



Pinehurst Primary School School Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2025

Experience, Excel and Enjoy

1.0 Introduction

Pinehurst Primary School recognises the link between the attendance and attainment of pupils. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils within our school to support learning and achievement.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding. It is important to see our children every day and provide a safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should attend every day that the school is open. As a school we set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance, with the expectation all pupils achieve at least 97%.

As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding, behaviour and inclusion.

This policy demonstrates our commitment to meeting the requirements laid out in the Department for Education statutory guidance August 2024 "Working Together to Improve School Attendance"

2.0 Aims

- Provide a framework to support building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (90% or below) or severely absent (50% or below)
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full-time education
- Have clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for all pupils
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data is in place
- Ensure there is a proactive whole school approach that embeds consistency of practice
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, School Health and other partner agencies

3.0 Legal Framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education statutory guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance August 2024"

The guidance is based on the following legislation

- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance Pupil (Pupil registration) Regulations 2023
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Governance:

The governing board is responsible for:

- Making sure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensuring the school has high aspirations
- Regularly analysing attendance data and reviewing the school's performance
- Ensuring all staff receive adequate training on their role in supporting pupil attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of the attendance policy

4.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Reporting school level performance data to governors
- Ensuring effective communication between school and the local authority
- Ensuring effective communication with parents for all pupils where there are barriers to attendance

4.3 The role of the Designated Attendance Lead - **Joanne Steers**

The designated attendance lead is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Ensuring all staff are aware of their role in supporting pupil attendance
- Ensuring all staff receive annual training on attendance procedures, safeguarding implications, and strategies for engaging families
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the school's process and procedures for managing attendance
- Implementing specific strategies to address poor attendance identified through the analysis of data
- Coordinating targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

5.0 Promoting regular Attendance at Pinehurst Primary School

This is the responsibility for all members of staff, parents and pupils.

The school will ensure:

- There is a designated attendance lead (DAL) for championing and improving attendance
- Effective strategies are in place to support all pupils to arrive on time for school
- An engaging curriculum is provided
- High quality teaching and learning is delivered throughout the school
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support from school and partner agencies to ensure regular attendance at school
- Pupils who experience difficulties in attending school are provided with effective support at the earliest opportunity and attendance is monitored rigorously
- Effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and communication
- Support for families of children with SEND or long term mental or physical health needs to address attendance barriers. This may include offering reasonable adjustments, personalised support plans, and referrals to external agencies where appropriate
- Parents are kept informed of pupil attendance and punctuality through the school's attendance procedures, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required
- Good attendance and punctuality are rewarded through regular individual pupil incentives
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly discussed with pupils in assemblies
- Attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff ensure that these are followed

6.0 Safeguarding

A child not attending school, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding issue if this places the child at risk of harm. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence from school is required.

To safeguard all the children in our care, it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide additional contact numbers in case of an emergency.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

7.0 Expectations of Parent/Carer

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a *parents' legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law
- Ensure your child arrives for school on time
- Notify the school if your child is going to be late
- Routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments should be made whenever possible outside of school hours. Confirmation of the appointment should be provided
- Contact school by **9am** on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend, providing the reason, an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is made by the school due to your child's absence, it is important that you respond to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact a member of the attendance team, if the reason for absence requires a more personal discussion.
- In case of emergency, school must have up to date contact numbers. Please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of three emergency contact details be provided)
- Requests for leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances must be in writing to the headteacher and can only be authorised by the headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.

***Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, the definition of a parent under education law defines "parent" as:*

(a) All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;

(b) Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person;

(c) Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

7.1 If a pupil is absent, we will:

- Telephone and text parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by **9.30am**
- If no response is received, a member of school staff may conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns, contact will be made with the family as soon as possible.
- If a pupil's absence continues, the parent will be invited to meet a member of the Attendance Team, and any barriers to the child attending school can be discussed and support put in place. This may include:
 - Reintegration support packages
 - School Family Support Referral
 - External Agency support e.g. Seedlings, Play Therapy, etc.
 - Attendance report cards
 - Reduced timetables

(In line with DfE expectations reduced timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a limited period, to support pupils to reintegrate back into education and access full time provision)

- If the parent/carer does not attend the meeting in school or engage in the support that has been offered and the pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week rolling period, the parents may be issued with a Notice to Improve, in accordance with Liverpool City Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

8.0 Understanding types of Absence

Pinehurst Primary School must legally record the reason for all individual pupil absence. Therefore, it is important for parents to directly inform school of the reason for absence on the first day a child is absent.

8.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence - the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by parents following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised unless, the school has a genuine concern regarding the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows Department for Education statutory guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 2024ⁱ which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description to best support the child and to be able to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parents aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school on each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our school supports pupil mental health and wellbeing following DfE guidance Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools.

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Attendance/Designated Safeguarding Lead (or other key professional in the setting) for further information on the support available.

Pupils taken ill during the school day

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out of school. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should always try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

Where appointments during school time are urgent or unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day of schooling for an appointment, unless necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out of school. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment information – only then will the absence be authorised.

Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such situations the child will be dual registered at that school and this school will remain their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as all other peers. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

Suspensions

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions. All exclusions **must** be agreed by the headteacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion in writing. For children in the care of the local authority the school will notify the pupil's carer, the Section 19 Team, social worker and the Virtual School.

In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out of school. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

8.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence - when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence following a parental request.

This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been explained.
- Pupils who arrive late after the close of registration.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child

Unauthorised absence may lead to the use of penalty notices or other legal interventions from the Local Authority. **Pinehurst Primary School**, in agreement with the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Notice to Improve letter to parents (in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Code of Conduct) where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week rolling period.

The Notice to Improve period will cover 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer the case to the Local Authority requesting a penalty notice be issued.

Penalty notices are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if the local authority considers an Education Supervision Order or a prosecution to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance.

Penalty notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child.

8.3 Persistent Absence

Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DfE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects schools to intervene early and offer support to prevent pupils becoming a persistent absentee (PA)

Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they may be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school at the earliest opportunity to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

Parent/Carers are asked to contact the **Ms Wigelsworth or Mrs Steers** in the first instance.

8.4 Severe Absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of school are classified as being severely absent by the Department for Education (DfE). This cohort of pupils are a priority group for **Pinehurst Primary School** and additional support may be required from the local authority and partner agencies to support your child and improve their attendance. It is essential that parents work in partnership with school and its partners, to ensure their child receives the support they require to overcome any barriers that are preventing them from attending school.

9.0 Why regular attendance is important

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have regular time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

If attendance over the school year is:	...a pupil will miss this many days:	...and this many lessons:
100%	0	0
95%	10	50
90%	19	95
85%	29	145
80%	39	195
75%	49	245
70%	58	290

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

10.0 Pupils on Reduced (Part-time) Timetables

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a pupil with a full-time education due to the pupil's needs, we will work with the pupil, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any reduced timetables will be for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the pupil's return to full-time provision as soon as possible.

11.0 The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) – will work with parents to support their child in overcoming any barriers in attending school, The EWO will always try to resolve any issues by working in partnership with the school and family. If a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists and the parent has refused or not engaged with support that has been offered, the local authority will be required to consider Penalty Notices or the instigation of legal proceedings.

11.1 Penalty Notices

- Liverpool City Council (LA) on receipt of a request from **Pinehurst Primary School** will issue a penalty notice to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child
Before issuing a penalty notice the LA will consider:
- If the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met, 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period
- If issuing a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve the attendance of the pupil
- If appropriate support has been put in place
- Consideration of the obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 that would make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate
- Each parent/carers who is liable can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually be the parent who allowed the absence
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil in the rolling 3 year period is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is no opportunity to pay a reduced amount.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions

The Local Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is published on Liverpool City Council's website

11.2 Leave of absence requests in term time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

At **Pinehurst Primary School** leave in term time requests for the purpose of a holiday, will not be authorised by the school.

Parents can receive a penalty notice for taking unauthorised leave in term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

If leave of absence is deliberately taken in term time, without school permission, creating a period of unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more; and it can be shown that the parent understood that permission had not or would not be given. In such cases, the local authority will issue a penalty notice without a Notice to Improve period being issued.

Any application for leave in term time must be in only exceptional circumstances and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. The headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Parents should put their request for a leave of absence in writing, for the attention of the Headteacher. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least **four weeks** before the absence. **Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing.** Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence to support your request.

If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding concerns, we will follow the necessary protocols.

For Children in Care, any period of leave taken without the agreement of the Virtual School Head, Service Manager and Director of Children's Services, will be classed as unauthorised.

11.3 How we manage lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and late arriving pupils disrupt lessons. It can be embarrassing for the pupil arriving late and can encourage future absence.

The school day starts and registers are taken at **8:50** am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their class by that time.

- If a pupil arrives late for school parents will receive a text message/telephone call to inform them of their child's late arrival.

- Late arrival to school following the close of registers is classified as an absence (Code U). If a pupil is persistently late after the official closure of the register and there are no barriers preventing the child from arriving on time, the school following a Notice to Improve period, may request the local authority issue a penalty notice.
- The official close of registration for **Pinehurst Primary School** is **9:30** am.

If a parent has any problem getting their child to attend school on time they should contact a member of the Attendance Team, who will offer support to resolve the problem.

12.0 People responsible for attendance at Pinehurst Primary School

All school staff, parents and pupils need to work as a team to support the attendance and achievement of pupils. This continued support therefore is vital in making every pupil's journey through school a success.

See Appendix- 1 Key contact List

13.0 Removal from Roll

From the 1st of September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to: Inform the LA in **every** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register. Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.

All schools must complete an Exit form and submit to the CME@liverpool.gov.uk inbox.

All schools must provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- Provide the attendance officer with comprehensive information about their plans, including, any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing.
- If a pupil leaves and we do not have the above information, then your child may be considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try to locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Appendix 1

Key Contacts

School Attendance Lead Name: Joanne Steers
Telephone number: 0151 263 1300/ 07858 739 336

School Attendance Officer Name: Sandy McCabe-Hunt
Telephone number: 0151 263 1300

Pastoral Support Lead: Clare Wigelsworth
Telephone number: 0151 263 1300/ 07858 739 336
