

Swale Academies Trust

Attendance & Punctuality

Policy and Procedures

Peacehaven Community School



Date Agreed by Governing Body: September 2020

Signed by Chair of Governors: Patricia Metham

Next Review Due: September 2021

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PCS Attendance Policy – Covid-19 amendment

In line with current DfE guidance, all students should be attending school unless they are self-isolating because of Covid 19 related-reasons.

We will still monitor absence and apply the following codes:

C	The student is eligible to attend but does not attend and doesn't fall into any of the below categories
I	The student is eligible to attend but is unable to do so due to illness
X	The student is not in a group that has been invited to attend school on that day

If your child has been invited to attend school but won't be attending, we ask that you use the normal absence procedures to let us know not to expect them in. Please call **01273 575832**. Depending on the cause of absence, we will let you know when and if you need to call again.

You should let us know if a student is remaining at home due to:

- **shielding** (themselves or others on recent written formal advice by a doctor or hospital consultant only)
- **self-isolation** (due to displaying coronavirus symptoms and/or a positive coronavirus test and/or another member of the household or close contact is displaying symptoms and/or has had a positive test).

It is vital that we are made aware of any positive Covid tests for students who have been in school immediately in order to ensure that anyone in proximity is alerted and required to self-isolate.

We also need to ensure that the correct absence coding is applied and that the information we report to the DfE is correct.

Students who have been invited to attend school must make every effort to arrive on time for their allotted session. Students who arrive late must avoid mixing with any other students and report directly to reception. Persistent lateness poses an unacceptable health and safety risk, as it affects our ability to maintain separation between student bubbles. Please refer to the PCS Behaviour Policy for steps that will be taken where a student's behaviour constitutes a H & S risk.

Equalities Statement

Over recent years, academies and schools have (in line with other institutions and public bodies) have been working towards an improved understanding of the diverse nature of their communities. Much of this work is in response to new legislation that places an increased duty on schools, academies and other settings. Legislation requires schools both to eliminate direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment and to promote equalities for students, staff and others who use the School's facilities. These developments reflect the growing awareness of the need to view different strands beneath one umbrella, rather than seeing them as separate elements, competing with each other for time and resources.

In our school, we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community across a range of strands, which include: Race, Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Age as well as any other factors which have the potential to cause discrimination, e.g. socio-economic factors.

For specific reference to these strands please refer to the Equalities Policy.

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Peacehaven Community School (PCS) 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.

Key Points and Summary

Regular and punctual attendance demonstrates that the students of PCS have a strong sense of identity and value the learning community they belong to. Their attendance reflects their pride in PCS and the value they place on their learning. The rigorous drive in continually striving to improve our attendance illustrates how all stakeholders recognise and understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

"Teachers in schools which achieve high rates of attendance maintain high expectations by continuing to insist that attendance is both important and obligatory. They are vigilant, and spend time in careful investigation of the causes of each absence, so that their response fits the circumstances".

"The fact that the students know their absence will be noted and there will be prompt follow up is in itself a sufficient deterrent for many."

Education Observed No.13 "Attendance at School" - HMI.

Principles

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

Scope and Applicability

PCS recognises that, while there is a dedicated Attendance Team, every member of the School has a role to play in supporting the School's aims and objectives in ensuring high attendance and punctuality.

The Policy

The main policy outlines the roles and responsibility for every member of the School and also that of parents and carers. The general descriptions in this main body of the policy are followed by detailed, fuller descriptions in the **Appendices**.

Roles and Responsibilities within the School

- a. Subject teacher, including staff covering
- b. Tutor - including staff covering
- c. Head of Year
- d. Assistant Head of Year
- e. Data Manager

- f. Senior Leadership
- g. Attendance Manager
- h. Attendance Officer

a. Subject teacher - including staff covering

The main duty of the subject teacher is to ensure that every time they take a lesson, an accurate register is taken. They understand and comply with the statutory requirement of an accurate and punctual register being taken first lesson in the morning and the first lesson after lunch as the AM and PM registers. If the electronic register is unable to be used, paper registers will be used and delivered promptly to the Attendance Office. If students return from absence, their teachers should provide them with support to catch up on missed work. If students are unable to come to school, work should be provided by regularly updating Google Classroom with the resources being used in class.

b. Tutor - including staff covering

The main duty of tutors is to monitor the attendance and punctuality of their charges and notice and take action on where a student's attendance appears to be dipping or inconsistent. They are required to raise any concerns with the Attendance Manager or Officer and must pass on any notes requesting or explaining an absence. They should make supportive phone calls home on the first day of any period of absence to check in and enquire if there is any information that the school ought to be made aware of.

c. Head of Year (HOY)

The HOY will support the Attendance Manager (AM) and Attendance Officer (AO) in her/his role. They will regularly meet with and mentor the Persistent Absentees (pink wave) as identified by the Attendance Team. The HOY monitors the attendance and punctuality for the year group to which they are attached and works with the Attendance Office to support students for whom attendance and punctuality are issues.

d. Assistant Head of Year (AHOY)

The AHOY will support the HOY to mentor students in the pink wave for attendance. They will support the Attendance Team by following up absences within their year/house on a regular basis.

e. Data Manager (Whole School)

The Data Manager supports the Attendance Officer and Manager by providing up-to-date data when requested.

f. Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will create an ethos where attendance matters are valued by all stakeholders of the School. They will work to develop effective systems for tracking, monitoring and improving whole school attendance. A member of SLT will have responsibility for attendance and will work strategically to improve attendance across the school by working with the pastoral and administrative teams.

g. Attendance Manager (AM)

The AM to coordinate the recording of accurate attendance registers and support with intervention for students whose attendance becomes concerning. They will support SLT in creating and maintaining systems to improve attendance and punctuality and will provide key attendance data. They will work to create an ethos where attendance and punctuality are valued by all stakeholders of the School.

h. Attendance Officer (AO)

The AO will work with the AM to track the recording of accurate attendance registers and support with intervention for students whose attendance becomes concerning. They will support the AM in creating and maintaining systems to improve attendance and punctuality and will provide key attendance and punctuality data.

Roles and Responsibilities : Parents and Carers

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that students attend school regularly and are punctual. This will help to ensure that every student achieves to the best of their potential. Notes for parents can be found in the Appendices A-E.

Appendix A

Attendance Procedures for Individual Absence

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

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 (e.g. after registers have closed)***

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 (ESBAS) 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 seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Parents/carers must inform the School by telephone on the first day of absence (and on subsequent days).

A parent should leave a message on the school absence line with a reason for their child's absence on **01273 575832** before 8:30am.

Morning registration takes place at **8:50am** each day and all children are expected to be in school and ready to attend their first lesson at 8.40am in order to secure a registration mark.

After this time, they will be recorded as late, even if they are on the school premises and have failed to attend the start of P1 without permission from a member of staff.

Late Procedure

First late / week – Students will be given a warning if it is their first late in the week. Straight to lunchtime detention if repeated.

Second late / week – Students will be given a ten minute lunchtime detention with the AM.

Third late / repeated lateness – Students will be given a 30 minute detention after school.

Any students that are repeatedly late are referred to the Attendance Team. In these instances, detentions escalate straight to after school/calls made home to parents. The Head of Year/House is informed who will interview the students and meet with parents.

In the event that a child is persistently late and recorded as late, the school may request that a Fixed Penalty Notice is applied.

Truancy calls, texts or emails are sent out each day to alert parents if their child is not in school and no absence message has been left. This system ensures that we know the whereabouts of the students in our care and is in line with our safeguarding.

If a parent/carer has concerns over issues that might affect their child's attendance, they should contact either the Attendance Officer, the Assistant Head of Year or the relevant member of the Pastoral Team (e.g. Tutor) so that the school can work with the family to resolve any issues prior to a referral to the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service within the Local Authority.

A **medical certificate** will be required if your child is/children are absent for **more than 3 days**. When requested by the school, parents/carers must provide medical evidence as proof of absence. If this is not provided, the absence will be classed as unauthorised. Medical evidence is also requested where attendance has previously dropped and is therefore being tracked.

It is not usually appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time. Medical appointments should be scheduled outside of the school day wherever possible.

In line with our Safeguarding Policy, a priority call list of students is in place for those who fall into a vulnerable group category (LAC, Child Protection Concerns and Young Carers). In the case of any of these students being absent they are contacted before the register closes and where needed appropriate external agencies informed.

Appendix B - Attendance Procedures for Requested Leave of Absence (including holidays)

PCS discourages parents/carers from taking their child out of school during term dates. The Headteacher will not authorise holidays in school time unless in exceptional circumstances. In the case of an unauthorised holiday, ESBAS will be notified of the holiday taken and a Penalty Notice will be issued. Please note that such a Penalty is issued to each parent/carer for each child taken out of school.

However, if there are exceptional circumstances, a completed leave of absence form must be sent to the Headteacher (a minimum of 14 days before the start of the absence), who may choose to authorise the holiday. Leave of absence forms can be collected from the school Reception. The maximum number of holiday authorisations possible is one per academic year even under exceptional circumstances.

The Department for Education guidance regarding taking holidays in term time is very clear and we as a school follow this closely. Consequently, if you book your child out of school for a holiday of less than 5 days and subsequently your child is off sick before the holiday is due to start or has extra days off after the holiday finishes, we will ask for a copy of the holiday booking or a Doctor's certificate, to confirm either the holiday dates or the child's sickness. Failure to produce this evidence will result in the School referring the family to the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service with the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice. Please be aware that the School can also issue a Fixed Term Penalty notice independently.

Appendix C - Persistent Absence Procedures

Staged Intervention Process

For implementation during 2020-21 at PCS:

Pre-intervention – a letter from the attendance office and/or phone call home by the tutor or AHOY for any student that is tracked as falling below 97% and is not in any other category. Supportive, asking if they were aware and what can we do to support.

Stage 1 – Head of Year & Attendance Team meet with those who have fallen into the 93% - 95.9% category. Parents are invited to attend a meeting with the AM/HOY to discuss any support that can be offered. This meeting is held if a student has been absent due to medical concerns; such as Physical, Mental Health and Chronic conditions, or pastoral issues at school.

The day before any meeting in this intervention process, the parent/carers is contacted by phone to confirm their attendance.

If the meeting is not attended by parent/carers, the meeting goes ahead with targets set and this is communicated through a letter and a phone call by either the HoY or Attendance Team.

Stage 2 – Member of SLT and Attendance Team meet with the parent and student if they have not met the targets from Stage 1. New targets are set within a clear time frame and it is mentioned that parents could be fined if there is no improvement. Very supportive meeting. Letter with targets sent home and student met weekly by the Attendance Manager / Tutor/ HOY/ AHOY.

Stage 3 – Headteacher and AT meet with the student and parent to explain that there has been no improvement from the Stage 2 meeting within the timeframe set at previous meetings. New targets are set and it is explained that if there is no improvement after a set period of time then we will have no option but to prosecute or issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. Letter with targets is sent home and student met weekly by one of the following: Attendance Manager / Tutor/ HOY/ AHOY

Stage 4 – If there is no improvement and there is enough evidence then there will be a move to pursue prosecution or Fixed Penalty Notice.

Appendix D - Teaching & Learning: Improving Attendance

Top tips to improve attendance in your lesson:

1. Welcome all students – make them feel valued.
2. Use praise, emphasising the importance of attendance for learning.
3. Integrate students arriving late quickly and smoothly by planning appropriate starter activities.
4. Follow up punctuality issues at the end of the lesson using an appropriate sanction where relevant.
5. Give students “the big picture” about the unit of work.
6. Integrate returning students and inconsistent attenders by considering key tools such as differentiation, peer support, seating plans and catchup material.
7. Know who is attending and who isn't. Find out why.
8. Include in the plenary a plug for the next lesson or use a cliff-hanger approach. Stress the importance of attending the next lesson.
9. Use one-to-one opportunities to acknowledge and praise individual improvements in attendance. Relate to improved learning.
10. Use the School reward system to promote the link between good attendance and effective learning.

Guidance for supporting returning students:

1. Greet the student back into your lesson politely and ensure that they are able to access the work that the class are doing at that time.
2. Ensure that appropriate differentiation is used to allow the student success during the lesson – if the student feels pressured and unable to cope they may choose to miss the next lesson as a result.
3. Take time out with the student to ensure that any concerns they have are considered.
4. Ensure the student has access to any work missed during the time of absence
5. Secure the support of a learning buddy who may be able to assist the student both in future lessons and, perhaps, with any outstanding homework or coursework.
6. Ensure that all subject-specific work considerations are discussed and that the student is confident about completing missed work.
7. Use one-to-one opportunities to acknowledge and praise individual improvements in attendance. Relate it to improved learning.
8. At no time should you use negative language or sarcasm to greet a student who has been absent for some time – for example: ‘Oh welcome back – did you enjoy your holiday’, ‘Good morning – are you a new student?’ Although often said in fun, such negative comments may have an adverse impact upon future attendance.

Appendix E - Overall School Attendance

These actions will be aligned with existing PCS Waves of Attendance actions and implemented during 2019-20.

The following interventions will be used to support individual attendance targets:

Individual Child Attendance falls below 97%

If a child's attendance falls below 97%, their tutor will contact the parent/carer to communicate their concerns. A letter will also be sent to communicate that any further absences must be accompanied by medical evidence.

Individual Child Attendance falls below 94%

If a child's attendance falls below 94%, their Head of Year will invite the parent/carer and child to a meeting. The child will then be placed on an attendance report to their Head of Year for 10 weeks, with an expectation of 100% attendance during that time (any further absences must be accompanied by medical evidence). An additional 10 unauthorised absences may result in a referral for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued by the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service.

Individual Child Attendance falls below 90%

Once a student hits 90% attendance or below, they meet the government's criteria for 'Persistent Absence'. Which will begin the **Staged Intervention Process (Appendix C)**.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are: (School Specific)

Darren Warner-Swann – Headteacher

Madi Bliss – Assistant Headteacher for Attendance

Ann-Marie Waite – Assistant Headteacher, SENCO & Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Rachel Henocq – Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour & DSL

Marie Wootten – Attendance Manager

Angie Williams – Attendance Officer

Pastoral Teams

All staff within Peacehaven Community School are responsible for supporting excellent attendance in line with the school ethos of *Aspire, Believe, Achieve*.