



Thorns Community



Infant School

Park Hill Thorns Federation

Attendance Policy

Written January 2017

Agreed by governors: Full Governing Body February 2017

Next review: January 2020

PARK HILL THORNS FEDERATION ATTENDANCE POLICY

2. AIM

At the Park Hill Thorns Federation we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

Statutory Duties

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

2. PRINCIPLES

Your child should come to school every day.

He or she should only be absent if the reason is 'unavoidable'. Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents can be fined. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) either as *Authorised* or *Unauthorised*. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason: illness or other exceptional or unique circumstances.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given.

Providing a reason may not be sufficient if the reason given is not 'unavoidable'. Children should never be kept off school for reasons such as shopping or as a treat. Some children need encouragement to attend school regularly. Any problems are best sorted out between school, parents and child. It is never better to cover their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If problems cannot be sorted out in this way the school may refer the child to the Attendance Compliance and Enforcement Team (ACE). They will try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

Parents may wish to contact the ACE team themselves to ask their advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the local authority.

Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at Park Hill and Thorns is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and all staff.

Pupils

All children are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Children who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, and if the need should arise, from the Head of Teaching and Learning.

Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn and for informing school if their child will not be attending. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours but in exceptional circumstances the school office should be notified.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff (not just teaching staff). The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly any absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. The schools will contact parents if they have not been notified of a reason for absence.

3. PROCEDURES

The Park Hill Thorns Federation applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending school, parents should contact the school by 9.30 am on the first day. A child's absence from school is considered as unauthorized until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. For reasons of safety, parents will be telephoned by school to confirm absence if no notification of absence has been received by 9.30 am. Other reasons for absence must be applied for using the application form which is then given to the Head of Teaching and Learning. (Appendix 1)

Absence Requests

Head Teachers are no longer permitted to authorise absence for holidays taken during term time. They are permitted to grant leave only in exceptional circumstances.

Reasons for which requests may be considered for authorisation:

- The absence is for a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong.
- There is a family bereavement.
- The child is involved in an exceptional special occasion (e.g. if a child is attending graduation of an older sibling).

Where a request is granted Parents will receive a letter to inform them of this (see appendix 2)

In the case of Gypsy Roma Traveller Children we will consult the Local Authority and follow their guidance.

Reasons requests would NOT be authorised would include the following, and would be counted as unauthorised absence:

- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- To take the child shopping during school hours.
- For unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday).
- Holidays (unless these involve exceptional circumstances)

Where a request is not granted then parents will be sent a letter to inform them of this and to explain the possible actions the school may choose to take if they continue with the absence. (see appendix 3)

Lateness

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Arriving after 9am at Park Hill and 9.05am at Thorns is counted as late; arrival after 9.30am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Registration

Registration periods at both schools are as follows:

	morning	afternoon
Park Hill	8.50 - 9am	1pm - 1.05pm
Thorns	9am - 9.05am	1pm-1.05 - Reception 1.15 - 1.20pm Year 1 and 2

If a child fails to arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'. Children who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the general office and be signed in by an adult. (The administrative staff will amend the register entry to read 'absent/late') If a child is persistently late, the Head of Teaching and Learning will contact the parents.

The following attendance codes will be used;

Categorisation of Absences

/ Present (AM) \ Present (PM)	O Unauthorised Abs
B Educated off site (not Dual reg.)	P Approved sporting activity
C Other authorised circumstances	R Religious observance
D Dual registration	S Study leave
E Excluded	T Traveller absence
G Family holiday (not agreed)	U Late (after registers closed)
H Family holiday (agreed)	V Educational visit or trip
I Illness	W Work experience # Planned whole or partial school closure
J Interview	Y Unable to attend due to

	exceptional circumstances
L Late (before registers closed)	X Non-compulsory school age absence
M Medical/Dental appointments	Z Pupil not on roll - All should attend / No mark recorded
N No reason yet provided for absence	

Communication

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in both School Prospectuses and Parents Information A-Z. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

Home/School agreements outline the responsibilities of parents and school for encouraging attendance and punctuality and the expectations of the school for its pupils.

Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

At the induction meetings held each year for children about to enter reception or Year 3 the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially as children can be very upset if they are the only ones left. If parents are delayed then they are asked to inform the school and let schools know any alternative arrangements that have been made.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school so that steps can be taken to ensure children are happy coming to school.

Authorised and unauthorised absences are notified to parents as part of the child's annual report.

Concerns

If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent then the class teacher will contact the parents concerned to have an informal discussion about this. If this persists then the teacher registers their concern with the Head of Teaching and Learning who will then meet with the parents and agree an action plan to improve attendance.

Attendance is reviewed every half term, patterns of absence worked out and the ACE team contacted if necessary. This is done by the Heads of Teaching and Learning.

Truancy

Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Head of Teaching and Learning is notified, who then contacts the parents. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. These can also be discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action taken. Other agencies may also be contacted when appropriate.

**Warwickshire County Council
Communities Group**

Appendix 1

**APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR A SCHOOL PUPIL IN TERM
TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY**

Important Information for Parents/Carers

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 only allow Head Teacher to authorise leave of absence (for any purpose) in **exceptional circumstances**
- If the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Head Teacher will determine the length of the absence authorised
- Requests for Leave of Absence should be made in advance and before any arrangements confirmed or money committed
- If Leave of Absence is granted please contact school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the absence on your child's academic progress
- This form **MUST** be completed by the resident parent(s)/carer(s) before requests will be considered
- Please complete a Leave of Absence form for each child
- Failure to make a request for a Leave of absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised

Please note: Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time.

I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:

Name of Child: _____ Form Group: _____

First Date of Proposed Absence: _____ Last date of Proposed Absence: _____

Expected date of return to school: _____

Reason for Proposed Absence – please provide reasons to support the application including evidence *(they can only be exceptional circumstances) (see overleaf before completing)*

.....
.....
.....

Total Days Requested On This Occasion

(For siblings) I have also applied to _____ School/Academy for
leave of absence for _____
(Insert child/children's name)

Signature of resident Parent/Carer: _____

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

For school use only: NAME OF CHILD: _____ Date received by school: _____

Absence Authorised: Yes/No

The reasons for this decision are:.....

- LOA record sheet to be completed by school and submitted where verbal requests made/ for other relevant information

1st date of absence: Last date of absence:.....

Expected date of return to school:

Head Teacher/Attendance Lead:Date:

- **Copy of this completed section must be sent back to parent with letter**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 state:

1. Head Teachers **shall not grant any** leave of absence during term time **unless:**

2) *An application has been made in advance, by the parent with whom the child normally resides*

AND

B) They consider there to be exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

2. The Head Teacher must be satisfied that exceptional circumstances warrant the granting of a leave of absence.

3. The Head Teacher can determine how long an absence should be and any additional absence will not be authorised.

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- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full time education through regular attendance at a school or otherwise (ie home education) (Section 7 Education Act 1996).
 - If a child who is of compulsory school age, who is registered at school and fails to attend regularly, it is the parent that will be guilty of an offence (Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996).
 - Parents whose children have unauthorised absence may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or prosecution.
 - Any Fixed Penalty Notices issued and/or prosecution will apply to each parent for each child who fails to attend school.

Parents:

a. The application must be made in advance by the parent(s) that the child normally resides with.

b. Any leave of absences taken which have not been requested in advance will recorded as unauthorised.

c. Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecuted for unauthorised absence including holidays.

We have a shared responsibility to ensure that the law is upheld and that your child achieves to his/her full potential. We look forward to your co-operation.

Appendix 2

Letter to parents rejecting leave of absence request

Dear «salutation»

«forename» «surname» «year_reg»

Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time in Exceptional Circumstances

I have received your completed application/verbal request for Leave of Absence outlining the exceptional circumstances to support your application.

I have carefully considered your request and reviewed the exceptional circumstances you have given.

As you are aware Government regulations prohibit Head Teachers from authorising absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In this instance the school **will not** authorise this Leave of Absence request and any absence taken during this period will be unauthorised (please see the attached Leave of Absence form for details). As parent(s) you have a legal duty to ensure that your child receives a full-time education (section 7 Education Act 1996). You may be liable to further action including the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution through the court if your child is absent during the period requested in your application.

Evidence shows that pupil absence has a negative impact on pupil performance and social development. We urge you to consider this matter very carefully before making a decision to go ahead.

You should be aware that failure to secure «Forename»'s attendance at school is a criminal offence under Section 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. In the event that «Forename»'s attendance at school fails to improve or improve sufficiently then this could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (£60 fine if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days) being issued to you or criminal prosecution proceedings being issued against you. If criminal proceedings are issued and you are found guilty, the court could sentence you to a fine of up to £1,000 or £2,500 and or sentence you to serve a community sentence period or sentence you to serve a custodial period of up to 3 months.

If you have any concerns about the content of this reply please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Rawlings / Miss E Biggs
Head of Teaching and Learning

APPENDIX 3

Letter to parents granting leave of absence request

Dear «salutation»

«forename» «surname» «year_reg»

Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time in Exceptional Circumstances

I have received your completed application/verbal request for Leave of Absence outlining the exceptional circumstances to support your application.

I have carefully considered your request and reviewed the exceptional circumstances you have given.

As you are aware Government regulations prohibit schools from authorising absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **In this instance only** the school is prepared to accept the reasons put forward and authorise the absence (please see attached Leave of Absence form for details). Any extension to this request without authorisation or further absence will be unauthorised and as parent(s) you may be liable to further action including the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution through the court.

You should be aware that failure to secure «Forename»'s attendance at school is a criminal offence under Section 444 (1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. In the event that «Forename»'s attendance at school fails to improve or improve sufficiently then this could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (£60 fine if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days) being issued to you or criminal prosecution proceedings being issued against you. If criminal proceedings are issued and you are found guilty, the court could sentence you to a fine of up to £1,000 or £2,500 and or sentence you to serve a community sentence period or sentence you to serve a custodial period of up to 3 months.

This decision is not made lightly. Our school is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes regular attendance through the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

Please contact the school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the leave on your child's academic progress.

If you have any concerns about the content of this reply please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Rawlings / Miss E Biggs
Head of Teaching and Learning

Reminder for Parents - Leave of Absence during Term Time

As you will be aware, current attendance stipulate a Head teacher may not grant a leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

It is for the Head Teacher to decide what he/she views as “exceptional” and it is at their discretion if the circumstances warrant the leave to be granted. If the leave is granted, the head teacher is able to determine the number of school days a child can be absent for.

The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the “resident” parent.

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).

Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

Parents are asked to respect the new regulations under which the school must work and if there is a need to take a child out of school during term0time, an application or request must be made in advance and make clear how the circumstances are exceptional.