



Attendance Policy

Principles

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by learners will be recognised appropriately.

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. School opens at 8:55am till 3:15pm.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent(adult with parental responsibility).

The attendance and behaviour policy must include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the learner is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a learner of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**.

Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- **parents keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **truancy before or during the school day**
- **absences which have never been properly explained**
- **children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage, asking for an appointment with the head teacher or Educational Welfare Worker (EWW) and work together in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Workers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

What parents should do if their child is absent:

Absence known in advance (e.g. Medical Appointment)

- Send in a note to the office/teacher informing the school of the nature of the absence (reasons why) and when it will be taken.
- A phone call to the school office informing the school of the nature of the absence (reasons why) and when it will be taken.

Absence not known in advance

- Ring the school (*before 9:30am where possible*) on the first day of absence in order to inform the school and provide a reason and also an estimation as to how long the absence may be for.
- If unable to ring – text or send a note into school as soon as possible (*the day of return*) detailing the nature of the absence.

Lateness

At Knutton St Mary's we actively encourage all children to arrive at school on time and try to work in partnership with parents to ensure this. If a parent/carer is aware that they are going to be late and have a valid reason then we ask that they follow the procedure below:

- Ring the school (as soon as possible) so that class teachers can be informed and prepare for the late arrival of the child.
- Parents and children who arrive late should come to the school office to register and sign in the 'Late Registration' Book providing a reason for lateness.
- Children arriving at school up to 30 minutes after the register was taken will be recorded as **L** for late.
- Children arriving later than this period will be recorded as **U** which legally means they were absent.
- At the end of each school week a letter will be sent home to parents of those children that have arrived late to school that week.

Requests for 'Leave of Absence' from school

Knutton St Mary's follows Staffordshire's Local Authority Protocol in relation to requests for 'Leave of Absence' from school during term time. (Copy of the form can be obtained at the school office)

- Requests for leave of absence from school must be made.
- Parent/carer should complete a request form (which can be collected from the school office) and submit at least 2 weeks prior to the attended period of absence.
- Pupils will be marked in the register as **G** for the period of leave as absences cannot be authorised by the school.

Parents will be made aware via the school website, letters and the notice board that leave of absence cannot be authorised and will lead to the pupil being marked with unauthorised absences and that this may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other action.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWW will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444. **(For information see Appendix A)** It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Holidays in Term Time

In light of the new regulations and amendments to school attendance set by the Department for Education, the school will no longer authorise any holiday absence with effect from 1st September 2013. The DfE website states:

'The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than 10 days in exceptional circumstances. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'.

This change in regulations means that Headteachers/Governing Bodies no longer have the discretion to authorise absence from school for family holidays and can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstance

School targets, initiatives and projects

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special projects:

Attendance Analysis

The school office and Leadership team regularly review and analyse attendance data to identify trends for individuals, groups and classes in order to target school improvement in this area. Wherever possible, action will be taken by the school to improve a child's attendance and investigate and address any underlying causes or problems before considering whether to make a referral to the Local authority.

Once every half term the Administration Assistant liaises with the Educational Welfare Worker to discuss any attendance concerns and also report any child who's attendance falls below 90%.

Attendance Initiatives

At Knutton St Mary's we believe that attendance is an important factor in the success of a child's education. In order to ensure consistency and progression in their learning development it is vital that children not only attend on a daily basis but also arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important however, that learners should not be in school if they are unwell and unable to cope with the daily learning.

The school has adopted the following attendance initiatives in order to help us ensure a continuity of learning experience for our children and to further improve our attendance targets.

Communication

Key information regarding lateness, illness and absence is given to parents through the website and provided through letters. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying the school if their child is absent for any reason. Parents are encouraged to share any worries their child might have in school and to work in partnership with the school to address any issues or concerns.

Attendance Celebration Letters

Each child's individual attendance is tracked on a monthly basis. Termly parents receive a letter indicating their child's attendance and how this compares to the school's own attendance target. Colour coded boxes visually highlight where their child's attendance falls within an agreed scale.

Attendance colour codes:

- 95% - 100% Green (Well done! This is excellent)
- 91% - 94% Yellow (Improvement)
- 90% or less Red 85% - 91% (Persistent Absence Pupil)

Class Attendance Celebration

Once a week the attendance records of each class are celebrated during a celebration assembly.

The Knutton Star

If the children have had 100% attendance for the week they will earn a Knutton Star. Over a half term the children will get a chance to earn a star each week. At the end of the half term

the children will have the opportunity to use these stars to buy a prize or trade for a privilege.

Termly Attendance Celebration

At the end of each term the attendance record of individual children is celebrated. Children with 100% attendance for the term receive a badge and certificate, those with two terms 100% attendance receive a pencil and certificate, those with three terms attendance receive a book voucher and certificate.

Concerns

Absence/Lateness

If a child is identified as regularly late for school or is often absent then:

- The administration officer or family support worker will contact the parent concerned in order to have an informal discussion;
- If the concerns persist then the administration officer or family support worker will inform the Headteacher who will then make arrangements to meet with the parents/carers to discuss any issues, difficulties or concerns;
- If the attendance problems persist then the school will inform the Educational Welfare Worker completing the relevant paperwork showing patterns of absence and lateness;
- The Educational Welfare Worker will then visit the family concerned to explore issues further.

Poor Attendance

Parents will receive an attendance letter each half termly informing them of their child's attendance. If a child's attendance continues to cause concern or falls below 90% then parents receive a special letter indicating the school's concerns and inviting them into school to meet with the Education Welfare Worker. The school aims to have fortnightly attendance clinics. Support mechanisms are then discussed to promote better attendance and work in partnership with the families concerned

Truancy

All staff at Knutton St Mary's are concerned about learner's regular attendance and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They also strive to ensure that every learner's safety, welfare and happiness is at the heart of all decision making. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a learner to truant, if there is a concern that a learner might be truanting then the following action is taken immediately:

- Notify the Headteacher;
- Headteacher then contacts the parents either by phone or by home visit if possible;
- This is then followed up by notifying the Educational welfare Officer of the situation;
- The Headteacher, Parents and learner concerned meet to discuss any reasons for the learner not wanting to attend school in an effort to resolve any issues and put relevant support into place;
- Actions decided are shared with all relevant personnel and put into place.

First Day of Absence Contact

If a child is absent without explanation then the following procedures will be followed:

- If by 9:30am we have not received an explanation for absence – Miss McNairn (Administration Assistant) or Mrs Harper (family support worker) in the school office will contact the parents by phone and by text message;
- This will enable us to ensure that the parent was aware of their child's absence from school enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe;
- This will also determine the reason for absence and when the child might be expected to return to school;
- The Administration Assistant or Family Support worker will then enter the correct code into the school register and relay any messages to the appropriate members of staff.

Targets

The school target is following indicates the targets agreed by the LA and school for the academic year.

- **School attendance target for 2015-2016 = 95%**

Responsible Contacts

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Mrs Wheaver – Headteacher

Miss McNairn – Administration Assistant

Mrs Harper – Family Support Worker

School Bursar

All staff have a shared responsibility in encouraging good attendance. They follow the school's positive behaviour management policies and practice in order to ensure that learners feel safe, cared for and positive about their experience of school.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix A – Code of Conduct for Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices.

Appendix B – Attendance percentage colour codes

Reviewed by the Governing body

Date – December 2015

Signed -

To be reviewed: December 2016

**STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Families First Targeted Services**

**STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY
Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices**

Rationale:

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. In recognition of this, the law makes it an offence for a parent or carer to fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a school at which the child is a registered pupil, without good reason or the agreement of the school.

Penalty Notices are one of the sanctions available for this offence and offer a means of swift intervention, which can be used to combat attendance problems before they become entrenched.

Parents and children will be supported by their school/alternative provision, the Local Support Teams for Targeted Services and, as appropriate, other Partner Agencies, to overcome barriers to regular attendance, through a range of intervention strategies.

Therefore, Penalty Notices and other sanctions will only be used where parental co-operation with this process is either absent or deemed to be insufficient to resolve the problem. They will be used as a means to support and challenge parents to meet their legal responsibilities and where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improved school attendance.

Legal Framework:

Section 444A of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 23 of the Anti-Behaviour Act 2003) empowers designated Local Authority (LA) officers, head teachers (as well as deputy and assistant head teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007

The Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence if a parent fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school at which they are registered, if that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under s444 Education Act 1996 or s36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

As a result, the Local Authority has responsibility for developing a local code of conduct that will govern how all of the partners named in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, will issue Penalty Notices.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year¹.
- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in the first five days of exclusion.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of following criteria is met:

- There are at least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during the current and previous term. These absences do not need to be consecutive.²
- For unauthorised leave of absence, there must be a minimum of 2 sessions of unauthorised leave of absence (due to unauthorised leave in term or time been absent for longer than was agreed) within the total of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence required prior to issuing the penalty notice. These unauthorised absences do not need to be consecutive and should be calculated from the previous rolling calendar year.²

¹ Continued poor attendance in the same academic year can be addressed by other statutory actions available to the Local Authority under the Education Act 1996.

² Once an unauthorised absence has been used as evidence in Court/Penalty Notice it cannot then be used again in another prosecution.

- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed, in the current and previous term. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of late arrival. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

Leave not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

The Local Authority will only issue Penalty Notices requested by a school in response to an unapproved leave of absence (including holiday related) resulting in unauthorised absence where the school has provided the necessary paperwork. This paperwork should comprise:

- A copy of the newsletter or letter sent to all parents during the current academic year which clearly states that parents may receive a Penalty Notice for an unauthorised holiday in term time. (The LA does not need a hard copy of this newsletter/letter each time a school applies for an unauthorised holiday Penalty Notice, just on the first occasion each academic year.)
- A copy of the leave of absence (Holiday) Request Form submitted by parent, and a copy of the response sent to the parent by school. In the event the leave of absence (holiday) request is being denied the school's response should state the reason why the request is unauthorised and should again advise parent that they may receive a Penalty Notice if they take their child out of school and that the school has referred the matter to the Local Support Team (representing the Local Authority).
- In cases where the unauthorised leave of absence occurs without prior request from the parents, or is due to unauthorised absence beyond what was agreed, the school should include all correspondence sent to the parents to explore the unauthorised absence.
- Relevant pupil Attendance or Registration Certificate signed by the Head teacher / Principal – or their nominated deputy – confirming that nonattendance during the period was unauthorised.
- Completed school unauthorised absence checklist and signed penalty notice request form. (Appendix A).

Excluded Pupils

In the case of an excluded child, a copy of the letter required to be sent to parent(s) pursuant to s.104 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 warning them to ensure that the child is not permitted to be present in a public place in the first five days of exclusion.

Robust and reliable evidence that the child was in a public place, which includes the date and time and a statement will be required from the witness will be necessary.

Who May Issue a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice may only be issued by:

- Authorised LA staff. In Staffordshire this will be members of the Local Support Teams.
- Head teacher / Principal and school staff authorised by them may request Local Support Teams to issue a Penalty Notice.
- A Police Officer during a truancy sweep under the provision of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may request a Local Support Team (LST) to write a notice.

Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices:

The designated officers within Targeted Services will be the only individuals permitted to issue Penalty Notices in the Staffordshire area. This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, avoid duplication of issue and to allow schools to maintain good relationships with parents and ensure that they reinforce other enforcement sanctions.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an instant action, e.g. during a Truancy Sweep. This will enable officers to ensure that all evidential requirements are in place, duplication of issue is avoided and limit the health and safety risks associated with delivering such notices by hand.

Where Schools, Police or neighbouring local authorities ask Staffordshire County Council to issue a Penalty Notice, their request will be investigated and actioned by the LST provided that:

- The circumstances of the case meet the criteria specified in this Code of Conduct.
- The pupil is registered at a Staffordshire School;
- All necessary evidence is provided to the LST to establish an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 has been committed.
- Issuing a Penalty Notice would not conflict with another intervention strategy already in place or another enforcement sanction already being processed; and
- There is an assessment and plan which demonstrates that the use of a Penalty Notice is now the appropriate action to improve the child's school attendance. (Not required in the case of unauthorised leave of absence).

Targeted Services will respond to all requests within 10 school days of receipt or if part of on-going casework, and where satisfied that all of the relevant criteria are met, will:

- Issue an initial warning to the parent (s) of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued;
- Set a period of 20 school days within which the pupil must have no

unauthorised absence and give the parent (s) an opportunity to respond; this information will be included in the formal written warning letter. (Appendix B).

- After due consideration of the facts of the case, only issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 20 day period, if the required level of improved school attendance has not been achieved.

Where the Penalty Notice is requested from a school in response to a leave of absence (holiday) related unauthorised absence, or is in relation to an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the formal warning letter and 20 day improvement period will not apply.

All Penalty Notices will be entered onto a database maintained by Targeted Services to assure that no duplicate Penalty Notices are issued.

Excluded Pupils

The parent of the excluded pupil must ensure that the pupil is not present in a public place at any time during school hours on a day that he / she is excluded, up to and including the first 5 days or, where that exclusion is for a fixed period of 5 days or less, any of the days to which the exclusion relates.

If the excluded pupil is present in a public place at any time during school hours on a school day specified above the parent commits an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

Truancy Sweep

A Penalty Notice will only be issued after due consideration when all facts are known and the threshold for serving the notice has been met.

Information is given to anyone stopped on a truancy sweep, pupil and/or parent about the possible support and sanctions used to address non-attendance.

Procedure for withdrawing Penalty Notices:

Once issued a Penalty Notice may be withdrawn if the Targeted Services is satisfied that:

- The Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person;
- The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to this Code of Conduct.
- The Penalty Notice was delivered to the wrong address;
- The evidence demonstrates that the Penalty Notice should not have been issued, e.g. medical evidence;

- The exceptional circumstances of the case warrant its withdrawal.

Payment of Penalty Notices:

- Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice; (Appendix C).
- Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent's or carer's liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice;
- Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120; and
- The County Council retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecuting in the event of non-payment).
- Payments will not be accepted in part or by instalments.

Non-payment of Penalty Notices:

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Penalty Notice and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1), of the Education Act 1996.

Policy and Publicity

- Identifying information about Penalty Notices issued to particular parents or specific children should not be made public;
- Issuing of Penalty Notices as a sanction is included in the Authority's Attendance Policy;
- All school Attendance Policies should include information on the issuing of Penalty Notices and this will be brought to the attention of all parents;
- The LA will include information on the use of Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions in promotional or public information material.

Reporting & Review:

Targeted Services will:

- report at regular intervals to the head teacher Forum groups (Primary, Secondary, Middle and Special). and Staffordshire Police on the deployment and outcomes of Penalty Notices;

- make regular reports to Staffordshire County Council on attendance matters which will include Penalty Notice use; and
- review Penalty Notice use at regular intervals and amend the Protocol as appropriate.

Representation

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice. The parent will be advised when they receive the warning that they may make representation to the Strategic Lead of Targeted Services setting out reasons why they should not have been issued.

Which band are you in?

95-100%

WELL DONE THIS IS EXCELLENT

Well done you are in the green group you have been absent for less than two weeks in the whole year or you may have attended school every day.

91-94%

IMPROVEMENT NEEDED!

If you are in the yellow group you could be missing at least two weeks of learning in the school year.

Red Alerts - 90% or less

PERSISTENT ABSENCE PUPIL

You are now a Persistent Absence Pupil and are missing at least two weeks of learning in the school year.