



Pinewood Infant School & Foundation Unit ATTENDANCE POLICY

Autumn 2024



Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance August 2024](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils

- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

It is an expectation that our children are in school every day, on time, with their books bags and water bottles wearing school uniform. We want to share with parents and carers that regular attendance at school ensures the best possible outcomes for all our children. These early years of education are so important, each day of education counts and children can miss out on so much by being absent for even very short periods of time. **Poor attendance rates and persistent lateness puts children at an educational disadvantage.** Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically. Data shows that 84% of Key Stage 2 pupils who had 100% attendance achieved the expected standard, compared to 40% of pupils who were persistently absent across the key stage.

At Pinewood we aim to work in complete partnership with our parents to ensure good attendance and collaborate together to ensure solutions to ensure good attendance wherever we can. We view partnership working with parents and carers as key. Our attendance procedures are based on themes of collaboration and support, a true partnership where home and school, work together collaboratively; we also provide challenge to parents and carers when needed to ensure our children are in school every day.

We expect parents and carers to work with us and do all they can to make the home school partnership work and to ensure good attendance for their children at school. We are a school that prioritises relationships with all stakeholders and will do all we can to foster excellent relationships with children so that they want to come to school every day.

We expect **All staff** to play their part in school attendance, it is everyone's responsibility.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by ensuring:



The governing body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
 - Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

All Staff:

All staff are responsible for:

- Understanding their roles in promoting good attendance
- Greeting families each morning on the school gate or in the classroom with a warm welcome
- Providing an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome with an 'irresistible' curriculum that children want to be a part of
- Prioritising building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Supporting parents/carers and pupils with their attendance as much as possible
- Celebrating good and improved attendance.

The Head Teacher (who is also the Senior Attendance Champion)



The head teacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Authorising the Attendance Officer to liaise and organise working with the LA regarding fixed penalty notices
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and liaising with the SENDCo to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance (the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Rachel Otter and can be contacted via head@pinewood.notts.sch.uk or through the school office.

The Attendance Lead

The school attendance lead is responsible for:

- Operate first day call system to first contact by 9:30 and send a text if no response. Other contacts are called by 10:30 am and if no response a decision will be made of how to progress in collaboration with the Senior Attendance Champion/Head Teacher. Please note this could involve a home visit or in some cases liaison with social care. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent/carers. This must be within a reasonable time frame according to the circumstances.
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data including the monitoring of impact of actions, taking prompt action
- Monitor patterns of unexplained absences, patterns of authorised absence, patterns of lateness and low/decreasing levels of attendance including the monitoring of persistent absentees
- Lead communication promptly around attendance data with other stakeholders
- Record all absence Investigate all unexplained absences
- Benchmarking attendance data against local, regional and national data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- 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 and the LA
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices and liaising with the LA

- Implementing on a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality
- Monitor school punctuality
- Ensuring consistency in the application of the school's registration and attendance procedure.
- Escalating procedures of support and challenge around attendance
- Weekly communication with the senior attendance champion
- Signposting families to appropriate support



The attendance officer is Natalie Fearnley and can be contacted via office@pinewood.notts.sch.uk or 0115 9521717.

Class teachers/Teaching Assistants



Class teachers/teaching assistants are responsible for:

- Recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office by 8:50am
- Offering praise support and challenge for attendance

School Office Staff



School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Update school systems from answer phone messages regarding absence
- Inform class teachers of absences
- Undertake phone calls home to chase up absences and home visits if required

Parents / Carers



Parents are expected to:

- Work collaboratively with us as a school to ensure excellent school attendance
- Make sure their child attends every day on time ready to enter the classroom at 8:40am (Nursery 8:30am) – school gates open at 8:30
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence if not reported on the first day call, and advise when they are expected to return. This message can be left 24/7 on the school automated answer machine service.
- Provide the school with 2 or more emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Not take holidays in term time
- If experiencing problems with attendance contact should be made with school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Natalie Fearnley or Rachel Otter via the school office if experiencing concerns.

School is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Authorised Absence

Absence for Medical Reasons

Pupils are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illnesses. But they should not be kept away from school when they are well enough to go to lessons or when they have minor ailments which do not prevent them from taking part in their education.

As a school we have the right to consider whether to accept the parent/ carers position with regard to medical absence. If the school has concerns that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence accruing, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card or medical certificate. This will only happen when there are real concerns as we recognise the additional burden this could place on parents and the health services. It is not the responsibility of the school to chase or gather medical evidence from a GP or other medical professional on behalf of a parent whose child is missing school.

Medical appointments



Pupils should not be taken out of school during school hours to attend non-urgent medical appointments such as dentist check-ups or optician appointments. Should your child need to attend a medical appointment which cannot be made outside of school hours e.g. paediatrician appointment at the hospital, such requests should be made via the school office.

Absence for Specific Circumstances

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as sudden injury, serious illness or death of a close relative, for a child to attend the day of a wedding of their parent(s) or for a close family member (close family member is an immediate relative, such as grandparent, sibling, aunty and uncle. However, we will expect the parent to make suitable arrangements for their child to attend school as soon as possible. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. Under the new guidelines DfE have said "A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted".

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments if unable to attend outside of the school day
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart



A leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Unauthorised Absence

The school **will not authorise absence** in the following cases:

- Holiday leave in term time
- Child not attending because the parent/carer is ill or cannot get the child to school
- Child not attending because the sibling is ill

- The pupil is absent for his or her birthday
- Oversleeping
- If the child is absent for a medical appointment that does not relate directly to the child (e.g. relates to the sibling or the parent)
- No explanation is forthcoming
- The Head teacher is dissatisfied with the explanation for absence

No reason for absence or an unacceptable reason given

Where no reason for absence has been notified and we have been unable to contact a parent/carer to authorise a child's absence and have not received this information on the child's return to school, such absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices



The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

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 is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead for example prosecution or another legal intervention. If prosecuted please be aware this will show on your DBS record.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Punctuality



We recognise that persistent lateness is:

- detrimental to the child's education
 - administratively disruptive
 - poor preparation for future schooling and adult life
-
- Morning school starts at 8.40am, the gates are closed at 8.45 and the register is taken at 8:50. If children arrive before the register has officially closed on our electronic system at 9:10am the child will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
 - If a child arrives at school after the register has officially closed on our electronic system at 9:10am, they will be marked as absent for the morning session, using the appropriate code
 - Pupils who arrive after the registers have been closed should report to the school office to be signed in the sign in/out log.
 - After morning registration has taken place, any child being removed from school by a parent/carer so that they may attend an appointment (medical etc.) must be recorded by the school office on a daily record sheet with the appropriate reason stated, agreed in advance with school. This will enable the class teacher to account for all children marked as present in the event of an evacuation. When the child returns into school they must be signed back on the daily record sheet. However, if that child does not return to school and is consequently marked as absent in afternoon registration then the appropriate absent code will be entered into the register.

Mid-Session Arrivals/Departures

It is recognised that children may arrive or depart mid-session for a variety of reasons which may be authorised:

- illness or accident in school resulting in a child going home
- medical appointments
- unavoidable delays or reasons to leave early.

Pupils present for registration who leave early, or for part of a session, should be noted on the *sign in/out Log* in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. *The register itself is not altered.*

Pupils not present for registration who return later from an appointment should be noted on the *sign in/out Log* in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. The register is subsequently amended to authorise the absence or record an unauthorised absence.

Persistent Absenteeism



A child should attend school every day and attendance over 96% is considered to be good attendance. If attendance drops to 90% or lower the government classify the child as having persistent absence (PA)

Parents/carers of children with attendance creeping towards the PA level (term dependent) will receive a letter notifying them of our concerns regarding attendance. If attendance continues to decline, further action will be taken. Parents will be informed if attendance falls below 90% and the Head Teacher may inform parents that any future absence may need to be verified and if not authorised, could lead to sanctions.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Whole School Reward Procedures for Attendance

As a school with the youngest of children, we have a pragmatic approach to attendance. We recognise that children in early years can often suffer from illnesses when they start school as they have begun to mix with other children and this can sometimes affect attendance of the youngest children and that illness attendance rates often improve as the children move through school. Our children at Pinewood love school and enjoy coming. We recognise that it is often no fault of their own at such a young age if they have poor attendance and although we want to highlight the positives of being at school with them, we do not feel it appropriate with KS1 and EYFS children to place too much emphasis on attendance rewards at a child level. We have heard of children at such a young age becoming upset when ill and wanting to come to school regardless as they wanted to get an attendance award. Our strategies for promoting attendance take all this into account and work in the best interests of our children and families.

We reward attendance as follows:

1. Each week a child will be chosen in each class to receive an attendance pencil. This will be given for 100% attendance that week, for improved attendance or even for settling back into school well after a block of absence.



2. Each week we will monitor the attendance of each class in school and the class with the best attendance will receive the gold trophy award for the week and will have the 'cool to be at school' cushions in their class for the week.



3. Each week in special assembly the attendance data for the week will be shared. Parents will be informed on the weekly Sway newsletters of the weekly attendance figures of all classes and informed if their child's class receives the gold trophy.

98-100%	96%- 97.9%	90.1% - 95.9%	90% or below
Excellent!	Good	Needs to improve	Very worrying

4. At a family level we will undertake a tailored approach depending on the situation and improvements or excellent attendance will be acknowledged on the annual school end of year report.

5. End of year attendance celebration for excellent attendees (98.5%) and for those whose attendance has dramatically improved.

PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS CHANGING

1

FIRST OFFENCE

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

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SECOND OFFENCE (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after **19th August 2024**.

3

THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY FURTHER OFFENCES (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10-WEEK PERIOD

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

Please follow the link for the Publication that will start from 19th August 2024.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance