

Pittington Primary School



Attendance Policy

September 2025

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Author of document:	Laura Wigham	Job role:	Headteacher
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Revision	Date of revision	Reason for revision	Resulting version number	Signatories

Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Laura Wigham	Head Teacher / Principal	0191 3720314
Laura Wigham	Senior Attendance Champion	
Andrew Wright	Other senior leaders with responsibility for attendance	
David Wright	Governor with responsibility for attendance	

If a pupil is going to be absent from school, a message should be left with the school absence line or the office manager on 0191 3720314.

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Class teachers	Support with initial barriers to attending school	0191 3720314
Mr Wright	Deputy head – access to services, family support, early help assessments	
Miss Wigham	Headteacher – access to services, family support, early help assessments	

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupil's whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. A pupil's place in school is at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Pittington Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. Improving attendance is everyone's business and a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners is required.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory](#) guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. To benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer we expect all pupils to attend every session they are able to attend.

Communication with our parents and pupils is vital to working together to support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date and changes are communicated to school as soon as possible. It is extremely important that school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from 8.55am – 3.30pm. Children from year 1 to year 6 enter the building via the main school playground. Nursery and reception children enter via their classroom doors.

The school doors open at 8:55am for pupils. At 9:00am, the pupil entry doors will be locked and all pupils must then enter by the main entrance. It is important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for your child and for the rest of the class.

If a child arrives in school after 9:05am, they will be marked as late.

Pupils must be in school for the start of registration to receive a present mark, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (**Code L**).

The DfE states that pupils must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration.

Pupils who arrive after the registers close will be recorded as a **Code U** unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence. It is still essential to come to school even if you are arriving after the registers close.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact the school office on 0191 3720314 if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the **reason for their lateness** and this will be recorded on our management information system.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions Miss Wigham will arrange a meeting to discuss and additional support needed from school. E.g breakfast club offers, meet and greets for support or possible referral to the local authority for action if unauthorised

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality an attendance support plan will be put in place. This meeting will be joint working with parents/carers and Miss Wigham.

Term dates and planned Inset days

Term dates can be found here [School holiday and term dates - Durham County Council](#)

PD days can be found on our school website [Pittington Primary School - Diary Dates](#)

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head Teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in [regulation 11 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission should be (academies)/ must be (maintained schools and non-maintained special schools) requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form within

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of absence

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are expected to contact the School via telephone, email or Class Dojo providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home via Class Dojo to find out why the pupil not in school. If no response is received, a phone call will be made to all parents.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. Attending school before an appointment is advised. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence

A parent must inform school of an absence, each day. The only exception to this is when a leave of absence has been requested.

No reason for absence provided

If no reason for absence is received a home visit may be carried out by a DSL. Where appropriate, referrals to other agencies may be made for example early help, police, First Contract. This is all outlined in our safeguarding policy.

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 rolling school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate for irregular attendance and, if so, the matter will be referred to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will count as that evidence and can be accepted without question or concern.

Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. This will be requested when there is a need for clarification to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the pupil is not in school.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

In order to promoting good attendance, our school:

- Submits a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;

- Builds strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance;

Attendance data

We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.

We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do. We will communicate information to parents as appropriate via TAF meetings, safeguarding meetings and attendance support meetings.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so that everyone can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent.

Attendance is monitored on a 3 week cycle. Parents/Carers will be contacted of any child who appears to be on track to become a persistent absentee. The Headteacher will support families to improve attendance and will refer to other agencies if and when appropriate.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

Attendance is monitored on a 3 week cycle. Parents/Carers will be contacted of any child who appears to be on track to become a severe absentee. The Headteacher will support families to improve attendance and will refer to other agencies if and when appropriate.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 rolling school week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, it should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to, a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Fixed Penalty Notice or Offence Investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#))

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet](#))

If penalty notices are not paid, then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence.

If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

This Policy will be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance. If a child has a specific need which impacts their attendance, the Headteacher will meet with parents/carers to understand the reasons for this and a plan will be made to identify support needed from school and other agencies

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding and Child Protection
Behaviour

APPENDIX 1

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high aspirations of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

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



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

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



FACILITATE SUPPORT

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



FORMALISE SUPPORT

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



ENFORCE

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

Expect

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

Monitor

The school will use attendance data to identify patterns of absence early. This includes:

- Daily registers monitored by the attendance officer.
- Three weekly reviews by the Attendance Champion.
- Termly analysis to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence.

Support First Approach:

Concerns will trigger early conversations with families, not penalties. The aim is to understand and support, not to blame.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

The Senior Attendance Champion will always be available to speak to about attendance concerns. Class teachers and support staff are trained to notice and respond to attendance concerns.

Attendance is a shared responsibility. Staff are encouraged to build trusting relationships and listen actively to pupils and families.

Facilitate support

The Headteacher will work with families to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance.

Formalise support

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

Enforce

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