



# Attendance Policy

Independent School Standards:  
paragraphs 15 and 34.

This attendance policy pays regard to national guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), including 'Working together to improve school attendance' (May 2022).

Last Review:	September 2022
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## Policy Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

## Legislation And Guidance

This attendance policy pays regard to national guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), including 'Working together to improve school attendance' (May 2022).

## Benefits Of School Attendance

Good attendance at school is not just valuable, it's essential. Going to school is directly linked to improved exam performance which should in turn lead to further learning opportunities and better job prospects. As well as this, going to school helps to develop:

- friendships
- social skills
- team values
- life skills
- cultural awareness
- career pathways

## Promoting Good/Regular Attendance

Whilst we recognise that many of our students have had historical (and some current) issues relating to attendance we aim to promote the importance of good attendance to school to students and Parents/Carers. Regular absence from school can seriously affect students' learning.

Any student's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Our current expectation is that students have a minimum of 90% attendance

As part of our commitment to raise awareness about the importance of good attendance to school we:

- advise families of the schools' expectations during the induction meetings for new students and on progress days
- report to families on their child's attendance in their achievement reports
- contact families every day to
  - clarify the reason for a child's absence from school; this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day (first day calling), the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register. If we are unable to obtain the reason for a student being absent, we will attempt to contact the student's emergency contacts. (We ask for at least two emergency contacts for every student. At this stage, if we have been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts, a home visit will be carried out. As a last resort, if the school has not been able to ascertain where a student is after following

the steps above, the student will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police).

- Will contact home should a student's attendance be a cause for concern, with the aim of establishing the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance seek support for students/families where out of school barriers are identified
- work together with multi-agency teams in order to improve attendance levels, including for those students who have social workers
- celebrate good attendance at assemblies
- reward good or improving attendance through termly attendance certificates and other events

## Roles And Responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The school attendance assistant is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information via Arbor and lessons attendance tracker spreadsheet (for Yr10/11).

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents and students to the Attendance Officer/Pastoral lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day **9.10am-2.30pm** (except Tuesday - finish time 1.50pm) or except if the child has a Behaviour Plan with a different arrangement.
- Call the school to report their child's absence by **8.45am** on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Students are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session on time

PhoenixPlace will praise and reward consistently good and improved attendance and punctuality. We regularly celebrate attendance in assemblies

The attendance and Pastoral Lead, together with the leadership team, are continually seeking new and innovative ways of improving, maintaining and celebrating good attendance. The team regularly updates staff on attendance issues and ensures that students are fully informed on all procedures and consequences of non-attendance at school.

### Understanding Types Of Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the family), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

This is why information about the cause of absence is required. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- families keeping their child off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never properly been explained
- students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- activities such as shopping, looking after other students or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been formally agreed.

Students can sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, family and child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with the family to understand the cause of the problem.

When a student's attendance drops below 90%, this will usually be addressed through informal conversations with a senior leader and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Where there is a lack of engagement and/or the attendance continues to drop then a more formal conversation will be had with families to highlight the need for immediate action and to be clear about the next steps and potential need for communication with our partner Education Welfare service (Visions for Schools and Education- VSE)

If attendance levels are not improving, an initial letter will be sent to the family (decisions on sending these are made on a case-by-case basis), highlighting the cause for concern. We recognise that absence that is below 90% is doing considerable damage to any student's education and we need the fullest support and cooperation from families to deal with this.

If the student's attendance still does not improve, a further warning letter will be sent and the matter will be raised with the student's placing authority and VSE. During this time the school will organise to conduct home visits (HVs).

### Punctuality

Good time-keeping is a vital skill for life. Being on time helps a pupil to be calm, relaxed and happy in school. Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and not spend time with their teacher getting vital information and news for the day.

Late-arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The register is a statutory document and is taken twice a day. Each day counts as two sessions of attendance. Timings are made clear to families and local authority transport teams.

### **The school day starts at 9.10 and ends at 2.30.**

Registers are marked at 09:30. If a child arrives after the registration period they will be formally marked in as late. At 10.15 the registers will be closed.

In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark to note that they are on site, but this will not count as a 'present' mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the relevant leader to resolve the problem. However, parents & carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time. We encourage good punctuality by being positive role models to our pupils and through celebrating and rewarding good punctuality, as we do attendance.

As special schools cater for a large proportion of pupils who arrive at school from a wide range of locations on transport provided by placing authorities' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) teams, we acknowledge that sometimes transport providers arrive late to school.

This can be for reasons beyond pupils' and families' control, such as heavy traffic or the late arrival of escorts.

Pupils will not be penalised for lateness that is beyond their control.

Pupils who travel independently must ensure they make suitable arrangements to get to school on time.

### **Illness And Medical Appointments**

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. We should be notified of these appointments in advance. If it is necessary for a pupil to be out of school for this reason, the pupil should, wherever possible, return to school directly after the appointment and not take the entire day off.

Long-term medical conditions requiring regular and repeated visits to medical professionals during term time need to be evidenced, reviewed and monitored by a senior leader.

If your child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedure:

1. Contact PhoenixPlace as soon as possible on the morning of the first day of absence by 8.45am (0207 703 7189)
2. Send in a written note explaining an absence of more than one day when the pupil returns to school

For unavoidable medical appointments during the school day – phone us or send us a note in advance of the appointment.

If your child is absent we will:

- contact parents & carers every day to clarify the reason for a child's absence from school; this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day and the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register.
- attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts if we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent (we ask for at least two emergency contacts for every pupil)

- carry out a home visit if we have been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts.
- As a final resort, if we have not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police.

We will always invite the family in to discuss the situation with a senior leader if a pupil becomes persistently absent. We may then consider referring the matter to VSE if attendance fails to improve.

- If an absence is longer than 2 days and medical evidence is not provided or there appears to be patterns of non-attendance, e.g. every Monday or regular 2 day absences, the school will monitor the situation and ascertain support needed on a case by case basis.
- Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours, whenever possible. If this is impossible, the absence will only be authorised when the appointment card is shown. The pupils should return to school immediately after a medical appointment, unless advised otherwise by medical professionals.
- Parentally-condoned absence can be a problem as it means disruption to a pupil's education, impacting progress and attainment. All absences, authorised or not, count against whole school figures.

### Term-Time Holidays

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school to go on holiday. It is strongly discouraged by the government, placing authorities and PhoenixPlace.

It is the family's obligation to apply to the school (in writing or at a meeting arranged with The Headteacher and Assistant Lead) for a leave of absence. It must be made by the parent or carer with whom the child normally resides. All applications for leave must be made in advance and are at the final discretion of the Headteacher.

In deciding, leaders will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time as well as the attendance and punctuality record of the child.

We strongly recommend that families gain consent for any holiday in term time *before* booking the holiday. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school or in excess of that agreed will be classed as unauthorised.

### Arrangements For Absence In Other Circumstances

Sudden serious circumstances do rarely occur, when it is impossible for a family to bring their child to school.

It is essential that we are told about these circumstances immediately so that the appropriate code can be noted in the register.

### Monitoring Absence

All staff are committed to working with families to ensure pupils have the highest possible levels of attendance.

All pupils who have 100% attendance and punctuality over a term will receive a special certificate in our final reward assembly of the term.

PhoenixPlace keeps pupils' placing authorities informed of all their pupils' attendance. We are obliged to inform placing authorities when a pupil is absent for 10 school days or more but actually keep them informed of all our pupils' attendance records if they present any cause for concern.

The relevant senior leader, DSL and Attendance Assistant, meets with families of pupils whose absence or punctuality are a cause for concern.

The Headteacher, Attendance Assistant and relevant leaders analyse attendance data on a weekly basis to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance and to develop strategies to support individual/cohorts of pupils. As schools, we have a duty to inform families of their child's attendance and how this can impact on their learning.

The Headteacher along with the SLT is responsible for supporting staff in ensuring full attendance and good punctuality and evaluating the effectiveness of systems and the policy.

All staff in particular the Pastoral Team and Attendance Assistant have a responsibility to meet with students who have issues with attendance, non-attendees and where necessary make home visits etc.

Attendance data, concerns and interventions are also discussed at our termly SAP Meetings (*governance*).

## The Role Of The Education Welfare Service

- PhoenixPlace has commissioned Vision for Education and Schools (VSE -Attendance Advisory Service) to work with the school to help improve attendance via scheduled fortnightly meetings, parent/carer meetings and Home Visits. Referrals are made to the Attendance Assistant of any student whose attendance is cause for concern. .
- Where referrals are made to VSE, they may take action where there are no improvements in attendance and punctuality and this could result in a penalty notice and court prosecution.
- Penalty notices may be issued to the parent/carer of students who have 10 or more unauthorised absences from school within a 6 week period. The amount of the penalty is £60 per parent per child. If this is not paid within 21 days, the amount rises to £120. If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996.

Parents & carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any attendance and/or punctuality problems, together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out this way, the schools may refer to VSE for support (VSE acts as our Education Welfare Service. With the schools, VSE may also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the pupil's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can facilitate sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court.

Full details of the options to enforce attendance at school are available from your local authority.

## Training

The head teacher is responsible for ensuring that all school staff, both teaching and non teaching receive regular training on all aspects of the Attendance Policy.

## Policy Review Cycle

This policy and all policies at PhoenixPlace are reviewed and updated by the leadership team as per our policy review cycle.