



# The Vale Federation

## Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy

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C Stephenson

Principal

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[Signature]

Chair of governors

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## **Statement of intent**

The Vale Federation believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to their SEND, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

## 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behavioural Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Principal is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The Admin officer (Attendance) is responsible for informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
- Have been permanently excluded.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

### **3. Definitions**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

#### **Absence:**

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

#### **Authorised absence:**

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

#### **Unauthorised absence:**

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed except for transport issues (LA)
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed

### **Persistent absenteeism:**

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

## **4. Training of staff**

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, relevant staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their training.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

## **5. Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)**

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The SLT will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents.
  - Engaging with families
  - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
  - Creating attendance clinics.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meet with parents to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Lead check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Whole school as all have SEND

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL

## **6. Absence procedures**

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone or parent mail electronic communication as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence. This is required even if the parent has already contacted the school. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the school office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.

A telephone call will be made to the parent of any pupil who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

In the case of PA, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the Family Support Worker (FSW).

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school may remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

## **7. Parental involvement**

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

## 8. Attendance register

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Late.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

## 9. Family Support Worker/ Attendance Team

If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the FSW who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement.

The attendance officer will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence, and will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.

## **10. Lateness**

### **Booker Park School**

The school day starts at 8.50am. Pupils should be in their classroom at this time.

Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Registers are marked by 9:20am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The register closes at 9:30am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- The afternoon register close at 1:30pm.

End of the day is 3pm.

### **Stocklake Park School**

The school day starts at 9.15am. Pupils should be in their classroom at this time.

Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Registers are marked by 9.45am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The register closes at 10.00am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- The afternoon registers closes at 1:30pm.

End of the day is 3.15pm.

## **11. Term-time leave**

The school will require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the Principal will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The Principal will be only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the Principal will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The Principal will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term-time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Principal. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Requests for leave will be granted in exceptional circumstances:

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the Principal, they will be recorded as unauthorised and may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

The Head of School will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

## **12. Religious observances**

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

## **13. Appointments**

As far as possible, parents will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the school office should be notified.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by a parent. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## **14. Young carers**

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

## **15. Rewarding good attendance**

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance in the following ways:

- Certificates and Postcards home

Good attendance and punctuality will be rewarded in the following ways

- Postcards home

## **16. Monitoring and review**

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 92%.

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Principal.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders

### First Day Call Procedures

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<p>There is an expectation that parents will notify the school of any absence prior to 8am.</p> <p>Teaching staff should inform the office if they have been told of any planned absence e.g. medical appointment etc.</p> <p>Admin staff should check registers by 10am each morning to identify any unexplained pupil absence.</p> <p>Admin staff to contact classes where there are unknown absences to ascertain if the class team are aware of why the pupil is absent.</p>	<p>Admin staff should attempt to make phone contact with the parent/carers/emergency contact of the pupil prior to midday.</p> <p>If phone contact is not successful by midday, a text or email is to be sent to parents/carers asking them to contact the school.</p> <p>Admin staff should note any changes to dial tone which may indicate that the parent/carer is abroad.</p>	<p>If there is no contact with parents/carers/ emergency contact by midday, then the DSL and relevant Head of Department are to be informed.</p> <p>The DSL/Head of Department may then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask someone to visit the family home</li> <li>• Contact a known Social Worker to ascertain if they are aware of the child's whereabouts</li> <li>• Contact the police and request a welfare check</li> <li>• Contact the school of known siblings to establish if they are at school</li> </ul>

NB: Pupils may be fast-tracked to Stage 3 in cases where, for example, there are safeguarding concerns.

### Monitoring Attendance Procedure

Monthly	Termly	Two-Termly
<p>Admin to compile a report of pupils with less than 90% attendance each calendar month, and share with the Head of Department.</p> <p>If the Head of Department is aware of a genuine reason for absence (e.g. significant illness, agreed leave etc.) then no further action to be taken.</p> <p>If there is no genuine reason known, then a text/email will be sent to parents, alerting them to their child's poor attendance.</p> <p>e.g. "For your information, your child's attendance fell below the expected level last month (insert month). We look forward to this improving this month."</p>	<p>Admin to compile a report of pupils with less than 90% attendance each term, and share with the Head of Department.</p> <p>If the Head of Department is aware of a genuine reason for absence (e.g. significant illness, agreed leave etc.) then no further action to be taken.</p> <p>If there is no genuine reason for the low attendance, then 'Stage 2' letter is to be sent to parents, detailing the expectation that this improves over the coming term.</p> <p>The Family Support Worker will liaise with the Head of Department in order to offer support to the family as required. Communication will continue throughout the intervention between FSW and relevant staff</p>	<p>Should a pupil's attendance be under 90% over the course of two terms, then parents will be invited in to discuss it.</p> <p>If necessary, the following actions could be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectation that a doctor's note/ appointment letter is provided to the school to justify any absence for this reason</li> <li>• Referral to FSW or further worker carried out by FSW/HoD</li> <li>• Referrals to Social Care/CAMHS</li> <li>• Start Local Authority attendance protocols</li> </ul>

NB: Pupils may be fast-tracked to Stage 3 in cases where, for example, there is a lack of engagement from parents, safeguarding concerns, significantly low levels of attendance etc.

