



UNICORN SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy applies to all children at Unicorn School, including those in the EYFS.

RESPONSIBILITY

Staff Member:

Governors' Committee:

Headteacher

Education & Staffing

Last Reviewed:

Approved by (Committee):

Noted by (Governors):

September 2024

October 2024

November 2024

Introduction

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance including those laid out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance

Working Together to Improve Attendance DFE 2024

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Attendance expectations

The Front Door is opened at 8.20am on every school day. Pupils are expected to be in their classrooms by 8.30am at the latest for Registration.

The Front Door is closed at 8.30am and any pupils arriving after this time will be marked Late.

The school day finishes at 3.15pm (EYFS), 3.25pm (Yellow and Green) or 3.35pm (all Juniors)

There is a dedicated e-mail address for parents to use to report absences on the day (eg. child ill).

absences@unicornschooll.org.uk

Safeguarding and attendance

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of

abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues including the criminal exploitation of children.

As soon as possible, and before 10.00am, the parents of any pupil who is still marked as "Absent (Awaiting Details)" will be contacted by the School to explain the absence. The school will phone all available numbers and use all means possible to ascertain the whereabouts of a child who is absent without explanation.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) the school:

- seeks to have at least two emergency contacts for each child.
- will seek to talk to parents to see how the child's right to education can be supported if there are concerns over the attendance of a child. In particular the Head will contact parents when a child's attendance falls under 90%, even if absences have been authorised, to open a dialogue over improving that child's attendance. In monitoring absence the school may request doctor's notes to account for prolonged or regular periods of illness.
- will inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register, including where the child has been taken out of school by his/her parents to be home educated, has moved away from the school's location and where the child has been permanently excluded.
- will inform the Local Authority if any children join or leave Unicorn School at non-standard points i.e. joining after reception or leaving before Year 6.
- will inform the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of ten school days.

If parents have concerns about their child's attendance they should contact the Head polly.fraley@unicornschoo.org.uk for support and guidance.

Procedure for Parents Needing to Obtain Prior Authorisation for an Absence

Parents must seek authorisation in advance from the Head if they plan to take their children out of School during term time. Apart from exceptional circumstances class teachers will not be expected to provide work for any period of absence.

Medical Appointments

Such absences must be notified in advance to the Class Teacher

Parents are encouraged to arrange medical appointments outside normal school hours. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. If it is necessary for a pupil to attend a medical appointment during school hours then the Class Teacher must be notified in advance. The School will monitor any recurring patterns for a pupil.

Religious Observance

Such absences should be notified in advance to the Class Teacher

All requests for absence due to days of religious observation will be granted but parents are expected to inform the Class Teacher in advance.

Approved Educational Activity

Such absences must be notified in advance to the Class Teacher

This covers activities such as visits to other schools, entrance examinations etc. The Class Teacher must be notified in advance.

Special Family Events

Such absences can only be authorised by the Head

Parents must obtain authorisation in advance from the Head if their child needs to be absent from school for significant family events such as baptisms, weddings, funerals.

If such a request is made to a Class Teacher then it must be passed on to the Head for authorisation.

Holidays during Term Time

With very few exceptions all absences for holiday in term time will not be authorised. Parents should inform the Headteacher and class teacher with as much notice as possible.

APPENDIX

Registration Procedure:

Class Teachers will take a register twice – once at the start of the school day and again at the start of lessons after lunch.

Class Teachers should mark their registers using the following categories:

Status	Description
Present	The pupil is physically present when the register is taken.
Absent (Awaiting Details)	The pupil is not present and no notification has been received to explain the absence.
Absent (Unwell)	The pupil has been reported ill for the entire session.
Absent (Appointment)	Notification has been received in advance that the pupil is attending a medical appointment & may/may not arrive later.
Absent (Approved Educational Activity)	Notification has been received in advance that the pupil is off-site on an approved educational activity (and may/ may not arrive later).
Absent (Family Event)	Permission has been received in advance from the Head that the pupil is attending a family event (eg. baptism, wedding, funeral etc.).
Absent (Religious Festival)	Notification has been received in advance that the pupil will be absent due to a day of religious observance.
Absent (School Advised – Going to be Late)	Notification has been received by the School of an unexpected delay, but that the pupil will be arriving. Generally this will result in an Arrived Late (Unauthorised) entry when the pupil arrives.

Absent (Authorised Holiday)	Holidays during term time are not encouraged. Authorisation for taking holiday during the School Term must be obtained in advance from the Head.
Absent (Unauthorised)	This is for any unauthorised absence (such as taking holiday without prior authorisation) and will be recorded as such on the pupil's attendance record.
School Closed	This entry is used in the event of the Head declaring a closure of the School (such as due to inclement weather).

If a pupil presents themselves in the School Office for Registration, they should be recorded as "Arrived Late".

NB. ARRIVED LATE means that the pupil is now PRESENT on the School premises but was not present at the "official" time when the register was taken.

The attendance of a pupil arriving at any time after the front door has been closed will be marked by the Staff in the School Office according to one of the two options:

Status	Description
Arrived Late (Unauthorised)	The pupil arrived after the Front Door was closed. This is the default option for all pupils arriving after Registration.
Arrived Late (Authorised)	<p>The pupil arrived after the Front Door was closed but prior notice had been received by the School, eg. medical appointment, visiting another school, car broken down (but not that they had overslept/left late).</p> <p>The distinction between the two "Lates" is that it is authorised only if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate permission had been received from the Head/Class Teacher in advance (eg. to attend a dental appointment); or - that the parent contacted the School prior to the pupil arriving to explain an unavoidable late arrival due to a Third Party event.

Two copies of the Registers are printed to provide a physical record of attendance in the event of a Fire Alarm. These are placed:

- in the School Office;
- in the Coach House.

General Guidance for Teachers on which Codes to Use

If a child is present at the time of registration (even if they are waiting to be collected) then they should be marked "Present".

Children who are attending a School sports lesson offsite (including swimming) are marked as "Present".

Children who are attending offsite activities organised by the School during school hours (eg. sports fixture (home/away), educational visit, activity day, etc.) are marked as "Present".

Children who are attending a residential trip organised by the School are marked as "Absent (Approved Educational Activity)".

It is the responsibility of the Class Teacher to ensure that all unexplained absences are accounted for.

Updated PF Sept 2024

Updated PF Nov 2022

Updated KL May 2019

Updated KL July 2017

Updated: KL July 2016

Updated: KL July 2015

Updated: KL July 2014