

# Attendance & Absence Policy



## Rationale

Vale School believes that, in order to reach their full potential, children need to attend school regularly and punctually. High levels of absence are shown to be associated with low academic achievement.

We aim to work together with parents and carers to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both regularly and punctually.

We aim to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure good two-way communications and sharing of information between home and school.

## Aims of the Attendance & Absence Policy

- To support the general aims of the school;
- To help promote and maintain high attendance and punctuality;
- To reinforce that high levels of absence are associated with low academic achievement;
- To detail procedures for noting that children are absent and for appropriate follow-up;
- To help clarify 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' absence;
- To assist children whose attendance is a cause for concern

## Responsibilities

### Parents/Carers

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis and to ensure their children are punctual.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends and stays in school unless alternative arrangements for their education are made.

Parents and carers are responsible for notifying the school of external appointments and where possible will make appointments out of school hours. Copies of Hospital/Doctor/Dentist appointments should be shared with the school.

Parents and carers are responsible for informing the school of any absences. This must be on the first day of absence. They can telephone the school and speak to a member of staff or leave a message on the school's absence line. They should state the nature of the illness and when the child is expected to return to school. If a child is absent and the school has not received any notification of the absence then the school's attendance administrator will contact the parent/carer. Parents and carers need to keep the school informed of continued absence.

Parents and carers can be prosecuted under the Education Act of 1996 for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school with the following exceptions:

- The pupil was absent with permission from school;
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious group to which the family belongs and a completed request for absence was received in advance by the school.

### Children

- To understand the need to attend school regularly and punctually;
- To begin to take responsibility for themselves and their attendance

### Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher & Governors

- To monitor attendance data;
- To ensure that the school has a systematic approach to the promotion and maintenance of high attendance and the management of poor attendance;
- To follow up the support available to children whose attendance is a cause for concern;
- To ensure staff understand and follow procedures for registration and for dealing with absence and lateness;
- To provide staff training as necessary for matters relating to attendance.

## Class Teachers

- To mark registers in an appropriate manner;
- To understand and implement the school's policy on attendance;
- To encourage high attendance and punctuality;
- To discuss with parents initial attendance/punctuality concerns at Consultation Appointments;
- To liaise with the Deputy Headteacher with regard to support for children whose attendance is a cause for concern and follow up as appropriate.

## Absence in School Time

Time off school for family holidays, days out or similar is not a right and is now actively discouraged by the Education legislation.

## Absence Requests

If a request for leave is absolutely unavoidable parents should complete a 'Request for Leave from Learning in School Time' form, wherever possible, **two weeks in advance** of any planned absence. Each request for absence is dealt with on its own merits and all the available evidence/additional information is considered.

Copies of the 'Request for Leave from Learning in School Time' form can be obtained from the school reception or by emailing the school office. [office@valeschool.org](mailto:office@valeschool.org)

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Government guidelines state that children can only be absent for the following reasons:

- illness and treatments
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances

Absence requests **will not** be authorised for:

- Holidays
- Days out (including long weekends, birthday treats, visiting relatives)

Requests for absence to attend funerals or associated events are responded to sympathetically and are normally authorised by the school.

## Fixed Penalty Notices

Regular unauthorised absence by a child will be scrutinised by the school and may attract one or more of the following interventions:

- A warning letter
- Request for parents/guardians to attend the school for an interview to discuss attendance
- Referral to Local Authority (Pupil Entitlement: Investigation Team)
- Referral to Social Services (in cases of child welfare concerns)

If your child has 10 unauthorised sessions (a session is half a day) of absence within a 10 week period, we will inform the Pupil Entitlement Investigation Team who may choose to serve a **Fixed Penalty Notice** on the parents/carers.

## Illness

If your child is too ill to attend school, you must contact the school on the first morning of absence, ideally, before school starts. You can do this by telephone 01903 872322 (answer machine available) or email [office@valeschool.org](mailto:office@valeschool.org)

- You must give a reason for absence.
- **You must telephone or email each day your child is absent.**
- If your child does not arrive at school and you have not contacted the office, we may contact you to ensure the child is safe.

## Children Missing in Education

If a child fails to attend or appears to have disappeared, and the period of absence is unusual, the school will make every effort to trace the child and will also inform the 'Children Missing in Education' team at the Pupil Entitlement Service. If the Child is Looked After or the subject of a Child Protection Plan, the school will notify the Key Worker within the first 24 hours of absence, if no contact has been made with the parent/carers. In the event of it being suspected that the child is at potential risk of harm, the school will notify Children's Social Care Services and/or the Police Child Protection Team immediately.

## Punctuality

It is vital your child arrives at school on time and is prepared for the school day. A normal school day starts at 8:45am for Years 3, 4, 5 & 6 and 8.50am for Early Years, Years 1 & 2. If your child arrives after these times they must enter the school via the main entrance and sign in at the school reception desk.