

# Attendance Policy

## Acre Rigg Infant School

Last reviewed in	September 2025
Next review due	September 2026



Every child Every day Every way Experiencing success

## Attendance Key Contacts

**Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.**

Name	Role	Contact details
Kate Longstaff	Head Teacher	(0191) 586 4437 <a href="mailto:acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net">acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net</a>
Kate Longstaff	Senior Attendance Champion	(0191) 586 4437 <a href="mailto:acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net">acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net</a>
Elaine Jones	Chair of Governors (with responsibility for attendance)	(0191) 586 4437 <a href="mailto:acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net">acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net</a>

**If a pupil is going to be absent from school, please contact the school office on (0191) 586 4437.**

**If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:**

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Kate Longstaff	Headteacher	(0191) 586 4437 <a href="mailto:acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net">acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net</a>
Mrs Simcox / Miss Garrod	Administration Assistant Office Manager	(0191) 586 4437 <a href="mailto:acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net">acrerigginfants@durhamlearning.net</a>
Karen Harrison	Parent Support Advisor	07775 574 978
Family Hub (Peterlee / Horden)	Family Support	03000 261 111
School Attendance Improvement Team (AIT)	Local Authority Attendance Support	03000 265 650 <a href="mailto:AIT@durham.gov.uk">AIT@durham.gov.uk</a>

## **Help & Support**

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

## **Children Missing from Education**

If any pupil's whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils placed in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

## **Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos**

**Acre Rigg Infant School** seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly,

safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory](#) guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

### **The school day**

The school day is from 8:45am until 3:15pm.

At 8:45am the bell will ring to indicate the start of the school day. Teachers will be in place in their classrooms.

Classes 1 and 2 will enter school through the porch doors, nearest to their classrooms.

Classes 3 and 4 will enter school through their classroom doors.

Classes 5 and 6 will enter school through the porch doors, nearest their classrooms.

Class 7 will enter school through their own class door, situated near the quiet area of the playground.

Classes 8 and 9 will enter school through the main entrance.

At 3:15pm a bell will signal the end of the school day. All children are collected from their own classroom. Class 8 and 9 are brought to the main entrance.

Registration is 8:45am - 8:50am. The register will close at 8:50am. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). If a child arrives after 8:50am, they should enter school through the main entrance, via the school office. They will be taken to their classroom by a member of staff.

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close at 9:20am.

Pupils who are not present before the register closes but attend during the session will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact the school office on (0191) 586 4437 if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

## **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the register.

## **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions**

Each parent or carer will receive a punctuality concern letter via post and may be invited into a meeting with the Headteacher. Punctuality will continue to be closely monitored and further action taken if appropriate.

## **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality**

To support parents and carers with a child's punctuality, we offer a free breakfast club for all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Further steps to address this include meetings with parents and Parent Support Advisor.

## **Term dates and planned Inset days**

Term dates and planned Inset days can be located in your child's Parent Information Pack (if applicable), on the school website or a copy can be obtained from the school office. A list of key dates for parents and carers is also issued at the start of each academic school year.

## **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in [regulation 11 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission must be in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form which is available from the school office or can be downloaded from the school's website.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.**

## **On the first day of absence**

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the School via telephone, providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school (telephone primary contacts then emergency contacts, an email will then be sent to the primary contact(s). Further contact attempts will be made via telephone and if there is still no contact, a home visit may be carried out.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

### **Periods of extended absence**

Parents and carers are expected to contact school each day their child is absent to provide an update unless stated below.

**Sickness and diarrhoea** – children should be kept off school for 48 hours after the last episode. A call should be made on the first day of absence. If there are no further episodes since the initial phone call to school then the child would be expected to return to school after the 48 hours.

**Chickenpox** – children should remain off school at least five days and until all the blisters have crusted over. A phone call would be expected on the first day of absence then an update on the third and fifth days.

### **No reason for absence provided**

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the local authority.

### **Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

## **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

- A daily attendance return is submitted to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, website, letters home
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance

## **Attendance data**

- We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.
- We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.
- We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.
- We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.
- We will communicate information to parents, staff and other professionals such as early help, TAF, TAS etc.

## **Absence concerns**

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

## **Persistent absence**

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. Parents/carers will be invited in to see the Headteacher to identify and support with barriers to attendance. Referrals may be made to wider support services.

## **Severe absence**

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent.

School will work together with pupils, parents and partner services and agencies to provide additional support through a more formal, planned approach in conjunction with the local authority to prevent severe absence (persistently absent pupils 70% or below) – review Attendance Support Meeting involving the School Attendance Champion.

## **National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention**

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#))

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet](#))

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence.

If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

## APPENDIX A

### **The school and all partners will work together to:**

#### **EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



#### **MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



#### **LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



#### **FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



#### **FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



#### **ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.





## Fixed Penalty Notices for irregular attendance at school Important information for parents

### 1 Overview

Penalty notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure their child attends school regularly. They can be used in cases where absence has not been authorised by a head teacher.

The notices are used to prevent the need for court action, for example, when support has not been engaged with or is not appropriate (for example, leave of absence during term time). **Changes from September 2024 are shown below.**

### 2 Leave

Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation **would not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

### 3 Absence

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if there are **5 days / 10 sessions** of absence in a period of **10 school weeks** (where absence has not been authorised).

A notice may be issued where the 5-day level of absence has not been reached, for example, if there are several periods of leave.

### 4 Amount

Within a 3-year period:

The first penalty notice is **£160** if paid within 28 days, reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice is **£160** to be paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued. **Legal action** may result (for example, prosecution).

## Leave of Absence in Term Time

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What does the law say about leave of absence in term time?**

It says Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The associated guidance states the need or desire for a holiday or leave for the purpose of leisure or recreation would not normally be considered exceptional. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

#### **If my child's school refuses to authorise my term time leave of absence request, will I receive a Fixed Penalty Notice and can I be prosecuted?**

Durham County Council's Fixed Penalty Notice Protocol acknowledges that regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the national framework and local code of conduct. Penalty Notices can be issued in circumstances where **10 unauthorised absence sessions (a session being a morning or afternoon registration period) have been recorded in any 10 school week period.** You can be prosecuted if you receive a fixed penalty notice and it is not paid.

Under the Education Act 1996, parents commit an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular school attendance. Taking a child out of school for a leave of absence without permission, and where the absence amounts to 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence in a 10 school week period is viewed as failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Payment of a Penalty Notice, where offered, is an alternative to prosecution by discharging liability for the offence. If unpaid, prosecution for the original offence under the Education Act can follow. A fixed penalty notice can be issued to **each person with parental responsibility** for the child / children who are deemed liable for the offence / offences, but usually to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence.

#### **Who has parental responsibility for a child?**

The Department for Education (DfE) state a parent means:

- All **natural parents**, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who **has parental responsibility** for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who **has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.**

The DfE further state: '**generally parents include all those with day-to-day responsibility for a child.**'