

# POLICY FOR PUPILS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



**November 2021**

**Ratified by the Full Governing Body on: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021**

**Chair of Governors Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

*This policy has been reviewed and updated with consideration given to the principles and the ethos outlined in the UN Convention for the rights of the child -.Article 28*

**The Governing Body is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment.**

## **POLICY FOR PUPILS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

### **Introduction**

Regular attendance at school is vital if pupils are to maximise the educational opportunities offered to them. Evidence shows that frequent absence undermines well-being, places pupils at risk and can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are considered to be of significant concern and their families are contacted by the Headteacher and offered support to make improvements.

At The Pines School we seek to promote high levels of attendance for all pupils, to follow up all unexplained absence and identify any pattern as it begins to emerge. In order to achieve this we ensure that all pupils, parents/carers, school staff and governors understand the issues and procedures for attendance, and are able to approach any problems in partnership. The school sets annual attendance targets and our Home/School Agreement outlines the responsibilities of children, parents/carers and the school in ensuring good attendance to achieve these.

The governors aim to improve school attendance in order to achieve a level of at least 95% attendance, in line with national expectations for primary schools. This will help us to meet government targets and to maximise the children's learning opportunities.

### **Aims:**

At The Pines School we aim:

- To provide an environment in which pupils feel welcomed, cared for, secure and valued as individuals.
- To offer children an interesting, stimulating and challenging curriculum which is closely matched to their individual needs.
- To promote a high level of well-being for all pupils through PSHE and the wider school curriculum.
- To encourage pupils to value their surroundings, and promote positive attitudes towards other pupils and their own attendance, through the provision and maintenance of an attractive and appropriate school environment.
- To establish firm foundations for trust and positive relationships with parents/carers through home visits made by staff prior to children entering the school.
- To provide helpful information regarding school times and term dates through the production of regular newsletters and communications with parents.
- To support parents/carers in maximising their child's attendance.
- For younger children and pupils with more complex difficulties a home/school diary facilitates more detailed communication.
- To encourage and reward good attendance through the presentation of termly certificates and annual awards for individuals and class groups.

Our ultimate aim is to achieve high levels of attendance for all our pupils.

### **1. The Role of Parents/Carers**

It is the duty of the school to support the regular attendance of all children, but the primary responsibility lies with parents/carers. In addition to their statutory responsibility to ensure regular attendance, parents/carers are obliged to ensure that children meet their escort or arrive at school on time and are suitably equipped for their day. Parents/carers are also responsible for informing the school of reasons for absence. This may be done by letter, telephone, a personal visit to school, or through a text message on Dojo. The reason for absence and, if possible, the expected date of the child's return to school are requested. If there is no contact with parents/carers a member of the school office team will phone on the first day of absence to find out the reason for the pupil not being in school. If school do not hear from the parent/carers after two days of a child's absence two members of school staff will complete a safe and well-being check. For pupils not attending school for a period of time longer than 5 days, a member of the office team will keep in regular contact with the parent/carer.

Following a change of Government directive the Headteacher is no longer able to authorise any holiday taken during term time except in very exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority has launched a "Holidays in Term Time Are Not Allowed" campaign to discourage this other than in exceptional circumstances. If, however, it becomes necessary to apply for leave of absence for their child, parents/carers must complete the appropriate request form and return it to school for authorisation by the Headteacher. Parents/carers who take their children out of school during term time, without the authorisation of the Headteacher, or beyond an agreed date, risk being issued with a penalty notice or taken to court.

Where the child is female and from a Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practising or affected community then the Headteacher will use direct questioning to ascertain whether this practice will be undertaken during this holiday. The Headteacher will then take the information from this meeting and make a decision on whether to refer to the local CYPS or Police.

We recognise that individual pupils and families may have particular problems, and try to support them in order to maintain regular attendance for all of our pupils. Parents/carers have statutory rights to be involved in the education of their children and they are encouraged to work in partnership with the school in the best interests of their child. They are able to call upon the support of the school to help resolve any difficulties that they may have.

### **2. Registration**

At The Pines School a register is kept electronically at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Pupils present in school are identified by oblique strokes, whilst those absent at the time of registration are indicated by an appropriate letter to denote the reason for absence (see Appendix 1). Any unauthorised absence is indicated by a circle. Registers are kept open until the beginning of the first teaching period, after which time pupils are indicated as being absent. Pupils may arrive later and subsequently have their absence marked as late. Registration is seen by both staff

and pupils as an integral part of each daily session, providing opportunities for both communication and social education

The Deputy Head monitors attendance on a weekly basis, to ensure that appropriate action is taken when individual problems arise.

### **3. Education Welfare Service**

Where there are problems with individual pupils' attendance the school may contact other services, e.g. the school nurse to support parents/carers and help them to fulfill their obligations, closely monitoring any individual difficulties experienced by particular families. Where significant absence causes concern the school may instigate a Common Assessment Framework process with other professionals or contact other services such as 'fastrack' to support families.

### **4. Authorised Absence**

Pupils whose absence falls below 90% may be contacted by a letter of concern from the Headteacher. Where a pupil's absence shows a marked number of absences due to illness the school may arrange for the child to attend a medical in the clinic held at the school, the school nurse may also be asked to visit the home.

### **5. Unauthorised Absence**

Within the context of the law only the Headteacher can approve absence. Where the Headteacher has reason to doubt the validity of an explanation for absence, that absence will be treated as unauthorised. If necessary, the Education Welfare Service will be involved. The Headteacher may, however, authorise absence retrospectively where a satisfactory explanation is offered. Doubts about the authenticity of a child's illness may be resolved by contacting the G.P. concerned, or the family may be asked to provide evidence, for example, confirmation from the doctor or a copy of a prescription. This becomes an obligation on parents once a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, and parents are informed by a letter home.

Explanations for absence such as looking after the home or siblings, shopping trips within school hours or lateness in getting up are not normally acceptable. Where parents/carers bring children to school by means other than organised school transport, they are positively encouraged to arrive on time.

### **6. Offsite Activities**

Educational visits and residential activities are part of the school curriculum and therefore pupils participating are regarded as present, as this is an approved educational activity. Where children leave school premises during the morning or afternoon session to take part in activities such as football or swimming, a list of their names is given to the Office Manager, and a register is taken by the accompanying teacher. A similar procedure is followed on both half and full day educational visits.

For activities of a more individual nature such as off-site tuition and inclusion in mainstream schools the register is kept open and a note made stating that the child is working in mainstream. Attendance is subsequently checked with the school concerned. Where pupils attend their mainstream schools on days designated as Professional Development Days for The Pines School, an informal note of their attendance is kept. Pupils attending The Pines School from any other educational

establishment are noted informally and their attendance reported to the base school at their request.

### **7. Long Term Absence**

Pupils who have been absent for some time due to long term illness may receive support from the Home Tuition Team or James Brindley School. Where appropriate classroom staff and the Home School Liaison Teacher liaise with these services to facilitate the gradual re-integration of the child into school. The rate of re-integration is appropriate to the individual pupil and established by discussion and agreement with the Headteacher.

### **8. Excluded Pupils**

Pupils who may be temporarily excluded from school remain on the register and are regarded as being authorised absent. Should permanent exclusion be sought for a pupil, any period of review or appeal would be considered as authorised absence. However, upon confirmation of permanent exclusion, the name of the pupil would be immediately removed from the school roll.

### **9. Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

The principle of inclusion is one which is firmly established in the education and welfare of pupils at The Pines School and involves safeguarding and promoting the well being of all children. Where matters of attendance are concerned the only relevant criteria are those of lateness and justifiable absence mentioned in sections 4 and 6, irrespective of race, religion, socio-economic background, gender, disability or circumstances of home or public care and these will be addressed with equal concern by the staff and Headteacher of The Pines School.

### **10. Conclusion**

This policy will be kept under review by the staff and Governing Body. Opportunities for the discussion of any issues should be raised in the first instance with the Headteacher.

## APPENDIX 1

### EXPLANATION OF PUPIL ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE CODES

#### PRESENT

/	In attendance (AM)
\	In attendance (PM)
L	Late (before registers closed)
B	Educated off site (not dual registration)
D	Dual registration (attending another educational establishment)
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Educational visit or residential
W	Work experience
J	Interview

#### AUTHORISED ABSENCE (AA)

C	Other circumstances not covered by another appropriate code eg bereavement
E	Exclusion (no alternative provision made)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
M	Medical or dental appointments
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence

#### UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE (UA)

G	Family holiday not agreed or days in excess of agreement
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence (If school are not satisfied with the reasons given)
U	Late (after registers closed)

#### NEUTRAL CODES (not counted in possible attendances)

X	Non-compulsory school age children or Covid-19 related
Y	Enforced closure (children unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances)
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
#	School closed to pupils (Planned whole or partial school closure)

## **COMPLIANCE SHEET FOR ATTENDANCE POLICY**

- Registers are marked electronically twice daily using the approved absence codes
- Staff share any concerns about individual pupils with senior staff responsible for attendance matters
- Attendance is monitored weekly by senior staff
- Where pupils have less than 85% attendance parents/carers are contacted termly by the Headteacher and support is offered to improve attendance. The Home/School Link Worker supports where families primarily use languages other than English
- Good individual attendance is rewarded termly with certificates and group attendance annually with an award
- Leave of absence in term time may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher under very exceptional circumstances, on completion of an application form, for a maximum of 10 days in any one academic year