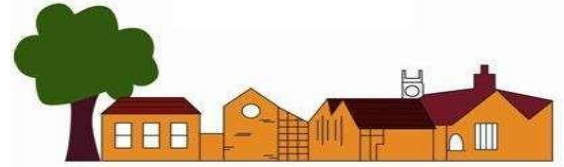


Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Irchester Community Primary School



What is the purpose of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy?

The primary purpose of this policy is to ensure that every child and parent is supported to ensure that they can achieve their potential in all areas of their academic life. Attendance is an essential building block on which to build and proactively improve achievement and nurture potential in every child.

At Irchester Community Primary School, our aim is that all members of the school community feel safe and want to be in school, thereby maximising learning potential and future outcomes for all children. Every child deserves a bright and promising future and at Irchester Community Primary School this begins with attending school regularly in a place where everyone feels safe, supported and welcomed. It is equally important that if children are 'too ill' to attend, they should stay home. Parents should follow NHS/Government guidelines if their child is 'too ill' to attend.

This policy acts as a 'Go To' Guide so that the whole school community (children, parents and staff) understand:

- What good attendance looks like and what is expected from children, parents and staff.
- Key contacts for any attendance related concerns or questions.
- Day to day timings and expectations with regards to attending and being on time for school
- Processes to follow when a child is too ill to attend school or has a pre-arranged or authorised absence agreed in advance.
- Strategy for promoting and rewarding high and improved attendance is set out.
- School processes for escalating procedures are understood and responsibilities clear.
- What persistent and severe absence looks like and the strategies in place to support and access wider services.
- Common terminology regarding school attendance when / if the Local Authority may become involved, for example where legal Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) may be applied.

What are the aims and objectives of this Attendance and Punctuality Policy?

To ensure a whole school culture that promotes and nurtures the benefits of high attendance. Our aim is that children and parents want to attend school and feel safe and supported when they do. Any child or family that struggles to maintain a good attendance level is provided with targeted and sensitive support so that the best possible outcomes can be achieved appropriate to the needs of that child and their family.

We appreciate that good attendance looks different in different circumstances, and our aim is to ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances can maximise their time in school and their potential. Support implemented for each child and family is bespoke and reflects individual needs working in partnership with parents, children and where necessary, the local authority and specialist support services.

What does good school attendance look like at Irchester Community Primary School, and what is expected of children, parents and staff?

At Irchester Community Primary School, good school attendance is 95% or over. This is a MINIMUM expectation for all children and ensures that their education has as little disruption as possible and minimal lessons are missed. We aspire to high standards of attendance from all staff, children and parents and aim to maintain a culture whereby children want to and are able to be in school, ready to learn.

When children do have unavoidable time away from school – for example when they are ‘too ill’ to attend, parents will be offered, and spoken to about any learning that was missed, and support given to help parents and children reduce anxiety about catch up. During the covid pandemic, we noticed the strengths created when parents and school worked together in partnership.



Start of the Day

Registration is important as a legal requirement and to ensure an orderly start to the day. Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

TIME	INFORMATION
8.40am	Children may enter school at any time from 8.40am
8.50am	Morning register opens
9.00am	Morning register closes
9.01am – 9.30am	Child is LATE and must be signed in via the Inventory system outside of the school office, providing a reason for lateness.
9.31am onwards	This is recorded as an unauthorised absence unless a valid reason is provided i.e. medical appointment

End of the Day

Children must be collected promptly at 3.15pm which is the end of the school day.

If an unavoidable delay occurs, parents **MUST** contact the school office to let them know. It is a parent's responsibility to inform school who will be collecting their child, and if there is any change to the usual arrangements.

KS2 only – if a child is to be allowed to walk home unaccompanied, written notification is required from the parent / carer to this effect.

If children are not collected by 3.30pm then a phone call home will be made to all of the emergency contact numbers in order. If no contact can be made, then Social Services will be informed.

What is an authorised absence?

The department of education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

1. When a child is 'too ill' to attend or receiving medical attention. In these circumstances, persistent absence will still be followed up for support and management of illness.
2. Days of religious observance must be notified in advance.
3. Absence due to family circumstances i.e. bereavement / serious illness.

There are other absences, such as approved sporting activity that can be authorised. We also appreciate that there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will also necessitate absence from school. In these cases, professional discretion will be used to determine whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absence to be kept to a minimum – routine medical and dental appointment should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

What is an unauthorised absence?

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents or carers
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above

Department of Education guidelines state that the following activities would classify as unauthorised:

- Holidays
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- Birthday or family celebration

All planned absences should be formally requested using the pink **REQUEST FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM**, which can be obtained from the school office. Once completed, the Head of School will make a decision as to whether the proposed absence is authorised or not, using the above guidelines.

We ask that parents notify school well in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will be reviewed on their own circumstances.

Parents will always receive a reply slip home advising them of the decision. If the above absence request is 5 days or more, a formal letter will be issued reminding the parent of the unauthorised decision (via the pink slip) and notifying the parents of the potential risk of a fixed penalty notice (FPN).

The Department of Education guidelines make it clear that it is the school that judges whether the absence is authorised or not. A note from home is therefore NOT automatically accepted as an authorised absence.

Holidays

From 1st September 2013 the school must adhere to the following amendment to the Education Act.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

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

Therefore, to adhere to these regulations our school policy remains that holidays taken during term time are classed as unauthorised. North Northamptonshire Council will decide whether to impose a penalty notice. To ensure safeguarding procedures are met parents **MUST** still complete a leave of absence form even though the holiday will be unauthorised.

The school can legally authorise a request for leave where there are 'exceptional circumstances'. This request must be put in writing to the Head of School at least 5 working days before the leave date.

What are Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)?

Parents can and have been fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without the consent of the school. A Fixed penalty Notice of £60.00 is issued to each parent for each child (two parent family, two children = £240.00 and the following would apply: £60.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120.00 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt).

If the penalty has not been paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

As a school, we support the government's stance on trying to reduce the amount of school missed due to holidays and we hope that you will continue to support your child's education by not planning a family holiday during term time.

Medical Conditions

If a child is deemed to have a medical condition by parents which results in a child being absent from school, then the school may ask to see a Doctor's appointment card or a box containing relevant medication. In some cases, school may ask for written evidence from a medical professional confirming the medical condition. This is not only to validate medical conditions, but most importantly to ensure that the child and their family have the necessary support, both getting into school, but also throughout the school day. In some instances, a medical assessment may be completed by both parents and SENCO to ensure the correct support is in place. See Medical policy for more detail.

Should there be a cause for concern regarding a child's attendance or this falls below the Ofsted definition of persistent absence (90%) then we follow an escalation process as set out within this policy. The primary focus will ALWAYS be to support families and this support will come from class teachers and Family Link Worker.

Child Missing from Education (CME)

Should a child be absent with no reason for 10 days and parents have failed to contact school, following frequent attempts by school to also make contact, a referral will be made to the EIPT (Education Inclusion Partnership Team) in line with local safeguarding procedures (refer to safeguarding policy – missing children). The child will be reported missing from education and parents will be contacted directly by the EIPT team.

What is expected from pupils?

All children are expected to arrive on time at school for registration and to always demonstrate the school values.

What is expected from Parents?

The law entitles every child to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. It is a parent's legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to follow the guidelines and procedures set out in this policy. This means that their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being 'too ill' to attend or being given special authorisation for an absence in advance from the school.

Our priority is to support and help families where attendance is a challenge. Children can sometimes be reluctant to attend school. In these sensitive circumstances, parents should contact school to discuss any issues initially with the child's class teacher and / or the Family Link Worker who can work with parents and their child to find solutions as quickly as possible. The ELSA/pastoral worker in school is able to provide and signpost children for mental health support to support the child as early as possible before worries and anxieties escalate.

If a child has any issues that are impacting their attendance or enjoyment at school, parents should always let class teacher / Family Link worker know so that they can help.

A parent should not cover up a child's reluctance to attend school by giving in to pressure to excuse them from attending, for example sore tummy caused by friendship issues. It is much more helpful to the child to talk to school and ask for support.

Parents are expected to minimise missed learning and ensure their child attends school regularly. See chart below again highlighting the impact missed days from school has.



What is expected from Staff?

All staff are expected to model exceptionally high standards of attendance, as well as demonstrating the British and school values.

All teachers, and support staff on term-time contracts, must take their annual holiday during the school holiday. Information on school term dates and holidays for the current academic year and the following are available on the school website. (<https://irchesterprimary.co.uk/>) Any exceptional requests for leave must be put in writing to the Head of School, prior to any holidays being booked. Permission will not be granted retrospectively.

Staff punctuality and attendance is monitored and reported to Governors on a regular basis. Staff absence is managed under the 'Managing Staff Attendance' policy.

Staff will provide a high-quality learning environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. Our ethos demonstrates that pupils feel their presence in school is important and that they will be missed when they are absent or late.

The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism with empathy and care, but also firmly and consistently so that expectations are clear and followed up.

Staff will follow up promptly concerns or worries that parents have that may be affecting their child's attitude to attending or their feeling of well-being. We recognise good or improving attendance, regularly reminding parents/carers of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

What day to day processes happen in school to ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality are maintained?

If a child is not in school, this is always considered a safeguarding matter, and a satisfactory explanation must be provided to school BEFORE 9.30am, if it is not a pre-planned and authorised absence.

Parents can call the absence line and leave a message, or speak to the office, or the FLW on the gate each morning.

ILLNESS is an authorised reason for absence, but this is considered to be where a child is **'too ill' to attend**. If a reason such as "not well", "bad night", "under the weather", "bit of a cold" is given, parents will be asked for more details.

Where a parent has not provided school with a satisfactory reason for absence, a phone call home will be made by our Family Link Worker to ascertain a reason.

Parents are expected to let school know each day how their child is and provide an update on their illness. Should this not happen, our Family Link Worker will ring home again for an update and offer of support if it is needed.

Punctuality is monitored and parents will be contacted if poor punctuality becomes regular. Missing the start of the day has the same detrimental impact on missed learning that absence has, and parents will be supported in exactly the same caring and considerate way as absence.

Who do I speak to if I have a question or concern about attendance and punctuality?**Class Teacher:**

For day to day questions about education missed, your class teacher is always the best person to talk to. Class Teachers are always happy to assist when parents ask for copies of work missed after an absence and will be supported to ensure any absence has minimal impact. When a child has had a period of illness or time away from school, parents can expect their class teacher to check in on the child's return to make sure all is well and to offer kindness and support to ensure that any learning missed is discussed and help provided to parents where needed. This is a bespoke approach tailored to the individual family needs and is guided and supported by the Family Link Worker where this is required.

Family Link Worker:

The FLW is responsible for day-to-day administration and management of attendance and punctuality so can answer any questions parents have. The FLW can also ensure that families that need support are signposted and assisted to receive the care and attention they need from members of the school community or outside agencies as required.

As mentioned earlier in the document, we recognise that every child and family is unique and as such, support provided will be bespoke and delivered in a caring, thoughtful and considerate way. We understand that often, poor attendance or punctuality can sometimes be a result of difficulties at home for example morning routines and behaviours, school anxieties or mental health. These are all topics that parents can discuss in confidence with the FLW.

Head of School:

The Head of School is a parent's point of contact for any concerns or questions regarding attendance strategy.

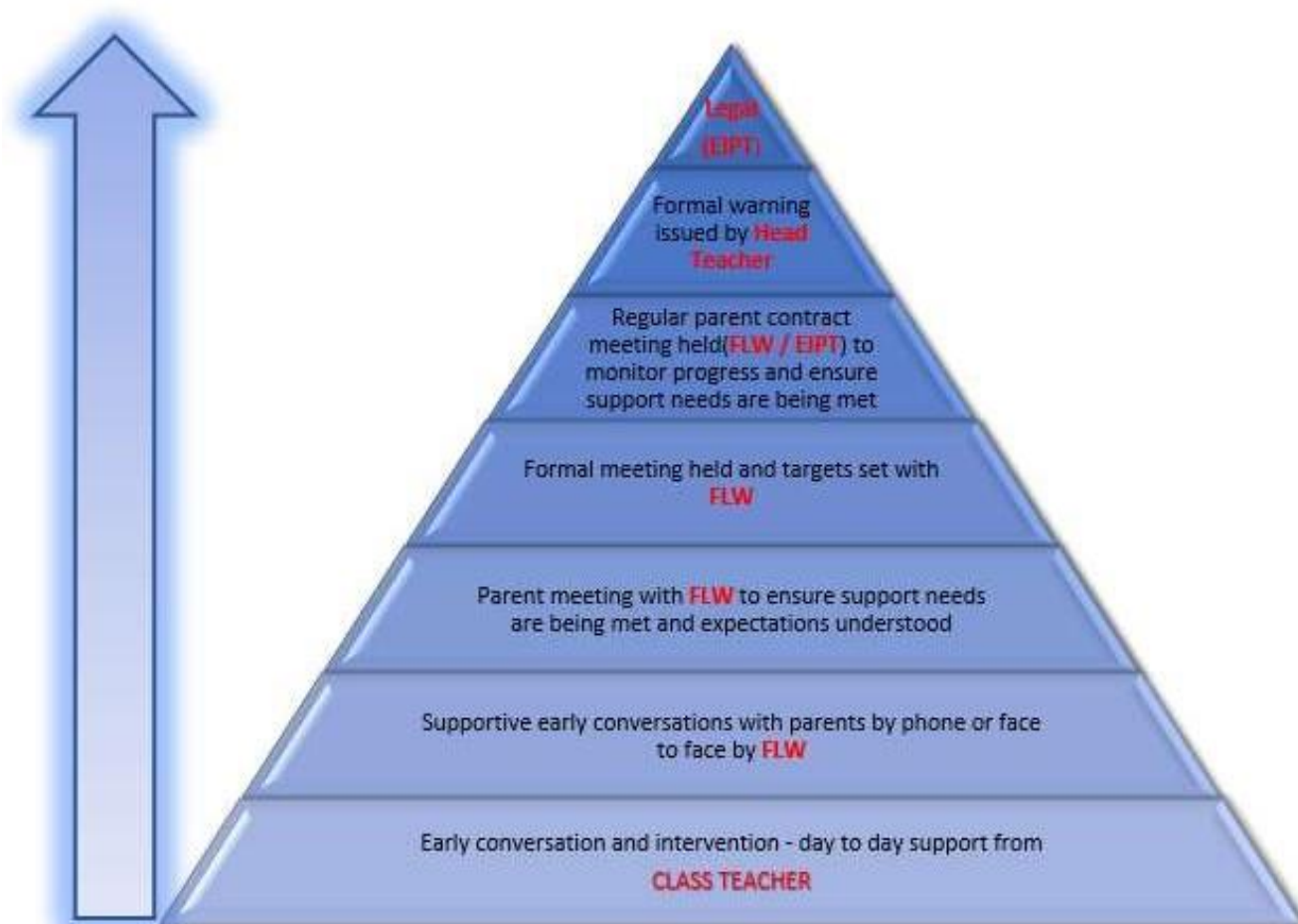
How do we promote and reward good and improved attendance and punctuality? What does this look like?

Good attendance and why it is so important as a life skill, is a regular topic of conversation in school. All children are reminded in celebration assembly about the importance of good school attendance.

We understand that some children with medical conditions and special needs will always struggle to achieve the same levels of attendance as their peers. For this reason, we take a kind and caring approach to supporting these children and this is taken into account when rewarding children. Rewards are not a 'one size fits all' and a bespoke approach is key to ensure every child is supported and nurtured in a way that is best for them.

What is the escalation process if there is a concern about attendance or punctuality?

Our primary focus is ensuring that families and their children have the support they need, when they need it. We want children to be happy, feel safe and enjoy being in school, and the same is to be said for parents when they visit school. Any conversation about attendance that are deemed necessary will always be supportive and not confrontational. Our priority is to help.



All pupils are monitored regularly, and should a child's attendance rate fall below 95% teachers or other relevant members of staff that parents know well, will check in to make sure all is well and offer support if it is needed.

If more support is needed the FLW will get in touch for an informal supportive early conversation either by telephone or face to face to discuss any barriers or problems the family has getting their child to school. At this point and in partnership with parents, support will be offered.

Unfortunately, in some cases, where further escalation is required, this will first of all be delivered through an informal meeting with the FLW to discuss in more detail the issues faced and ensuring that expectations are clearly set out. A more formal parent contract meeting might be necessary. If this happens, the family and Mrs Thom will meet regularly to discuss progress and ensure support in place is working.

If parents are unable to engage or satisfy their legal requirement to ensure their child attends school, formal warnings will be issued which may result in local authority intervention, fines and court.

What persistent and severe absence looks like and the strategies in place to support and access wider services.

Any absence below 90% is considered a PERISTANT Absence and is a cause for concern.

Any absence below 50% is a SEVERE absence and increases the seriousness and likelihood of legal intervention.

Through the use of our Family Link Worker, and links with Northamptonshire Children's Trust, we are able to sign post and refer to local services that can support families. Sometimes this may be financial support, support with parenting programmes or help in the home. Early Help Assessments are another tool that families find useful which can help to bring together support needed and ensure that families do not have to repeat their stories to multiple professionals. The Family Link Worker in these circumstances acts as a single point of contact and co-ordinates support on behalf of the family where it is needed.

Who are the Education Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT)?

The Children Missing from Education (CMFE) section of the North Northants Council Education Inclusion Partnership Team may initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school. They may also impose penalty payments on parents who take their children out of school on holiday in term time. In these cases, a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) may be issued which is detailed earlier in this policy.

How do we ensure targeted support and improvement for any child or family that needs it?

By identifying problems and needs early; help is sought at the earliest possible opportunity avoiding escalation and situations becoming harder for families later on. Early intervention is important and as a school we work hard to be a welcoming and nurturing school community to facilitate this.

Successfully treating the root cause of absence and removing barriers to attendance is key and as a school we aim to work with families to provide support where it is needed.

GLOSSARY:

SENDSCO – Special Needs and Disability Co-ordinator

FPN – fixed penalty notice

EHA – Early help assessment

PA – persistent absence

SA – severe absence

FLW – family link worker

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

EIPT – Education Inclusion Partnership team

EWO – see sheets from training

CME/CMFE – Children missing from Education