



Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance

Attendance Policy

**This policy was agreed by the schools in the Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance:
Banham Primary, Bressingham Primary, Bunwell Primary, Carleton Rode VA Primary,
East Harling Primary School & Nursery, Kenninghall Primary, Old Buckenham
Community Primary & Old Buckenham High School**

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils / students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils / students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with all staff and school governors and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the governing body know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) **within** The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils / students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 The office administrators will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the Headteachers, and made available to all staff and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing bodies in the Headteachers' Report. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.3 Registration
 - i) The schools in the alliance are required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session, using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) This includes any absence authorised by the Headteacher for which they have agreed that 'exceptional circumstances' apply to.	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) The registers will be called promptly by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

At East Harling Primary School and Nursery these times are 8.50am and 1.15pm.

- iii) The registers will close no later than 30 minutes after they have been opened. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.5 on page 7).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the schools in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the schools as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the schools at a later stage, the register will be amended i.e. an I to denote illness added to the original entry on receipt of an explanatory letter. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher. The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at the school will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the Headteacher**. Therefore it is important that parents/guardians provide schools with a clear explanation of why their child is absent; information such as their child is 'poorly, unwell or off colour' is not sufficient to enable Headteachers to judge whether an absence can be authorised.
- ii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the schools **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.
- iii) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the schools in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - (b) where the schools are satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand)
 - (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;

- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- (f) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**. This is defined in Annex A – A Guide For Parents, point 4)

iv) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday or day out the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday because the holiday is cheaper during term time;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the schools will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Staff Training

The Headteachers and/or Office Administrator will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The Office Administrator will ensure that attendance data is complete and accurate. The Headteachers will report to parents and the governing bodies (see para. 2.2 above). The governors report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

3.2 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DFE within the stipulated time frame.

4. **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at the Acorn Cooperative Learning Alliance. Parents are reminded in newsletters from the schools about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

4.2 First-day calling

Parents have a responsibility to contact the school on the first day of their child's absence, provide clear information about the reason for their child's absence and their expected date of return. The schools have in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact directly with parents on the first day of absence, the school will contact them by email or text message.

Third days' absence

If after three days the school still has not had any direct contact with the child's parents, they will write to them (posted first class) asking them to contact the school on receipt of the letter. Continuous absence without explanation will be followed up with further electronic and written communication.

Ten days' absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Staff for the local area. [*This is a legal requirement*]. The school will include details of the action that they have taken to contact the parents.

4.3 Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the schools will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

4.4 Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the school attendance officer.

Regular attendance checks are made by the Educational Welfare Officer and a standard letter is sent from the school to parents of any children whose attendance falls on or below 95%?

Children whose attendance level remains at 90% or below are classified as persistent absentees and may be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. Parents will be invited to attend a Fast Track meeting to discuss their child's absence, resolve any difficulties and put in place a plan to improve their child's attendance within a specific time. This meeting will involve the pupil, the pupil's parents and a member of the school's senior management team. A member of the governing body, the school's Parent Support Advisor and Attendance Officer may also be invited to attend.

When will a Penalty Notice be issued?

The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance aims to work with schools and parent/carers to improve pupil attendance. The individual schools are required to submit reports to Norfolk County Council, who may issue Fixed Penalty Notices in the following situations, where unauthorised absence meets the criteria for legal intervention:

- Where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school
- Where any pupil has an attendance of 90% or less, with at least 10% unauthorised absence over a 6 week period.
- Where a pupil has 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3 (iii) on page 4) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence (see para. 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.6 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be reminded that they are late and asked for a reason. The register will be marked L so that any emerging patterns can be quickly monitored.

4.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late- after the register has been sent to the office should therefore report to the office. It is important that all pupils arriving late following this procedure.

4.8 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day sign in and out at the office.

4.9 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

5. **Term-time Holidays**

5.1 Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. These are defined in defined in Annex A – A Guide For Parents, point 4)

Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

- 5.2 All requests for a leave of absence will need to be submitted at least 7 days in advance unless it is an emergency situation.
- 5.3 All requests will be responded to in writing giving the reasons for the decision.
6. Promoting good attendance
- 6.1 At East Harling Primary School and Nursery we promote good attendance through; termly 100% attendance awards, annual attendance awards, and reward cards to support children improve their attendance.

We regularly share whole school attendance targets (and progress towards these) and other information regarding attendance with parents through our school newsletters and on our school website.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance

7.2 The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify the school on the first day of absence before 10 0'clock.
- provide the school with the exact reason for their child's absence and when they can expect them to return to school.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. The Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

7. Pupils' responsibilities

7.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or headteacher.

7.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

8. Governors' responsibilities

8.1 The governing body shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

8.2 The governing body sets attendance targets at least annually and monitors progress towards these in their full governing body meetings.

In 2015/2016 our target is

Reviewing the policy

The schools, through the Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance, will review this policy each year with an allocated **School Attendance Officer**.

ANNEX A - A Guide For Parents

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **8.50am** and the afternoon register at **1.15pm**.

2. What happens if my child is late?

If your child arrives after registration he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives after **30 minutes after the registration opens** he/she will be marked **absent**. This is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office. If a pupil is late on two or more occasions during the week a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons / difficulties for lateness and if appropriate a letter may be sent home)

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence as soon as possible- before 10 o'clock at the latest. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement or time of family crisis where travel is needed
- When there are exceptional circumstances that prevent a parent from taking annual leave in school holiday periods; for example when the parent has served overseas in the armed forces and the family take a holiday together on their return. In these circumstances parents are expected to provide evidence from their employer (which includes a copy of their employer's policy for annual leave).

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce **appropriate medical evidence such as appointment notes, prescriptions or medical notes**.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, holidays during term time, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays, having lunch offsite or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

6. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward

7. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/ she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

8. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with a **Parent Support Adviser**. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. **The Parent Support Adviser is based at the high school. Appointments can be made through the school office.**

Absence Request Forms

Acorn Co-operative Learning Alliance
Banham Primary, Bressingham Primary, Bunwell Primary, Carleton Rode VA Primary, East Harling Primary School & Nursery, Kenninghall Primary, Old Buckenham Community Primary & Old Buckenham High School

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

Please note: taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress

Please give at least 7 days notification for absence unless an emergency situation occurs at the last minute.

Full name of child(ren)

Address

Leave requested from _____ to _____

Total number of school days _____

Reason for application:

I/we have read the information on the reverse of this application and would like to formally request the leave of absence as shown.

Signature of parent(s)/carer(s) _____

Date: _____

The Headteacher will consider your request for leave of absence following government guidelines and the following points

1. The child's previous attendance history
2. The child's stage of education.
3. The time of year (SATS or exams).
4. Whether the parents are restricted in terms of leave from their employer.

Your request for leave of absence from school during term time has been considered and has been agreed/not agreed.

Signature of Headteacher _____

Please note: Retain the original signed and completed forms in school records and ensure a copy is returned to the parent/carers of the student to confirm authorisation.

Leave of absence during Term Time

You are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure your child attends school regularly. There is however, a discretionary power to allow leave of absence in exceptional circumstances during term time. This is not an entitlement and purely at the discretion of the schools head teacher. Schools should not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of a student's education or if the absences are during school exam periods and SAT's.

Before completing this application we would advise that you consider very seriously how the absences will affect your child's education. National statistics show 10 days absence in any academic year does have a negative effect on attainment. Schools are not obliged to provide work for students taking leave of absence; however some schools may choose to do this.

The government advises that any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised by the school on the student's records. As you may be aware unauthorised absences may result in legal proceedings against you either through a Fixed Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court.

Discuss with the school any request for leave of absence prior to making a booking. Your child's school may have a designated person for this. It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure you receive confirmation from the school before the leave is taken. Do not assume permission is granted if you have not received written confirmation.

Fixed Penalty Notices

With the implementation of the Anti Social Behaviour Act (2003) the Local Authority has statutory powers to use Penalty Notices to help tackle irregular school attendance and unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the school has not given permission for or the parent/carer has been unable to provide a reason for the absence, which is acceptable to the school.

The school will discuss with the Local Authority any cases of unauthorised absence and whether the issuing of a Penalty Notice would be appropriate. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to a prosecution to the offence and can be issued when it is felt that parents/carers are failing in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly.

The penalty is in the form of a £60 fine per parent/carer per child payable within 21 days, this increases to £120 payable per parent/carer per child within 28 days. Failure to pay usually results in prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

*(Academic year =school year from September to July)

ANNEX C - **September Letter To Parents**

September 201x

Dear Parents/Carers

Attendance at school and legal intervention

This is a reminder to all parents/carers regarding the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government remains very clear that schools must aim to have the highest attendance possible for all of their pupils in order for them to achieve their maximum potential.

The Governing Body unanimously agree that the Headteacher **is not to authorise any holidays during term time**, and will only authorise absence for exceptional circumstances, such as time of family crisis where travel is needed.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil who has an attendance of 90% or less, with at least 10% unauthorised absence over a 6 week period, or 10 consecutive sessions unauthorised absence, will meet the criteria for legal intervention, which could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Any pupil in xxxx School who meets either of the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment in 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice for £60 per parent per child is issued; both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. Failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

Research has shown that children often do not catch up on work missed, which can have serious consequences for their learning and progress. Our aim is to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education. I hope we can count on your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher