

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2019-20



This policy reflects the vision and aims of Polegate School by

- ❖ Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- ❖ Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Good attendance means being in school 98% of the time. That is no more than 4 days off in a school year.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a 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 may make things worse.

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- ❖ ***parents keeping children off school unnecessarily***
- ❖ ***truancy before or during the school day***

- ❖ ***absences which have never been properly explained***
- ❖ ***children who arrive at school too late to get a mark***

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service from the Local Authority. The Practitioner will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use Legal Interventions on parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

See appendix (i) for Monitoring and tracking attendance (East Sussex County Council)

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

If parents know that a child will be absent they are obliged to provide the school with a satisfactory explanation. It is preferable that contact should be made before registration on the first day of absence so that the class teacher can be informed: in any event the school should be contacted before 9.15 am.

Please note that it is the parents' responsibility to contact the school – not the other way round. If we need to contact you it is vitally important that we have a minimum of two emergency phone numbers to use. The reasons for the absence may be reported by telephone or in person by a responsible adult but we also require a written note when the child returns to school as these are held as a record for the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who makes routine inspections of our registers and checks attendance figures on regular basis. Unexplained absences are recorded as “unauthorised” and repeated incidents are passed to the EWO to take action.

A child may be absent from school because they are ill, have unavoidable family circumstances or have a medical appointment which cannot be arranged out of school hours. The school will not authorise absence for family celebrations, illness of other family members, day trips etc. Absence may, however, be authorised in an emergency e.g. bereavement.

Reporting a child's absence

Parents are asked to ring the school **01323 482404** and leave a message stating name, class and reason for absence before 9.15am, If a parent knows in advance that a child will be absent e.g. for a hospital appointment then a letter can be sent in or the school secretary can be told before the day

in question.

When a child returns to school after an absence a letter explaining the absence will need to be sent in. This helps us track reasons and keep accurate records. You are still required to call before 9.30am if your child is going to be absent and this is for Safeguarding reasons

If a child is off for 3 days or more then we will require medical evidence in the form of a doctor's appointment card or prescription. It is rare for children to be off for 3 days and an absence of this many days would be concerning so a visit to the GP would be expected.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special projects:

Our whole school target is 97% and our current aim is to close the gap between FSM and SEND attendance to ensure it is in line with the rest of the school.

See appendix (ii)

Late Arrivals

Lateness

At Polegate School the register is taken at 9 am and 1 pm for KS1 and 1.15 for KS2. The school follows a 'drift in' policy with school doors opening at 8.45; we encourage children to arrive as early as possible.

Children arriving after these times must enter school by the school office and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.00 am and 1.15 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Holidays in term time

Holidays in term time are likely to cause disruption to children's education. There is a form available from the school office which parents/ carers must use to inform the school of their intention to take a family holiday. The Headteacher will decide, with reference to the checklist provided by East Sussex County Council whether to authorise this holiday. In cases where the level of attendance is unacceptable or a child is removed from school for a period of more than 5 days without authorisation from the Headteacher, parents/ carers will be referred to the Attendance and Behaviour service, which may result in a subsequent fine.

DFE and East Sussex County Council guidance is that holidays should not be authorised by Headteachers, unless there are exceptional circumstances. See appendix (iii)

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

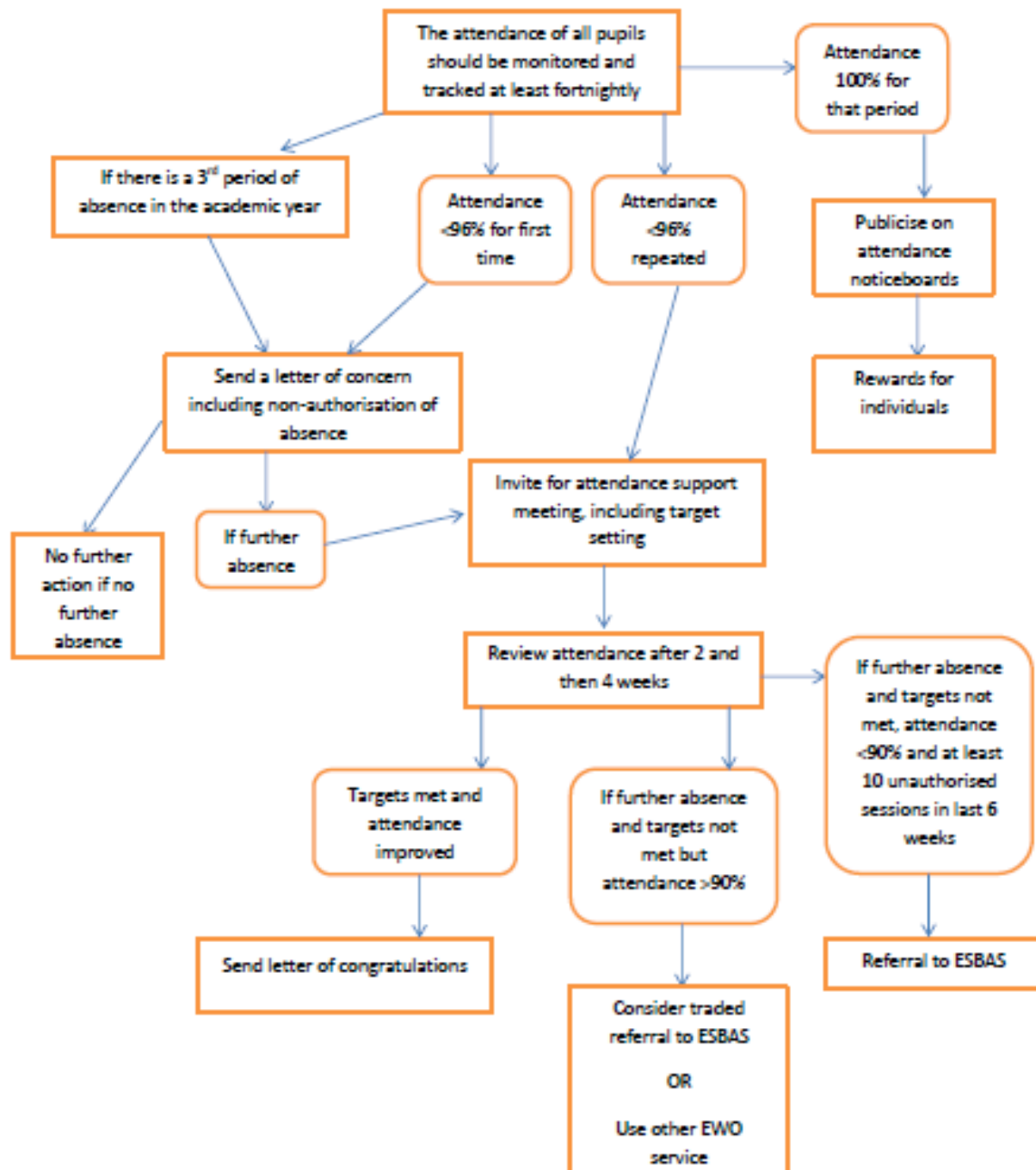
Claire Martin-O'Donoghue whole school
Una Holbrook SENCO SEND pupils

Summary

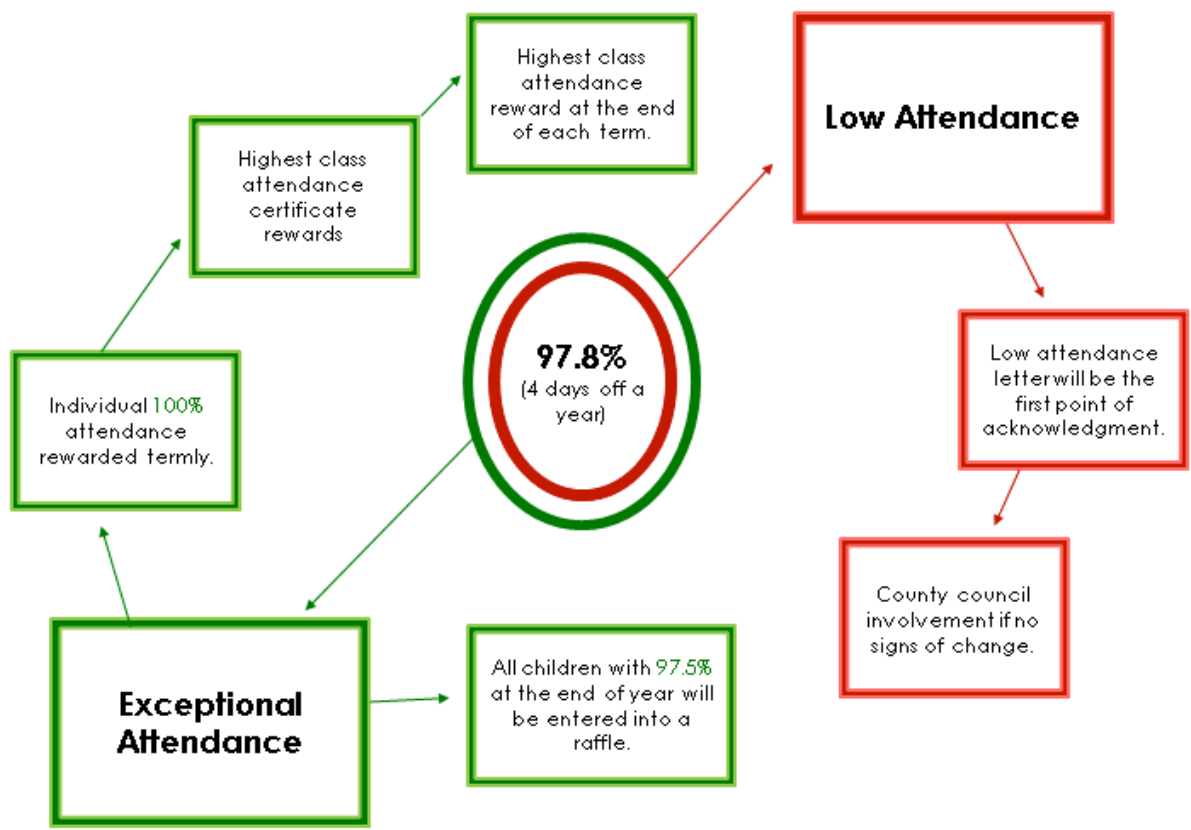
The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix (i)

Monitoring and tracking attendance (East Sussex County Council)



Appendix (ii)
Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives



Appendix (iii) **Term time holidays**

Rationale

Holidays in term time are likely to cause disruption to children's education. They can also effect the education of other children in the class if the teacher has to give time to individual children to catch up on work missed.

Guidance from the government and ESCC states that children should attend school every day that the school is open. The guidance acknowledges that legally Headteachers can, at their discretion and in exceptional circumstances, authorise a child's absence from school for reasons other than sickness. There is no nationally agreed definition of exceptional circumstances.

Parents and carers are asked to note the following:

- **Parents and carers do not have the right to remove their children from school for the purposes of a holiday in term time.**
- If parents / carers make a request, returning the form does not guarantee that the holiday will be approved.
- In line with government guidelines all but the most exceptional holiday absences will be recorded as unauthorised.
- In making a decision as to whether to authorise the absence or not the head teacher will take into account:
 - The reasons given for the holiday (exceptional circumstances only)
 - Whether the child will miss any preparation for tests / exams
 - Whether the child will miss any exams or tests
 - The number of days requested for the holiday

Making a holiday request

DFE and East Sussex County Council guidance is that holidays should not be authorised by the Headteacher, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- Fill in a holiday form available from the school office.
- Return the form to the school at least fourteen days before the start date of the holiday and preferably earlier.
- In signing the form parents are confirming that they understand the following:

- If a child is removed for a family holiday, without approval, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- A child who is removed for a prolonged period in term time will miss a large amount of school work while he or she is away and will be unprepared for the work on returning to school.
- The school cannot guarantee that the teacher will be able to spend time helping a child catch up with work missed during the holiday.
- Asking for extra work to do while on holiday may not be appropriate as much of the work done at school relies on the interaction between teacher and child to gain full understanding.

This policy will be monitored during the school year and reviewed on an annual basis, or in response to changed legislation or guidance from the DfES or ESCC.

Checklist to Assist Decision Making (Whether to Authorise Holiday)

