



CONWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Keith Robertson/Linda Greenlees **Date:** 18/11/2019

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**Next review due
by:** November 2022

Conway Primary is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

All children of compulsory school age (5 to 16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

Local Authorities (LA) have a duty to satisfy themselves that children who are not in the school system are receiving a suitable education. If the LA believes that a child is not getting a suitable education, it has a duty under section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to serve a notice or a school attendance order on a parent. The notice requires the parent/carer to satisfy the LA that the child is receiving a suitable education while the order requires the parent/carer to register the child at a named school.

LAs also have responsibility under sections 444, 444A and 444ZA of the Education Act 1996 for legal action to enforce attendance at school. This duty is often exercised through the Attendance Advisory Service and its Attendance Officers (AOs). They also have the following legal powers to enforce attendance:

- **School attendance orders**
- **Prosecution for irregular attendance**
- **Penalty notices for irregular attendance**

- **Education supervision orders.**

Whilst it is not a legal measure, school and the LA can use parenting contracts in their efforts to improve a pupil's attendance.

Why is regular attendance important?

Learning: - Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: - Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: -

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding concern.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

We will:

- Give you details on attendance on our school website/ school app and via social media
- Celebrate good attendance weekly in assembly and award class attendance cup and publish this on the website;
- Reward good or improving attendance through individual certificates.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child, we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the Parental Support Adviser. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Absence from School

If a pupil is unwell and unable to attend school, parents/carers should telephone the school office (open from 08:30am) on each day of absence outlining the reason for the absence and the expected duration if possible or leave a message by pressing option 2 on the school answer machine. *When returning to the school, the pupil should bring a written note explaining the reason for absence and specifying the exact dates, even if you have telephoned the school.* This is an essential procedure for the school to keep accurate records.

Medical appointments should be made out of school hours. However, if unavoidable, the appointment should be arranged for as late as possible in the school day (e.g. after 3pm)

the pupil should attend school before and/or after the appointment wherever possible.

Whole day absences for medical appointments are unacceptable unless the circumstances are exceptional.

Parents/carers must request a leave of absence and attach medical appointment cards/letters for the Headteacher to authorise. Leave of Absence Request Forms must be submitted to the office before the appointment date.

The following is a list of reasons, which are likely to count as **authorised** absence:

- Illness or other unavoidable cause
- Emergency medical or dental treatment (where appointments cannot be made outside school time)
- Religious observance
- Transport failure where travel to the school is not within walking distance
- Participation in a school-approved performance or sporting activity.
- Education off-site approved by the school.
- Exclusion
- With the school's approval, death of a close family member or exceptional event.

The following is a list of reasons, which are likely to count as **unauthorised** absence:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you **must**:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and School Business Manager if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Attendance Officer if attendance falls below 85%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. **We must have a minimum of 2 contact numbers.** So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10 % or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers full support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly and adopt a traffic light coding to measure attendance.

Green 95% or above = good attendance

Amber 91-94% = unsatisfactory

Red 90% or below = your child may be underachieving because of poor attendance and will be placed on **Fast Track**.

Fast Track

If your child has less than 90% attendance they will be placed on the Royal Borough of Greenwich Fast Track. Fast Track is a system where individual students attendance has fallen below the set % and are closely monitored. Parents / Carers are written to and asked to provide medical evidence for any missed sessions. Failure to do so will result in an unauthorised absence and a meeting being set up with the Headteacher. Failure to attend that meeting could result in a referral to the Attendance Advisory Service.

In order for any future absence due to illness to be authorised you will be required to

supply medical evidence to the school if a child has been met the criteria for and has been placed on FastTrack.

Fast Track process

- a) Letter 1 (L1) - General letter sent to alert parents of the Fast Track Scheme; sent at the start of each academic year.
- b) Letter 2 (L2) – L2 sent to notify parent/carer that their child/ren has now met the Criteria for Fast Track because of further unauthorised absence from school since issuing the Letter 1 (L1).
- c) Letter 3 (L3)- L3 sent to the parent/carer of any child who has been absent with no reason given or to request Medical Evidence for absence as a result of illness.
- d) Letter 4 (L4) – L4 sent to invite parent/carer into school for a pre-referral meeting; where parent/carer have failed to positively engage with Invicta Primary School or adhere to the School's Attendance Policy.
- e) Letter 5 (L5a/b) – L5 attended or failed to attend pre Referral meeting, further unauthorised absence will result in referral to the Attendance Advisory Service (AAS).
- f) Letter 6 (L6) – L6 is to notify parents of referral to the Attendance Advisory Service (AAS).

Holidays during term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking their children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

It is extremely unlikely that holiday applications will be authorised, unless they fall into the category of "exceptional circumstances".

The Headteacher and School Business Manager are responsible for determining which absences will be recorded as authorised and unauthorised on a pupil's individual record and on the school's Attendance Register.

If parents remove their child/ren from school in unauthorised circumstances such as a term-time holiday, then they may be issued with a Penalty Notice which could lead to a prosecution. The most obvious step for parents to take to avoid prosecution is to pay

the fine within the time frame stipulated within the notice. Under the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/1867) (as amended) the amount of the fine will be £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If this is not done, parents can be summoned to appear before a Magistrates' Court under a section 444(1) or (1A) offence.

Absences for Important Religious Observances

Absence for religious celebrations are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.