attendance and Punctuality Policy, we are writing this letter to you about attendance and punctuality to provide you with a clear outline about absence procedures and the School and Local Authority responses to poor pupil attendance. The Governors have made it clear that they will support the Headteacher and Education Welfare Service in promoting high levels of attendance and taking action where there are unsatisfactory reasons for absence.

Unbroken attendance at school is important for learning. However, there will be times when absence is unavoidable and acceptable. This letter explains the approach we are following to manage attendance.

Types of Absence

Each absence that a child has is classed as authorised or unauthorised. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given.

Unacceptable Reasons

The following reasons are not acceptable:

- shopping visits
- care for family members
- days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows
- parents' work commitments or business trips
- holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- Parental illness

Unauthorised absences will be referred to or picked up by the Rochdale Education Welfare Service.

Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school through illness you should inform us by telephone (01706 641013) on the first day of absence before 9.00am or call in in person at the School Office. It is useful to know the expected day of return. If you do not supply us with this information we have a duty to contact you so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure. Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments this will normally be counted as authorised. Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness we will need to discuss this with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support – for example by involving the School Health Service.

*"A school
in the heart
of the community"*

Headteacher: Mrs L Cotton



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Quality
Standard

Medical/Dental Appointments

It is generally better if these can be arranged outside school hours, but we know this is not always possible. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day it is important that parents come first to the School Office before collecting children. Please bring your child to the office on returning from the appointment. Please indicate in advance whether s/he will be returning for the midday meal. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g. bereavements, family problems, etc where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs.

Lateness

Please ensure that your child arrives at school on time. The doors are opened at 8.30 a.m. Registration is done by 8.40 am each day. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for the children's social development. Lateness causes problems over lunch money/numbers, register marking and missed instructions and the start of the day activity. Where a genuine reason for lateness exists this will be an authorised absence but where explanations are inadequate or the lateness is after 8.45 a.m. then an absence (late) will be recorded.

Please ensure that your child is collected from school at 3 p.m. or 4/4.15 p.m. if they are attending an after school club. We are fully aware that there are valid reasons or emergencies where parents/carers have been delayed and, when the school is informed in advance of this, we will always take an understanding view. However, some parents/carers regularly pick up their child late with no prior contact being made. Therefore, we are taking the following action. Children who are not picked up by 3.10 p.m. will be taken to the school office where they will be supervised by school staff. If it is the first occasion of late collection and the parent/carer has notified the school that they are held up then no charge will be made for the supervision of the child. There will be a charge of £5 per hour or part thereof per child applied to contribute to the cost of the school for supervision of children if one of the following applies: A repeat occurrence of late collection by the parent/carer by 3.10 p.m. This charge would be expected to be paid on arrival at school.

Leave of Absence

Holidays

Head Teachers can no longer authorise holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances means: rare, significant, unavoidable, short, and the leave could not reasonably be scheduled for another time.

Unauthorised leave of 10 sessions (5 days) or more will qualify for a fine. No warning will be issued from the local authority as schools will have informed parents in advance.

Penalty Notice fines are issued to both parents and are £60 per parent per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the fine will be doubled to £120. Failure to pay the fine after a further 7 days will result in a summons to Magistrates Court and potentially a larger fine and a criminal record.

Approved Public Performance

Where children are invited to perform in a licensed show or concert (e.g. orchestra, pantomime) you are asked to consult with the Headteacher about how much time away from school is required. Where possible such requests will be granted provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer. The school will also be sympathetic towards leave to participate in a recognised city, county or national sporting event.

Where parents wish to take their child(ren) out of school during term time for purposes other than holidays, they should complete the leave of absence form. This is available from the School Office or can be downloaded from our website on www.norden.rochdale.sch.uk

What we are aiming for

Average attendance would be around 96% for the year, with outstanding attendance above 96%.

What is considered as poor attendance:

Anything below 96% is weak, under 94% is poor and if attendance dips below 90% we will have serious concerns. Below 90% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE. In this school we are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 96%. We monitor attendance and provide termly reports on each pupil's attendance. At the end of each half term we identify all those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 94% and issue a courtesy letter or make telephone call informing parents. We then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing. Our duty of care in responding to unauthorised and persistent absence.

Possible consequences:

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance. Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (judged by the Education Welfare Service, not the parent) for a pupil's frequent absence or where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) then parents render themselves liable to a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. This could mean a fine of £360 for two parents of three children. This would be doubled to £720 if the fine is unpaid within 21 days and could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen but we need to be very clear about the issue.

We hope that these notes will help you to have a clear understanding about the School's expectations in this matter. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have about our approach to maintaining and improving our attendance record.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs L. Cotton
Headteacher