

## **Roberttown CE (vc) J&I School Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **Aims**

All children of compulsory school age have the right to attend school regularly and punctually. Regular and punctual school attendance is essential if children are to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. We expect all children to have 100% attendance unless absence is authorised.

Our aim is to ensure that every child will want to attend school and will achieve maximum possible attendance. We want to ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.

As a school we follow and uphold the Kirklees and DfE guidance, Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments on Attendance and absence.

Roberttown School will:

- promote a warm, welcoming and secure atmosphere where pupils feel valued
- identify and act upon problems or obstacles which may impede full attendance
- raise awareness of the importance of good attendance
- monitor and promote regular attendance
- work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. Leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application has been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

It is important that we work in partnership with parents/carers to promote punctuality and regular attendance. Each has distinctive roles and responsibilities that enhance and complement each other. If difficulties do occur, a quicker and better resolution will be found by working together.

**Pupils will:**

- attend school regularly and on time
- go to bed at a reasonable time

**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.
- inform school by 9.30am on the first day of absence
- keep school informed if the absence should continue
- avoid term time holidays
- make medical and dental appointments out of school time
- 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)
- 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.

**Class Teacher will contribute by:**

- monitoring pupil attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attainment
- following the correct procedure and codes when completing the electronic register using Integris G2 software
- following school procedures when a child is absent and ensuring that a reason for absence is established and recorded
- *welcoming* a child back after *any* absence from school
- providing a re-introduction plan and support after extended absence from school
- liaising with parents regarding any initial concerns
- reporting pupils with significant attendance concerns promptly to the Headteacher
- positively encouraging good attendance and punctuality
- supporting and encouraging reward schemes introduced by the school to promote good attendance and punctuality
- discussing attendance issues at parent consultation evenings where necessary

**Office Staff will contribute by:**

- following up unexplained absence promptly on the first day of absence and reporting concerns straight away to the Headteacher or teacher in charge
- producing evacuation reports each morning and after lunch for emergency evacuation purposes
- monitor the electronic registers on a daily basis
- positively encouraging pupils when they arrive late
- following procedures for late arrivals eg: taking children to class, ordering a dinner if required and passing on information regarding illness/appointments etc
- positively engaging and encouraging parents/carers in their responsibility to ensure good attendance of their child
- maintaining and compiling attendance data and analysis half termly
- providing the LA with attendance data as requested

- maintain clear communication with the Headteacher regarding attendance and punctuality
- ensuring staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.
- informing parents/carers of school procedures, when they have failed to inform the school.

**Headteacher will contribute by:**

- reviewing school attendance each half term
- raising awareness of individuals who are experiencing particular difficulties to classteachers, office staff
- communicating the policy and maintaining the profile of attendance with parents, staff and pupils
- informing and providing an annual report for Governors
- ensuring that the school meets all the legal requirements in relation to attendance
- contributing to legal proceedings as required
- referring pupils with concerns to the APSO (Attendance Pupil Support Officer).

**Governors will contribute by:**

- fulfilling their role and responsibility for pupils' attendance at school and monitoring both the attendance data and the strategies employed by the school
- enabling the Headteacher in her day to day management of attendance and punctuality
- requesting and giving due consideration to an annual report with details of attendance data and strategies to raise the level of attendance, given by the Headteacher
- using the annual report information to set the following years' attendance targets, in line with guidance from the APSO (Attendance Pupil Support Officer and the DfE guidance.

**Maintaining Awareness**

Awareness of the importance of attendance at school will be maintained through reward schemes, class discussions, staff meetings and in the school Newsletter.

**Communicating With Parents**

It is important that *all* communication is positive and constructive. The aim of any communication should be to enhance the educational opportunities for the child.

School will communicate with the parents ensuring:

- the key elements, requirements and the need for good attendance are included in the School Prospectus
- the importance of good attendance and the procedures relating to absence are included in the Home/School Agreement
- report annually to parents on their child's attendance
- issues of attendance and punctuality are raised at parent consultation meetings and specifically addressed through attendance monitoring.

## **Reasons for Absence**

### **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments**

Parents are encouraged to make appointments outside school hours.

A written note from a parent *before* the absence is needed. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter) However, a telephone message will be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Parents/Carers should inform school by 9.30am on the first day of absence. A member of staff will be available to receive telephone messages from 8.30am. 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 notes regarding absence will kept in the green class register.

The school will keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to school in case of an emergency.

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 Headteacher 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.

- 1) By 9.20am: First day text sent to first name on contact list asking for response
- 2) If no response to text call first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time (9.35am)
- 3) Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted
- 4) If no reply send second text and email to first and second contacts on list
- 5) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time (9.50am)
- 6) HT/DSL to risk assess the current level of concern and consider whether circumstances warrant a home visit
- 7) Home visit to be made following decision at 6, where possible by school staff or any other agency involved with the child. NB staff **MUST** not undertake a visit alone.
- 8) Contact Police to initiate a “safe and well” check if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This should be done using the 101 number.

## **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, 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.

## **Religious Observance**

A note is needed from parents *before* the child’s absence. This is for absence on any day set aside exclusively for religious observance.

## **Leave of Absence Requests**

Parents should not take pupils on holiday during term time. Such absences can be very disruptive to pupils' learning and development. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application has been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Requests for leave of absence must be made on the school's official 'Leave of absence Form', which is available from school, or can be downloaded from the school website: [www.roberttownschool.co.uk](http://www.roberttownschool.co.uk)

## **Criteria for deciding whether the leave will be authorised**

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.

Roberttown School follows the DFE and Kirklees guidance which only allows leave of absence to be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Leave of absence taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlap with beginning/end of term

Headteachers are asked to determine if each request is reasonable and on a case by case basis.

The NAHT have produced guidance for Headteachers to determine whether circumstances are 'exceptional' and this is used to support the decision making process (please see Appendix). Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

## **Consequences of taking unauthorised leave**

Where a family chooses to take leave of absence during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for

each child absent. If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded.

If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer. The penalty if prosecuted is a fine up to £1000 and a criminal record. In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Should a child be removed from school for a leave of absence lasting more than three weeks then the child's name may be removed from the school roll. This will necessitate the parent/carer having to apply for a place at the school when the absence ends.

### **Exclusion**

For a fixed term exclusion any absence will be authorised.

### **Absence Procedures**

All absences should be recorded in the register using the appropriate codes – see Appendix.

School will follow up unknown absences promptly by contacting parents at home or at work. In situations where there have been either attendance difficulties, or the child has already been referred to the APSO (Attendance Pupil Support Office) the APSO will be contacted straight away.

If a Looked After Child or a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is absent without satisfactory explanation, or if we are unable to contact the parent/carer the Headteacher will contact the link Social Worker.

If a member of staff is concerned about a child's safety during the absence, Safeguarding procedures should be followed in the first instance.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The class teacher will monitor pupil attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attainment, and liaise with parents about any initial concerns.

The class teacher will report pupils with significant concerns promptly to the Headteacher.

The school office will monitor attendance each half term and produce reports showing:

- whole school attendance for the academic year to date
- class attendance for the academic year to date

- individual attendance reports for children whose attendance is 90% or below 90%
- individual attendance reports for children who have been late more than 10 times in the academic year to date
- individual attendance reports for children who have unauthorised absence
- children achieving 100% attendance in a term (termly)

The Headteacher will review the attendance analysis and take appropriate action. This may include:

- writing to the parents
- meeting with the parents to discuss the attendance
- monitoring the attendance
- referring the child to the Education Social Work Team

### **Daily Registration Procedures**

The electronic register is taken between 8.50am and 9.00am each morning. The school office must be informed if any children have not arrived in class by 9am, unless we already know that they are on holiday/visiting the doctor/dentist etc. Messages that have been rung into school will be passed on ASAP.

The electronic register is also taken at the start of the afternoon session.

The appropriate codes, as outlined in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 should be entered against each child's name. If a child is not present, an absence code should entered and altered at a later stage if necessary.

When the registers have been checked each morning and after lunchtime the Office staff will run an Evacuation report. This will be used to check off all children in the event of an evacuation.

Notes from parents should be logged in the front of the paper register. If the class teacher is not satisfied with the explanation for the absence, this should be raised with the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the reason for absence, then the Headteacher may choose to record the absence as unauthorised.

### **School Session Times**

Reception, Yrs1& 2 - Morning session	Afternoon session
8.50am - 11.55am	1.00pm - 3.15pm
Yrs 3, 4, 5 & 6 - 8.50am - 12.00 noon	1.00pm - 3.15pm

### **Lateness**

The external doors to the classrooms must be closed by 8.55am. Any latecomers must enter school through the Main Entrance. Office staff will take the children to class and



ensure that a dinner is ordered, if required. They will also pass on relevant information to the class teacher with regards to the reason for their late arrival.

Pupils who come into school from 8.55am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.15am 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 9.15am 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 parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **Rewards for Attendance**

### **Class Reward**

If the class achieves higher than 97% attendance during the half term, approximately ten minutes extra play is awarded.

If a class achieves 100% attendance for the full week approximately ten minutes extra play is awarded.

### **Individual**

Full attendance during a term will be rewarded with a special attendance sticker.

APSO (Attendance Pupil Support Office)

The school works with the APSO who is available to support the school, pupils and their families. The school will liaise with the APSO regularly through meetings with the Headteacher.

## **Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy**

Performance Indicators:

- overall attendance figures show that we are attaining school targets
- reduction in the number of absentees
- reduction in the number of children arriving after the register has closed

This policy is a working document, therefore, the review will be dependent upon the practice it has promoted. Consultation is thus envisaged with the whole school.

This policy will be reviewed as part of our rolling programme of policy review.

## Appendix: Attendance and Absence Codes

### Attendance Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

### Administrative codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

## Absence Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their GCSEs
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when reason emerges)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

**Roberttown CE (vc) J&I School**  
**Application for Leave of Absence during School Term Time (Sept 2017)**

**Names of Pupils:**

1. .... **Class:** .....

2. .... **Class:** .....

**Holiday dates: From:** ..... **To:** .....

**Number of days absent from school:** .....

**Please explain the exceptional circumstances that mean that absence is required during term time. Please note that if you are requesting absence due to workplace holiday allocation we will require written evidence of this from your employer:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**(Please continue on the back of the sheet if required)**

**Signed:** ..... **Parent/Carer**    **Date:** .....

Please return the form to school as soon as possible **before** the leave of absence. Please note permission may not be granted retrospectively. A letter approving or denying permission will be sent as soon as possible.

**SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL**

<b>Name of child</b>	<b>% attendance previous year</b>	<b>Days taken in previous year</b>	<b>% attendance current year</b>	<b>Days taken already in current</b>

<b>Name of child</b>	<b>% attendance previous year</b>	<b>Days taken in previous year</b>	<b>% attendance current year</b>	<b>Days taken already in current year</b>

**Appendix: Pro forma letters PNS1 - Request for a Penalty Notice for Leave of absence**

(NOTE : Penalty notices are issued against both parents/carers. Full names are essential)

<b>Parent/Carer 1</b>		<b>Last name:</b>	
<b>First name:</b>			
<b>Address:</b>		<b>Tel:</b>	

<b>Parent/Carer 2</b>		<b>Last name:</b>	
<b>First name:</b>			
<b>Address:</b>		<b>Tel:</b>	

<b>Pupil</b>		<b>Last name:</b>	
<b>First name:</b>			
<b>UPN:</b>		<b>DOB:</b>	
<b>Ethnicity:</b>		<b>School Name:</b>	

<b>Information about this Leave of absence:</b>			
Was permission for this absence requested in advance by the parent?			
Was permission given?			
Dates of the unauthorised absence:	<b>From:</b>		<b>To:</b>
Dates of any absence you have authorised:	<b>From:</b>		<b>To:</b>

<b>Signed: (Head Teacher)</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
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<b>Please indicate that the following documents are included in this pack:</b>	
An attendance certificate showing the absences marked as an unauthorised holiday (code G if leave of absence was requested or O if the leave of absence was unrequested).	
A copy of the letter or communication from the parent(s) requesting the leave of absence.	
A copy of any corresponding evidence from the parent(s), e.g. flight tickets or details of leave of absence.	
A copy of the letter to the parent(s) ( <u>if applicable addressed to both</u> ) advising them that the leave of absence has been refused (if applicable);	
A copy of the letter to the parent(s) ( <u>if applicable addressed to both</u> ) advising them that a penalty notice will be issued.	

<u>For Administrative use only</u>	
Authorised by .....	Date .....
Authorised by .....	Date .....

**Form PNS2 – Pro-forma witness statement**

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.1(1)  
Criminal Justice Act 1967, Section 9, MC Act 1980 s.5B

**Statement of:** [INSERT HEADTEACHER'S NAME]

**Age if under 18:** Over 18

This statement (consisting of ... pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

**Signature:**

**Date :**

**STATEMENT IN RESPECT OF: INSERT DEFENDANT'S NAME (PARENT/CARER)**

I am the Head teacher of [insert full name of school].

I can confirm that [insert child's name / date of birth] is on the register at the above school.

I can confirm that (Insert Parent/Carer's name) of (Insert address) is this child's parent/carer

I have checked the school attendance records and can confirm that the attendance record shown as exhibit (**Exhibit – Head teacher's initials 1**) is a true and accurate record of [insert child's name] attendance at school between [insert date] to [insert date]. The record shows that (insert child's name) was absent from school without authorisation from (insert date) to (insert date).

Permission to take (insert name) out of school for the period was requested (**Exhibit – Head teacher's initials and number**) and refused (**Exhibit –Head teacher's initials and number**).

OR:

Permission was not requested for this leave of absence.

Following the unauthorised leave, a letter (**Exhibit – Head teacher's initials and number**) was sent to the parents confirming this and informing them of the application for fixed penalty notices which were subsequently issued. No response was received and the penalty notices were not paid.

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**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Head Teacher Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

I can confirm that:

- This school has a written attendance policy in place which includes procedures in relation to leave of absence.
- A summary of the leave of absence policy is included in the brochure (or provided separately as an addendum) and communicated regularly to parents.
- The absence to which this request refers is recorded as unauthorised in the school register.

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Head Teacher Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## PNS 4 - LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST AUTHORISED

Name  
Address etc.

Dear (Name of Parent/s)

**Re: Leave of absence request for .....**

Following your recent request for .....to be allowed leave of absence, I am writing to confirm that I have authorised this planned absence, from .....to ..... My reasons are as follows:

- 
- 
- 

However, I must point out that the school strongly discourages leave of absence during term time.

I must also draw your attention to the school's Attendance Policy. This makes it clear that if *leave of absence occurs* which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued. The penalty notice is for £60, for each parent of each child, if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid after this date but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence you may be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

Finally, you also need to be aware that **if your child does not return to school on the date stated** in the request, the school place is at risk of being withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

**PNS5 - LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST NOT AUTHORISED**

*Name*  
*Address etc.*

Dear (*Name of Parent/s*)

**Re: Leave of absence request for .....**

Following your recent request for ..... to be granted leave of absence, I regret that I am unable to authorise this leave. My reasons are as follows:

- 
- 
- 

Should you continue with your plans for ..... , I must draw your attention to the school's Attendance Policy. This makes it clear that if a leave of absence occurs which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued.

The penalty notice is for £60, for each parent of each child, if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid after this date but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence you may be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

Finally, you also need to be aware that if your child fails to return to school following 20 days of absence, he/she is at risk of losing their school place.

Yours sincerely

## PNS6 - ABSENCE NOT AUTHORISED – WARNING LETTER

*Name*  
*Address etc.*

Dear (*Name of Parent/s*)

### **Penalty notice warning – leave of absence**

It has come to my attention that .....has been absent from school for ..... days from..... to ..... This leave of absence was not authorised by the school.

The school's Attendance Policy makes it clear that parents must seek permission for leave of absence in writing from the head teacher in advance should they wish to take students out of school. If leave, or part of the leave, is taken which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued.

The penalty notice is for £60, for each parent of each child, if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid after this date but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence you may be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

On this occasion I have decided not to request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice against you. You should consider this letter as a warning and any further leave of absence without prior permission **will** lead to such action being taken against you.

Yours sincerely

## PNS7 - ABSENCE NOT AUTHORISED – PENALTY NOTICE LETTER

*Name*  
*Address etc.*

Dear (*Name of Parent/s*)

### **Penalty notice for leave of absence**

It has come to my attention that .....has been absent from school for ..... days from ..... to ..... This leave of absence was not authorised by the school.

The school's Attendance Policy makes it clear that parents must seek permission for leave of absence in writing from the head teacher in advance should they wish to take students out of school. If leave, or part of the leave, is taken which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued.

The school will be arranging for a penalty notice to be issued against you. The penalty notice request will be processed by Kirklees Council in due course on behalf of the school.

The penalty notice will be issued to each parent of each child. Each penalty notice will be for £60 if it is paid within 21 days, and will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence you may be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

Yours sincerely

## PNS8 - DID NOT RETURN BY DUE DATE – WARNING LETTER

*Name*  
*Address etc.*

Dear *(Name of Parent/s)*

### **Penalty notice warning – leave of absence**

It has come to my attention that .....did not return from the authorised leave of absence by the agreed date. This means that .....days of this absence have been treated as unauthorised.

The school's Attendance Policy makes it clear that parents must seek permission for leave of absence in writing from the head teacher in advance should they wish to take students out of school. If leave, or part of the leave, is taken which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued.

The penalty notice is for £60, for each parent of each child, if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid after this date but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence, you can be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

On this occasion I have decided not to request that the Local Authority issues a penalty notice against you. You should consider this letter as a warning and that any further unauthorised leave of absence **will** lead to such action being taken against you.

Yours sincerely

## **PNS9 - DID NOT RETURN BY DUE DATE – PENALTY NOTICE**

*Name*  
*Address etc.*

Dear *(Name of Parent/s)*

### **Penalty notice for leave of absence**

It has come to my attention that .....did not return from the authorised leave of absence by the agreed date. This means that .....days of this absence have been treated as unauthorised.

The school's Attendance Policy makes it clear that parents must seek permission for leave of absence in writing from the head teacher in advance should they wish to take students out of school. If leave, or part of the leave, is taken which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued.

As you did not request permission for the entire leave of absence, the school will be arranging for a penalty notice to be issued against you. The penalty notice request will be processed by Kirklees Council in due course on behalf of the school.

The penalty notice will be issued to each parent of each child. Each penalty notice will be for £60 if it is paid within 21 days, it will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence you may be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

Yours sincerely

## PNS10 - LEAVE NOT REQUESTED – PENALTY NOTICE LETTER

*Name*  
*Address etc.*

Dear (*Name of Parent/s*)

### **Penalty notice for leave of absence**

It has come to my attention that .....is currently absent from school and this leave of absence was not requested.

The school's Attendance Policy makes it clear that parents must seek permission for leave of absence in writing from the head teacher in advance should they wish to take students out of school. If leave, or part of the leave, is taken which has not been authorised, a penalty notice may be issued.

As you did not request permission for this absence, the school will be arranging for a penalty notice to be issued against you. The penalty notice request will be processed by Kirklees Council in due course on behalf of the school.

The penalty notice will be issued to each parent of each child. Each penalty notice will be for £60 if it is paid within 21 days, it will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular attendance at school. If you are found guilty of the offence you may be fined up to £1,000, and you will receive a criminal record.

Finally, you also need to be aware that if your child fails to return to school following 20 days of absence, he/she is at risk of losing their school place.

Yours sincerely



## Guidance on authorised absence in schools

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for students during term time. We believe it is valuable to have some guiding principles to back schools in their decisions and provide consistency. This guidance has no statutory authority and is not imposed upon schools. However, the legal definition of exceptional circumstances is that it must be exceptional to the child.

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.
2. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
6. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave. However, if the funeral is held abroad, it is considered acceptable to authorise up to a maximum of 5 school days.
7. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
8. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
9. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
10. Families may need time together to recover



11. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.

12. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

## **Background**

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also stated that head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

The DfE advice on school attendance (November 2013)\* should also be considered and read in conjunction with the 2013 regulations.

(\*Most recent guidance – November 2016)

We believe the guidelines in this document to be compatible with the above policy. They clarify the definition of external circumstances; they do not change it.

Ofsted have confirmed that their focus is on whether recurrent absence is being addressed; only if there is an issue with this will they look more deeply into why the school has authorised absence. Concern about inspection should not govern schools' decisions in this area. Head teachers are under pressure to meet overall absence thresholds however.

## **Variations to term time**

Where schools serve communities whose patterns of work create a regular barrier to attendance and family life schools could consider changes to term times. Where this involves changes to compulsory terms, we strongly recommend this is co-ordinated across schools and local authorities in an area.

Some schools have adopted flexible term patterns, with the same overall number of days of study but some discretion to families under certain conditions.