

Vernon Primary School



Attendance Policy

Rationale and Culture

Good attendance and punctuality is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills to equip them for life. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. It is also important to ensure that our most vulnerable pupils are given the same opportunities, which may mean extra support in certain cases.

The school aims to ensure good attendance and punctuality by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parent(s)/carer(s), local community and the Attendance and Children out of Schools Team can work in partnership. The school will monitor attendance and punctuality and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

All staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality and will liaise with home and partner agencies if this is appropriate. Good attendance and good punctuality will be seen as an achievement in their own right and be recognised as such by the school. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

We recognise that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and it is prioritised in wider policies and improvement strategies such as:

- Raising attainment
- Support for disadvantaged pupil including Pupil Premium strategy
- Behaviour management
- Special educational needs and disabilities
- Wellbeing
- Safeguarding

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance from the Department of Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- It also refers to:
- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensuring all children attend regularly and punctually to gain the best possible educational outcomes for each child.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.
- Demonstrating to pupils, parent(s)/carer(s) and staff that the school values good attendance and punctuality and to recognise that good regular attendance and punctuality are achievements in themselves.
- Being consistent in implementation, both in terms of rewards and sanctions.
- Regular communication with parent(s)/carer(s) about regular school attendance and punctuality.

Targets

- To have an effective means of collecting and monitoring attendance and punctuality information.
- To maximise the percentage of children achieving attendance of 96% or above.
- To reduce absence percentage each year.
- To reduce 'Late' percentage each year.
- To act early to address patterns of absence.
- To continuously improve school attendance by agreeing new targets.
- To ensure that such data is available and used effectively by school managers and staff in conjunction with the Attendance and Children out of School Team.
- To agree specific targets for individuals and families using Attendance Plans, in a context of all known relevant factors.
- To target resources and implement where most appropriate and to undertake this within a reasonable time frame.
- To keep parent(s)/carer(s), pupils and governors informed of policy and practice.
- To ensure that the school is aware of government targets which may have been set.

Role and Responsibilities

The Headteacher will:

- Monitor the attendance and punctuality throughout the school.
- Monitor school absence data and report it to governors.
- Support staff and initiate actions and interventions aimed at meeting or improving overall attendance and/or punctuality.
- Monitor the impact of any attendance strategies.
- Issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Governors will:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support the school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set a whole school culture.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.
- Regularly review attendance data to ensure support is focused on the pupils who need it, paying particular attention to pupil cohorts and to groups that face entrenched barriers to attendance.
- Regularly monitor recent and historic trends and patterns, benchmark against comparator schools within the local authority and nationwide.

The Pastoral Manager/Attendance Officer will:

- Monitor and analyse attendance data.
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families and report concerns about attendance to the headteacher and governors.
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher.
- Attend supervision meetings and work with the Attendance and Children out of School Team to tackle persistent absence.
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss the attendance issues of vulnerable children.
- Raise the level of attendance and punctuality of those children identified as being at risk.
- Regularly remind parent(s)/carer(s) of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Advise the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices following the PENALTY NOTICE REQUEST For Unauthorised Leave of Absence procedure from Cheshire East Council.

The School Office Staff will:

- Support the Pastoral Manager/Attendance Officer to monitor attendance and punctuality data across the school and the situations of individual children.
- Monitor attendance communications received from parents/carers by phone, on school Spider, and from the absence email address.
- Record absences and planned absences on the school attendance system Arbor, logging any medical evidence.

Class teachers will:

- Record attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submit this information onto Arbor, the school information system.
- Regularly remind their class of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Each teacher will find relevant ways to promote good attendance in their class.

Parents and Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time. Parents/carers have a duty, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child of compulsory school age (5 to 16) receives an efficient full-time education either by attendance at school or otherwise, and so share in the responsibility of ensuring good and regular attendance.
- Let the school know as soon as possible why their child is absent on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

- Do not allow their child to have time off school unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

Recording Attendance

Completing the Register

- The twice-daily requirement to register pupils is perceived as an opportunity for the school to receive pupils formally from home, and serve as an introduction to the session.
- The marking of registers will be given high importance at all times within each classroom.
- Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are legal documents **that may be required in a court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school.
- Registers are marked electronically on the school information system, Arbor.
- If manual registers are required, they are to be marked in ink. Any alterations should be visible and explained. Correcting fluid products may not be used.
- The register should be marked using the symbols advised by DfE and Cheshire East Council.

Lateness & Punctuality

- School begins at 8.45 am and all pupils are expected to be in the classroom for this time.
- Registration will begin at 8.45 am and registers close at 9.15 am. Up until this time pupils are given a late code (L). Register is open for no longer than 30 minutes following the DfE *Working together to improve attendance* Guidelines (September 2022).
- Arrivals after close of register at 9.15 am, are given an unauthorised code (U) = 1 unauthorised session.
- Persistent lateness after close of register may be referred to the Local Authority for possible legal action.
- Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others.
- When a pupil is late parents/carers will be required to give details explaining the reasons for the lateness. These will be monitored on a half termly basis and discussed by the Headteacher and Pastoral Manager to see if any support or advice can be offered to families. In the first instance, the class teacher will discuss the issue of lateness with the parent/carer in person or via phone call. Where appropriate a meeting may be arranged to discuss lateness with the Headteacher or Pastoral Manager.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Absence Procedure

There are two types of absence:

- **Authorised** (where the school approves pupil absence)
 - **Unauthorised** (where the school will not approve absence)
- It is expected that parent(s)/carer(s) will provide an explanation by 9.30 a.m. if their child is absent, on the first day the absence occurs. This can be by telephone, in person at the school office or via the school absence facility on School Spider.

- If contact, explaining the child's absence, fails to be made by parent(s)/carer(s), then the school office team will contact the home by telephone on the initial day. Where reasonably possible, the school office team will work through the emergency contact list number for an absent pupil. This is good practice to give school additional options to make contact with a responsible adult.
- If the absence continues without explanation or contact, a home visit will be made by a member of the Pastoral Team to ensure the child's wellbeing. The Pastoral Team will ensure that proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. This contact is recorded on Arbor and/or CPOMs where appropriate.
- The school office and pastoral team will keep in regular contact with parents/carers during an absence until their child's return to school. This helps us to work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure a positive return to school can be made at the earliest opportunity.

Absence due to illness (both physical and mental health related)

- Parents and carers are expected to provide a full explanation for any absence due to illness or a medical condition on the first day of absence.
- Any absence due to illness will be marked with an (I) code which is an authorised absence from school.
- If the school has cause for concern about the veracity of the illness and a child is absent for more than 5 days school will request that medical evidence of illness such as a doctor's appointment card, hospital letter or a copy of prescription details for any further absences. Evidence of medical appointments may be requested.
- If requested, failure to produce medical evidence to support an absence will mean the absence will automatically be unauthorised.
- Where illness or a medical condition is impacting on school attendance, parents and carers will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss how the school can help to improve the child's attendance levels. The purpose of the meeting will be to:
 - ❖ explore ways that absence due to illness can be reduced;
 - ❖ discuss any support needs for the child or family and if any other agencies need to be involved to offer help and support;
 - ❖ reassure the school the reasons for absence are authentic;
 - ❖ agree a plan to reduce the impact of illness on education and school life.

Authorised Term-time Leave of Absence

- Following the 1st September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, **the Headteacher cannot grant any leave of absence during term time. (Other exceptional circumstances may apply.)**
- No holidays will be authorised during term time. Absence due to holiday will be recorded in the register as unauthorised. (Other exceptional circumstances may apply.)
- Parent(s)/carer(s) will be advised not to book holidays during term time.
- In considering whether or not to authorise leave of absence, the school will consider each case individually taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.
- The school will not authorise leave of absence during any examination periods.

Leave of Absence Procedure

- A request must be made at least **four weeks prior** to the first day of absence being requested. Some exceptional circumstances may not allow for this and this will be taken into consideration.
- Leave of absence requests must be made in writing to the school office absence@vernonprimary.cheshire.sch.uk for the attention of the Headteacher.
- Parents/carers may be required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to explain their exceptional circumstances or present evidence of the circumstances.
- Parents/carers will be notified of the school's decision via email that their request for leave has been accepted or declined, detailing the reasons for the decision.
- The school or local authority will consider issuing a fixed penalty notice (FPN) for any leave of absence taken without authorisation from the school, where the child is of compulsory school age.
- If a fixed penalty notice is issued the school will follow the Cheshire East timeline for the penalties.
- The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:
 - ❖ The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
 - ❖ One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.

Mental Health

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, assessments or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly. School staff will work with parents/carers, to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term used to describe children who experience challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSA is commonly associated with emotional and physical distress, and a reluctance to attend school, which can lead to reduced attendance and further anxiety regarding school.

At Vernon Primary School:

- We recognise that attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxiety about attending in future.
- We recognise that there can be attendance challenges where a child has a social, emotional or mental health issue, particularly a severe issue for which the child is receiving clinical treatment.
- Associated anxiety about attending is mitigated as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance. These adjustments are agreed by and regularly reviewed with all parties, including parents/carers.
- In developing a plan to support attendance through reasonable adjustments, school staff take into account the individual circumstances of the child, being mindful of safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the Keeping children safe in education 2022 guidance.
- Relevant pastoral support is facilitated with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible while supporting the underlying mental health issue.
- Any plan to help the child to attend well may also involve making referrals to external professional support, this might include community groups, counselling services, psychological practitioners, school nursing team or, where available, Mental Health Support Teams.
- In very exceptional circumstances, however, where it is in a pupil's best interests, a plan to help a child to attend well may involve the use of a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual

needs. For example, where a medical condition (including a mental health condition) prevents a pupil from attending school full-time and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. Any part-time timetable will seek to maximise face-to-face school time as much as possible.

- We recognise that in some instances, parents/carers themselves might be living with mental health problems or experiencing wider vulnerabilities or challenging life circumstances. We recognise the need for practical, whole-family support and/or extra family support where necessary, in order to try to address the causes of poor attendance. For example, where applicable, the family’s support worker might act as a convenor of any additional support offered and is a key party to join any conversations about a child’s attendance.
- Where support offered is not engaged with, or where all other options have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate, schools will work with the local authority to consider whether to formalise support or to enforce attendance through legal intervention in the normal way under existing powers.

Legal Sanctions

Cheshire East Penalties for unauthorised absence

Parents/carers should be aware that if your child of compulsory school age has **10 unauthorised sessions (equivalent to 5 days)** of absence due to holiday in term time this will be referred to Cheshire East and may result in a school absence penalty notice (fine). Please see the table below.

Timeline	One Child	Two Children
Paid within 21 days	£60 per parent	£60 per child=£120 per parent
After 21 days and before 28	£120 per parent	£120 per child = £240 per parent
After 28 days	Parents/carers will be summoned to appear before the magistrates’ Court on the grounds they have failed to secure their child’s regular attendance.	Parents/carers will be summoned to appear before the magistrates’ Court on the grounds they have failed to secure their child’s regular attendance.

Referral to the [School Attendance and Child out of School Team](#)

- If attendance is below 90% a fixed penalty may be initiated having taken into account exceptional circumstances.
- If, during two consecutive half terms, a child has more than 10 session’s unauthorised absence (5 days), a fixed penalty notice may be initiated having taken into account exceptional circumstances.
- A School Absence Penalty Notice Warning Letter will give a period of 15 days in which to improve the child’s attendance.
- A School Absence Penalty Notice (PCN) can be issued if you get a penalty notice warning letter and there is no improvement in attendance or if you take your child out of school in term time without the Headteacher’s permission.

Attendance and Monitoring

To manage and improve attendance effectively, Vernon Primary School:

- Develops and maintains a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Monitors attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identifies whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Collects pupil-level absence data each term which is then published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school compares attendance data to the national average, and shares this with the governing body.
- Has a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents/carers understand.
- Accurately completes admission and attendance registers and has effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitors and analyses attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Builds strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Shares information and work collaboratively with the local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Identification of Attendance Concerns

- Identification of poor attendance or punctuality is made by the Class Teacher, School Office Team, School Business Manager or Pastoral Manager.
- Concerns are passed to the Headteacher/Pastoral Manager, who is the person responsible for contacting parent(s)/carer(s).
- A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter.
- Attendance data is monitored half termly.
- The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.
- If attendance falls below 90% the attendance monitoring procedure will be followed. Please see the School Attendance Concerns Flow Chart (Appendix 1).

Informing Stakeholders

Parent(s)/carer(s) will be advised of our policy on attendance:

- When their children first start at our school
- Home school agreement
- Through newsletters
- At parent(s)/carer(s) evenings
- On the school website
- In the school prospectus

Children will be advised of our policy on attendance:

- In assemblies
- In the classroom
- During appropriate areas of the curriculum.

If a parent(s)/carer(s) is worried about their child's attendance at school what can they do?

- Talk to their child; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the Headteacher and staff at the school.
- Talk to the school's Pastoral Manager.
- Talk to the [School Attendance and Children out of Schools Team](#), who will work with them and the school to resolve the situation.

Equal Opportunities

Vernon Primary School has taken into account the fact that Cheshire is an ethnically diverse community. Our practice safeguards against disadvantaging any sections of the community. Improving the performance of underachieving pupils is a key priority in our Strategic School Development Plan.

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

We believe that this policy is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

Policy Date – January 2024

Review Date – January 2025

Ratified by Governors - January 2024

Working Together to Improve Attendance (DfE Guidelines September 2022)

At school we work to treat the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school and with local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.

EXPECT

We aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents/carers and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across school. Our aspirational whole school attendance target is 96%.



MONITOR

We rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, we discuss with pupils and parents/carers to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we work together with partners to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

'Nobody else is quite like me'



Appendix 1 - School Attendance Concerns Flow Chart

