

PENRICE ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Review Date: July 2019

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Students need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Penrice Academy recognises its responsibilities to ensure students are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of students who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at Penrice Academy miss two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve students' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with students, parents and staff, so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in students a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and tutors, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and students.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.

- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, students, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.
- Rewards for the best attending tutor groups are given out termly at celebration assemblies in Year 7 and 8.
- Rewards for the 30 best attenders on a termly basis are given out at celebration assemblies in Year 9, 10 and 11.
- Students with over 96% attendance receive termly certificates.
- Students with 100% attendance for the year are entered into a draw to win a bike.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and students.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual student's attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Admissions and Attendance Officer any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Cornwall LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Assistant Principal

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the EWO service.
- Meeting parents/carers in danger of being issued a first warning.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Senior Vice Principal.

Admissions and Attendance Officer

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Assistant Principal where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation via text message and e-mail through Schoolcomms.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.
- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.

Attendance Support Officer

- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Heads of Year

- Oversee intervention and support strategies directing Pastoral Managers.
- When relevant, unauthorise attendance and inform parents of the consequences.
- Attend EPMS and attendance clinics.

Tutors

- Tutors are the child's first point of contact and will monitor daily attendance.

Attendance/Behaviour Officer

- Will complete home visits
- Mentor and run group work for students with poor attendance
- Liaison with families

Pastoral Managers

- Run attendance groups for students with low attendance setting individual targets and rewards for improvement.
- Provide and offer support for families and students.
- Lead attendance clinics for families and students at risk of persistent absence.

SFC Co-ordinator/Admissions and Attendance Officer

- Daily meeting with the Admissions and Attendance Officer to discuss and look at daily absences.
- Agree and issue letters.
- Liaise with Heads of Year regarding parent contact and Letter C.
- Liaise with Assistant Principal regarding parent meetings.
- Liaise with Assistant Principal regarding Educational Planning Meetings.
- Record daily absences and letters sent and issue to Assistant Principal and Heads of Year at the end of the week.
- Record monthly interventions.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter/prescription paperwork or packet).
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

The school doors open from 8.00am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any student who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00. and by 1.20pm. (Attendance code / and \ for students who are present.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Any student who comes into school after 8.30am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those students who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each student (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.00 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.00am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness:

- If your child is late 6 times within a half term period, they will lose their social time for the day (break one and break two) on the day they are late. This will continue for any subsequent late thereafter. The 30-minute detention after school will now only apply for the 3rd, 4th and 5th late.

- A penalty notice could be issued for persistent lateness (see penalty notices below for further details).
- The system will operate over a half term period.
- All students will have a clean slate at the start of every half term.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Assistant Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The Attendance Support Officer checks all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those students who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home or offer Ed Lounge access, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of the Principal to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year. Instead, the Principal will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Parents should ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed.

Concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters (A, B and C – attached to the end of this policy) which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the Admissions and Attendance Officer has a responsibility to make a referral. A first warning will be issued, then an educational planning meeting will take place, before a final warning. From this point if there is no further improvement court proceedings will begin.

Monitoring Attendance

The Attendance Support Officer, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Assistant Principal and Admissions & Attendance Officer to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings, such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns.

Penalty Notices

If you decide to take your child out of school, without permissions, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer this matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences and lateness not authorised by the school may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2500, and/or custodial sentences. **The Council may also apply for the cost incurred in taking the matter to Court.**

Appendix

Letter A

Dear

High attendance at school improves your child's chances of success. Students who have high attendance are more likely to be able to sustain good friendships and make good progress towards qualifications. At Penrice Academy the largest group of students have attendance above 98%.

Penrice Academy is very concerned that your child's attendance has fallen below 95%. If this high level of absence continues they are more likely to:

- find it hard to make good friendships
- make poor progress and lower GCSE subject grades by one or two GCSE grades
- find school stressful.

Sometimes absence from school is caused by medical issues or worries about school or friendships. Penrice Academy is committed to supporting student's welfare. If you feel there is anything we can do to support «chosen_name» please contact their tutor or the Student and Family Centre.

Your child's pattern of absence has caused Penrice Academy concern because it may;

- show occasional absence of one or two days for minor ailments.
- be that Penrice Academy is unaware of the reason for absence.
- be that you have taken an unauthorised holiday.
- be that their attendance is close to the government's definition of persistent absence.

Please support our high expectations for your child's attendance and progress. Penrice Academy will monitor your child's attendance and provide support if needed. I enclose «chosen_name»'s registration certificate.

If «chosen_name» has to attend a medical appointment please try to make it between 10am and 1pm so that they can attend the start of the day and miss breaks rather than lessons.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can do anything to help improve «chosen_name»'s attendance.

Yours sincerely

Letter B

Dear

I wrote to you on **date** to express our concern with «chosen_forename»'s attendance. «chosen_forename»'s attendance is still below 95% and is now likely to damage their education and progress. I enclose a copy of «his_her» registration certificate. Please note that being late to school after 9.00am counts as being absent from school for a morning.

Here at Penrice Academy, we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed on exceptional circumstances. Please let us know of any medical reason for absence or any school based factor.

Penrice Academy is closely monitoring «chosen_forename»'s attendance. It is becoming very hard for **him/her** to learn effectively and progress in their learning and friendships. If their attendance fails to improve Penrice Academy will have to take urgent action with the Local Authority. This can include a legal warning and/or fines for parent.

Penrice Academy is committed to supporting students and families before requesting legal action. Please phone Miss Libby on 01726 72163 ex 291 or email klibby@penrice.org.uk to improve «chosen_forename»'s attendance and increase their chances of better progress and happiness at school.

Yours sincerely

Letter C

Warning of intention to unauthorise your child's absence.

Dear

«chosen_forename»'s attendance remains a very serious concern. Penrice Academy is unaware of any significant or compelling reason for such a high level of absence and the pattern of absence is now sustained and worrying. Penrice Academy has offered you and your child support.

Penrice Academy will only authorise «chosen_forename»'s absence where we have reasonable evidence that there is a medical reason or for any other exceptional circumstances. Please share any medical evidence you have so that we can support your child's welfare and education and authorise their absence.

If you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. If your child's absence is unauthorised you will be committing an offence. If there are 10 sessions (each session meaning being recorded at morning or afternoon registration)

unauthorised you will be referred for legal proceedings. We will refer the matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice will result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and / or custodial sentences.

Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Penrice Academy is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely