

William Amory Primary School
Attendance Policy

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school every day;
- attend school punctually;
- attend appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- ensure that they contact the school daily of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school;
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child;
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

Triggering response to repeated low level illness.

The school recognise that every person can become ill and that whilst some illnesses may result in absence of several days or weeks, others will produce a more sporadic pattern of absence.

However, the school also recognises that a sporadic pattern of absence, particularly when it relates to low attendance, *could* be a symptom of some further concern which may have safeguarding issues.

The school will overwhelmingly authorise absence on the say so of a parent. Clearly they know their own child and his or her needs in almost all cases. However, at the advice of Staffordshire County Council Education Welfare Workers, there are points at which the school needs to stop authorising certain absences in certain cases.

For this reason, The William Amory will send a letter home to parents whose children fall into this very narrow band. The letter will explain that the school is unable to authorise absence from that point for specific absences without a doctor's note to corroborate this. The specific absences involve low level illness including but not exclusively:

- Coughs, bad chests, colds, flu,
- Upset stomach, ill, "under the weather," poorly and similar,
- Sickness and diarrhoea.

These letters will not be triggered for the overwhelming majority of cases reported. But the letter may be triggered when:

- Attendance falls below 90%, and,
- There are no specific long absences which may skew this figure (ie measles), and,
- There are no absences such as holiday that may skew this figure, and,
- There is no pattern that could provide an explanation – such as regular trips to hospital, and,
- The cause of more than 5% absence is as a consequence of low level illness which is hard to disprove such as those listed above as these may be used as an easy excuse

The above trigger criteria may be bypassed at the judgement of the Headteacher in conjunction with the Education Welfare Worker or similar agencies.

School Responsibilities

The school will:

- keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality;
- contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested;
- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition;
- regularly inform parents of the % attendance and punctuality of all pupils;
- make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly;
- meet regularly with the Education Welfare Worker (EWW) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may

result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order;

- notify the Local Education Authority (LEA) after 15 days sickness;
- notify EWW after 10 days unexplained absence;

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 09.00 and pupils who arrive after 09.10 will be recorded as late to school, the number of minutes they are late by may also be recorded.
- Registers close at 9.30am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- A record of late minutes is kept and the same procedure for absence is followed if lateness raises concerns.
- The Education Welfare Workers can hold 'late gates' and issue notices to parents and carers who arrive late.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 13.00 for Key Stage II and 13.10 for Key Stage I.
- Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

Pupil Leaving/Arriving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day. During the school day:

- pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school;
- whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time;
- parents of any child attending a medical/dental appointment during the school day need to produce an appointment card/letter or similar. Any child registered late having been for a medical or dental appointment will receive a 'Medical' absence mark which is authorised.
- pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return;
- where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- Children educated off site (such as Stoke City Academy) are subject to certain conditions found in relevant policies.

Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published in advance and leave of absence will not be authorised during these assessment periods.

INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

In line with the Government's amendments to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, holidays during term time will NOT be authorised except under exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- in exceptional circumstances permission may be granted for a maximum of five days of holiday;
- where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, **prior** to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed five school days in any one academic year.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare will be notified.

Exceptional Circumstances

The William Amory consider exceptional to mean unique and significant. The prime focus of any decision would be based on whether the absence would very significantly outweigh the loss of teaching time. However, this will need to be balanced with the regulations which make it clear absence should not be authorised in most circumstances. Therefore the term, "very significant" would be a prime consideration.

The decision whether or not to authorise a holiday should be justified and any reason for rejection must be recorded and conveyed to the parent(s) in writing. A letter refusing a request should explain the reason it is not deemed to be a special circumstance. A penalty notice per parent per child may be issued if the holiday is taken without the school's permission.

Penalty Notices

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- 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 the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. “Persistent” means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher (e.g. family holiday)
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. “Persistent” means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. 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.

Other conditions.

- 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.
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence / lateness will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.

Legal Framework:

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 23 of the Anti-Social 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. These comply with the following frameworks:

- 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.

The Regulations also require each local authority to publish a code of conduct for issuing penalty notices, after consultation with governing bodies, head teachers and the police. Guidance from the Secretary of State states that this “should set out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice”.