



Yavneh Primary School
Attendance and Punctuality Policy

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Regular attendance at school is an essential element in ensuring that each child has full access to their learning entitlement. In addition, the Headteacher and governors believe that it is important for children to arrive at school on time in order to ensure they start the day calmly, as part of the class, and that they avoid disrupting the learning of others.

Attendance is an element of school performance monitored by Ofsted in their inspection of the school and forms part of the overall behaviour judgment. As such, we ask all families to ensure that their children come to school each day on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn, provided that they are fit and healthy.

The Local Governing Body and Headteacher have legal duties regarding registration and attendance, contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5);
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- and The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

Under these regulations, the local governing body are responsible for ensuring that the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end school staff put in place appropriate procedures to encourage good attendance, including striving to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who are prevented from coming to school, due to medical issues or other complications.

Student attainment and achievement depend on regular attendance at school. Any absence leads to missed learning and other experiences and may cause difficulties with social relationships.

School attendance is a "whole school issue" and also a Safeguarding (Child Protection) issue. Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the school, the parent/carer, the pupil and partners in the Local Authority, the Police and Children's Social Care. Parents/Carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority, through its Education Welfare Service, to ensure that this happens.

Whilst we recognise that some Reception children will not be of statutory school age until the summer term, we urge parents to bring their child to school every day and be mindful of the importance of children's learning during the Reception years where they are embedding the skills they need to become lifelong learners.

Children whose absence is greater than 9.5 days a year will have an attendance rate of less than 95% which would be unsatisfactory and a cause for concern.

The school's designated Attendance Lead is Mrs Field

Registration

School registers are legal documents and every care must be taken to ensure that they are filled in accurately and correctly. Yavneh Primary School registers are completed electronically on the school's Management System (Sims), by each class teacher in the morning and afternoon. Registration is an integral part of the school day and all children need to be present in their classrooms at the start of the school day in order to be marked present.

The organisation of registration at Yavneh Primary School.

- School starts at 8.40am.
- At 8.30am pupils can enter the school grounds using the main Yavneh College gate. Pupils should go directly to their classroom. Only pupils attending breakfast club will be allowed onto the grounds of Yavneh College before 8.30am.
- Registration is at 8:40am. Children arriving after this time must be signed in by a parent or carer at the school office. Parents are required to explain why they have arrived late and this explanation is recorded in the Late Arrivals register
- Pupils arriving after 8.40am but before 9am will be marked as 'late' but present for the session.
- Pupils arriving after 9am are marked as absent. This can be authorised if a satisfactory reason is given, or left unauthorised.
- After 9am in the morning and 1:15pm in the afternoon the admin staff print a fire list for the day.

Absence

- On the first day of a child's absence, parents must contact the school by telephone or email by 9am to explain why their child is absent. A record of this communication is kept in the Absences email folder.

- Children out of school but attending therapy or specialist education appointments will be marked in the register with the appropriate code (this is classified as *attending education off-site*)
- The Head teacher will check the registers regularly, at least every half-term
- The admissions register and attendance registers must be available for inspection during school hours when requested.
- An examination of attendance and punctuality figures will take place every half term. This includes whole school figures as well as pupil groups e.g. year groups, SEN pupils etc.
- Parents of pupils with attendance rates of less than 95% will be contacted by the Head teacher to discuss ways of improving their child's attendance.
- The school records whole school termly attendance figures
- The Head teacher reports termly attendance figures to the Local Governing Body.
- Each child's percentage attendance and punctuality is recorded on their end of year reports.

Authorised and Unauthorised absence

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message can the absence be authorised. A parent/carer may be required to provide evidence to support absences due to illness or other reasons.

The Head teacher makes the decision as to whether an absence should be authorised or unauthorised. Where necessary, it is the Parents' responsibility to provide all evidence of absence and bear any costs that this may incur.

Authorised absence

- Absence from school is regulated under the DfE's School Attendance Guidance (2013). An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Under the guidance, only 'exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence'.
- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. At Yavneh Primary school the Headteacher will consider each request individually, taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent/carer gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority, consequently not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

For example, if a parent/carer takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

- In general, absences for holiday's during term times, or absences to participate in life cycle events including weddings will not be authorised, unless they meet the criteria of being exceptional circumstances.

Unauthorised Absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent/carer, therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

Absence May be Unauthorised when:

- No explanation of a child's absence is forthcoming within an acceptable time limit (2 – 4 weeks)
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation (for example all the children in one family are off sick for one day or all the children from one family are reported sick the day after a holiday etc.)
- The parent has been advised that absences will not be authorised without appropriate medical confirmation.
- The pupil stays home to mind the house or look after siblings.
- The pupil is seen shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions e.g. a birthday, wanted to play in the snow rather than come to school.
- The pupil is absent from school for the purpose of an unauthorised holiday. This includes those occasions when the family has previously requested a holiday absence for that day and that request has not been authorised.
- The pupil is absent from school due to not returning to school from an authorised holiday at the agreed date.
- The pupil, on returning to school, explains an alternative reason for the absence (this would be discussed further with the child's parents).
- Arriving late after the registers have closed:
 1. Children **regularly** arriving late as a result of traffic will have their lateness recorded as an unauthorised absence – parents are expected to anticipate regular traffic and plan their travel arrangements accordingly.
 2. Children regularly arriving late to school as a result of parents having to take siblings to another school/nursery first will have their lateness recorded as an unauthorised absence – when choosing to send their child to a particular school, parent are expected to ensure they can bring and collect their Children to and from school at the correct times.

Fixed Penalty Notice

All schools have the authority to recommend their Local Authority issue parents with a Fixed Penalty Notice when they take their children out of school without authorisation.

The Head teacher will, consider requesting Fixed Penalty Notices to be issued for unauthorised absences such as:

- Taking children out of school without permission on the day(s) immediately preceding or following a school holiday;
- Taking children out of school after having a Request for Permission for Absence be NOT authorised;
- Taking children out of school at any other time without permission;
- Persistent unauthorised absences (including those due to persistent lateness) and
- Failing to improve a child's poor attendance.

A Fixed Penalty Notice requires payment of £120 per child, per parent (reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days). There is no legal right of appeal. If the notice remains unpaid after the 28th day, the Local Authority prosecutes the parent in the Magistrates Court for the original non-attendance offence under the Education Act 1996, section 444, and not for non-payment of the Penalty Notice. If found guilty, parents will have a criminal record, possibly receive a fine of up to £1000, for a first offence, and be required to pay costs to the Local Authority.

Following Up Attendance and Punctuality

1. We require all parents to contact the school office by 9am to explain a child's absence.
2. For reasons of Safeguarding (Child protection), this also applies to Reception children below statutory school age.
3. For reasons of Safeguarding (Child Protection), we operate a "First Day Calling" policy – parents are telephoned on the first day of a pupil's absence if there has been no contact with school to explain the absence.
4. When the office cannot get hold of either of an absent child's parents, the office will call all emergency contacts available.
5. If it is not possible to ascertain the whereabouts of a missing pupil, an email and a first class letter will be sent on the same day requesting contact be made with the school to explain the child's absence.
6. If neither parent has contacted the school within 5 days, the school will make an immediate referral to the Education Welfare Service for Investigation.
7. Where there are concerns as to the safety or welfare of the child, the school will endeavour to contact parents via an immediate home visit. This may be done in conjunction with Education Welfare Service, Children's Social Care, Health or the Police where appropriate.

8. After a few days sickness absence, the school office calls families to enquire after the child's welfare.
9. When returning after an absence, parents are required to send a letter/email to the school detailing the date(s) of their child's absence and the specific reason for it. These written communications are kept on file.
10. The Head teacher meets with parents of pupils of whom we have attendance and/or punctuality concerns. These meetings are recorded in the Attendance file and may be followed up with a letter to Parents.
11. In the instance of persistent absence due to long term sickness or frequent sickness, the Local Authority EWO advice is that school fixes a set period (e.g. half a term) within which all future absences due to sickness can only be authorised with a doctor's note. The situation is then reviewed after the fixed period.
12. Any case of a Persistent Absentee pupil (85% or less attendance) with no acknowledged reasons for the absence is **always referred** to the Education Welfare Service.
13. Regarding instances of school staying open in severe weather conditions e.g. snow, parents are expected to make every effort to get their children to school especially when other parents living in the same locations are bringing their children to school. During periods of heavy snow, the registers remain open until later to allow for longer journey times. It is understood that some families living further away from school may have more challenging journeys. Parents are expected to telephone the school office to discuss the situation in these circumstances.
14. Regarding Reception children not yet of statutory school age (reached the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday), where there are persistent attendance and/or punctuality concerns, the Head teacher will meet with the child's parents to explain the negative impact on their child's learning and the importance of getting into good attendance and punctuality habits.

Signing in and Out

- Parents/carers who collect a child early, or bring them in late (e.g. for a medical appointment) need to sign them in or out at the school office.

Unplanned absence

- If a child is unexpectedly going to be absent due to sickness, a parent/carer is asked to email or call the school office on the morning of the absences to explain the situation. When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. Once registration is closed, the school office will complete the electronic register with the relevant information provided via the parent/carer has contacted the school office and authorise the absence where appropriate.
- If no explanation has been given regarding a child's unexpected absence, the school

office will endeavour to contact a parent/carer as soon as possible that morning, in order to ascertain the reason for the absence. (see above)

- If parents/carers develop a persistent pattern of not informing the office of children's unexpected absence, this will become a cause for concern.

Planned absence

- If a parent/carer wishes to take a child out of school, i.e. because the child has a medical appointment, they must complete the school's absence request form (see appendix A). We believe that there are legitimate reasons for a child to miss school, for example, a special event. We expect parents/carers to contact the school at least four weeks in advance, and the Headteacher will consider these applications on an individual basis. The Headteacher may authorise leave of absence from the school if there are exceptional circumstances and it is considered to be beneficial to the child. Application will be considered on an individual basis and the Headteacher will also consider when making the decision, the level of attendance the child has achieved and the rate of academic progress made.
- In some cases, it may be appropriate for the class teacher to supply learning materials for the child during the absence.

Medical and Dental Appointments

- Parents are expected to arrange routine dental check-ups for their children for the school holidays and out of school hours.
- Medical appointment absences require parents to submit a completed appropriate Absence Request form together with the appointment card/letter.

Exceptional Leave of Absence From School (ELAS)

This policy is based on the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, regulation 7 as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The 2013 amendment to this legislation has removed the paragraphs making any reference to a Head teacher being able to grant leave of absence for a pupil to go away on holiday. Under the new legislation:

- Parents have no right to remove their children from school for the purpose of a holiday.
- Parents may request permission for an absence in *exceptional* circumstances

The regulations state that leave of absence may only be granted by the Head teacher if an application has been made in advance to the Head teacher by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides and the Head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances relating to that application. The Head teacher may

not authorise absence for holidays or other circumstances on the grounds of cost. This includes cases where families seek to visit family for longer periods for value-for-money reasons.

Time of year

- No exceptional leave of absence will be authorised during the first two weeks in September (unless there are truly exceptional circumstances);
- No exceptional leave of absence will be authorised for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 during the first half of the summer term prior to and during statutory assessment periods;
- Extra exceptional leave of absence will not be authorised at the beginning and ends of school holidays as there is sufficient time provided in the school calendar for families to arrange their travel arrangements.

The child's attendance record for the current and previous year

- Term-time exceptional leave of absence can only be considered for authorisation where a child has an attendance record of 95% or better;
- Term-time exceptional leave of absence may not be authorised if a child has had an attendance record of less than 95% the previous year.

Impact on Learning

- The individual needs of the child will be taken into account as well as any impact the holiday leave may have on their learning, especially if they are receiving extra provision and resources.

Similar and repeated request in the child's school career

- Leave of absence will not automatically be authorised every year even if requested with the same reason

Long-term absence

- When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send learning materials home, so that they can keep up with their school work, however it is acknowledged that this is seldom a full replacement for class based learning. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school may contact the support services, so that arrangements can be explored for the child to be given tuition outside school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

- The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence to determine the reason for the absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences the parent/carer will be asked to visit the school to discuss the situation. Staff at Yavneh Primary School will ensure the parent/carer understands the consequences of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance and, where possible and appropriate, will put in place supportive measures.
- Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will notify the school office. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parent/carer.
- The governors reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors/ trustees to monitor overall attendance, and the Headteacher will report on attendance each term. The local governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided them, and seek to ensure that attendance is high.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years. The rates of attendance will be reported in the annual review of the School Development Plan.

This policy will be reviewed every one – two years or earlier if necessary.

Date: June 2018

Date of review: June 2020

Appendix 1

Yavneh Primary School

Leave of Absence Request Form

Before making this application please refer to our Attendance Policy for more information

A request MUST be made PRIOR to any leave of absence

Please note that it is only the school, within the context of the law, which can approve absences in terms whether in 'special' or 'exceptional' circumstances, NOT the parents/carers.

There is no automatic right for pupils to be granted authorised absences for family holidays. Yavneh Primary School considers every request for a leave of absence in relation to the individual pupil's attendance and educational attainment.

Name of pupil		Date of birth	
		Class	
Address			
Leave of Absence requested			
Start date of absence		Return date to school	
Reason for term time absence request			
Please provide written evidence to support your request.			
Declaration			
I have read and understood the information on leave of absence in term time, unauthorised absences and penalty notices.			
Name of parent/Carer			
Signed (Parent/Carer)		Date	

For School Use Only			
The school has considered your request for leave of absence and your child's absences will be recorded as follows:			
Authorised		Unauthorised	Unauthorised absences to date
Signed:		Position:	Date:

Original signed and completed forms to be retained with pupil's records.

Copy returned to the parent/carer of the pupil to confirm authorisation or refusal before the intended leave of

absence. Include appendix 2 letter for declined request

Appendix 2

9 June 2016



Department for Education

High Court judgment on unauthorised pupil absence

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to set out the Government's position on unauthorised school absence and next steps following the judgment by the High Court on Friday 13 May regarding the case of the *Isle of Wight Council v Jon Platt*.

I am disappointed with the High Court ruling. I am clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances.

Over the past six years, schools and local authorities have taken the lead in reducing overall absence to make sure more children attend school every day. Overall absence in primary, secondary and special schools has been on a downward trend since 2010/11. In particular, since introducing the changes to the regulations in 2013 so that absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, the rate of absence due to term time holidays has decreased by more than a third.

This is a significant achievement. As you will be aware there is clear evidence that absence from school is linked to lower levels of attainment. The Department's latest analysis published in March shows that every extra day missed was associated with lower attainment at age 11 and at age 16. In other words, every extra day of school that is missed can affect a pupil's chance of gaining good GCSE results.

I wish to advise you on two matters.

1. The High Court's judgment did not establish a hard and fast rule that a pupil's attendance above 90% is regarded as 'regular' attendance. Instead a decision will have to depend on the individual facts of each case. In the *Isle of Wight* case, for example, the magistrates thought it was a pertinent fact that the school itself had described 90% attendance as 'satisfactory'.

2. We understand that some parents who have already been given penalty notices and have paid the penalty are asking local authorities to withdraw the notices under regulation 8 of the Education (Penalty notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and refund their payments. However, the view of the Department is that the decision in the *Isle of Wight* case does not require local authorities to do this, and I would expect applications of this kind to be refused in the ordinary course of events. We will set out any additional steps necessary to secure children's attendance at school in due course.

In the meantime, it remains the case - as set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 amended in 2013 - that headteachers continue to have the power to authorise leave of absence, but only in exceptional circumstances. While family holidays are enriching experiences, the school year is designed to give families the opportunity for these breaks without having to disrupt their children's education. It is for schools to consider the specific details and relevant context behind each request. Schools know their pupils best and are well placed to make those judgements.

I am clear that we need to continue reducing absence, building on the success schools and local authorities have already achieved, to support attainment and ensure all pupils fulfil their potential.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Gibb MP

