



ATTENDANCE POLICY

01/12/2022

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims and Objectives
3. Definitions
4. Procedures
5. Responsibilities
6. Registration
7. Lateness
8. Absences
9. First Day Contact
10. Illness
11. Exceptional Leave (Requests for Absence during term time)
12. Promoting good attendance
13. Addressing attendance concerns
14. Monitoring and reviewing attendance within school/academy
15. Appendices

Introduction

Waveney Valley Academies Trust and Stowmarket High School are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school/academy attendance by all. Only by attending school/academy regularly, and punctually, will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

All schools/academies recognise their responsibilities to ensure children are in school/academy and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all students registered at the school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils/students who are registered at our school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the whole school/academy community -pupils/students, parents/carers, tutors, teachers, support staff and School/Academy Committee members work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from the school/academy frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at the school/academy miss just over 4 half-terms of learning or 19 full school/academy days in each year.

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, parent/carers and School/Academy Committee Members in our Trust are fully aware of, and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Aims and Objectives

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Support the safeguarding of all children and families ensuring that pupils/students are in school/academy
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils/students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility
- Improve pupil's/student's achievement, by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Children are expected to attend every day, on time, to maximise the opportunities for learning
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school/academy and the community, by raising the awareness of parents/carers and pupils/students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a pupil's/student's education
- Work in partnership with pupils/students, parents/carers and staff, so that all pupils/students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and our attendance officer, in promoting good attendance

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents/carers and pupils/students
- Ensuring that parents/carers understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their pupil/student attends regularly and punctually
- Equipping pupils/students with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school/academy attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents/carers, pupils/students, staff and school/academy committee members on school/academy attendance matters
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness
- Supporting pupils/students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home, or at school/academy, which are preventing good attendance, by identifying barriers to the school/academy and developing strategies to overcome these
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school/academy

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil/student has been away from school/academy for a legitimate reason and the school/academy has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school/academy if at all possible)
- Only the school/academy can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. Where the absences are not authorised, we will inform parents/carers of this

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil/student is away from school/academy without the permission of the school/academy. (Unauthorised holiday constitutes an unauthorised absence)
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil/student is away from school/academy without good reason, even with the support of a parent
- If the absence is unauthorised the Local Authority Attendance service will be notified of the absence and consideration may be given to a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings for non-attendance. A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent/carer of each pupil/student taken out of school/academy and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days if the fine is not paid on time, it may result in legal action being taken against parents/carers. Parents/carers have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school/academy and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Legal action under Section 444(1) can result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months imprisonment
- A Penalty Notice will be considered if a pupil's/student's attendance is deemed as 'not regular'

Further information on avoidable absences and the Law can be found in Appendix A

Procedures

Our schools/academies will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Record attendance twice daily (and in case of secondary schools in each lesson) and consistently record absence or lateness
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, School /Academy Committee Members, parents/carers and pupils/students
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school/academy
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
- Work with parents/carers and other agencies to improve individual pupil's/student's attendance and punctuality
- Refer to Attendance and Safeguarding, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school/academy initiatives to improve
- Report attendance statistics to the LA and the DfE where requested

Responsibilities

All members of our school/academy community have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Parents/Carers responsibilities:

- Ensuring that their child attends school/academy regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment
- Contacting the school/academy office on the first morning of absence
- Informing the school/academy in advance of any medical appointments in school/academy time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter/prescription paperwork or packet)
- As far as possible, ensure that non-urgent medical or dental appointments are made outside of the school/academy day or avoiding registration periods.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised
- Talking to the school/academy [who – need to identify contact people e.g. teacher/tutor/HoY] as soon as possible about any pupil's/student's reluctance to come to school/academy so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with
- Promote the link between attendance and attainment/progress

Pupils/Students responsibilities:

- To aim for high attendance (an average pupil/student would achieve an attendance of over 97%).
- To be on time for school/academy
- Attend school/academy appropriately prepared for the day
- Take pride in attendance and punctuality

Class Teacher/Tutor responsibilities:

- Welcoming pupils/students at the beginning of the day and for each lesson.
- Celebrating high attendance rates – both verbally and through the school/academy rewards system
- Class teachers/tutors are the child's first point of contact and will monitor daily attendance.
- Take registers accurately and on time
- Highlighting concerns regarding attendance with parents/carers and or pupils/students
- Discussing attendance during parent/carer consultations, or at individual parent/carer meetings

- Raising concerns with the school/academy Attendance Lead where necessary

Senior Leadership Team responsibilities:

- Monitor attendance and, where concerns are identified, consult with parents/carers/outside agencies to agree actions to address identified issues
- Inform School/Academy Committees of attendance data through leadership reports
- Inform parents/carers of attendance for their pupils/students in line with the school's reporting procedures
- Promote excellent attendance by pupils/students and provide opportunities to celebrate good attendance
- Monitor the attendance of individual cohorts of children, and plan appropriate interventions at whole group level to address concerns.

Headteacher

- Take overall responsibility for attendance in the school
- Nominate a member of the Senior Leadership Team, as appropriate, to undertake delegated responsibility for attendance in the school
- Assign Attendance Officer duties to a named member of school staff
- Ensure full training is given to relevant members of staff regarding attendance recording and procedures
- Consider requests for absence and meet with parents/carers to discuss such requests as necessary
- Make referrals to the Local Authority for the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices as appropriate.
- Monitor the progress of attendance interventions across key groups to ensure all pupils/students have the best opportunity for success

Attendance Officer duties:

- Overall monitoring of school/academy attendance
- Identify trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to other agencies as appropriate
- Meet parents/carers in danger of being issued a first warning
- Liaise with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence
- Keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Inform the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Provide background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Follow up absences with immediate requests for explanation via telephone calls or email
- Ensure attendance issues are raised by teachers at parent/carer consultation evenings where necessary
- Collate and record registration and attendance information
- Take and record messages from parents/carers regarding absence
- Contact parents/carers of absent children where no reason for absence received
- Record details of pupils/students who arrive late or go home
- Send out standard letters regarding attendance

The Attendance Officer duties within each school/academy include the need to ensure that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the Management Information System. Regular meetings will be held with the Trust Attendance Lead to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions will be taken following these meetings, such as letters sent to parents/carers or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns.

School/Academy Committees

- Attendance data and strategies for attendance support will be shared with School /Academy Committees during meetings enabling members of the committee to offer challenge and support

Registration

The school/academy is open from 8.45am. Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil/student who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9am. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils/students who are present.)

At Stowmarket High School the register is taken at 8.50am and 12.30pm every day.

Attendance registers are legal documents, and these must be kept securely and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Any student who comes into school/academy after 8.50am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils/students who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil/student (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school/academy later than 9.10am (20 minutes after start time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Students who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school/academy later than 9.10am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M). Where possible routine dentist or doctor's appointments should be made outside of the school/academy day.

Students 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:

- The Headteacher, (or senior leader responsible for attendance), will meet with the parent/carer to create an action plan to improve punctuality. Should punctuality not improve the Local Authority may be approached to give consideration for a fixed penalty notice

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school/academy on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full details of the reason for their absence. Please avoid using phrases such as "poorly" or "sick".

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents/carers 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 within 5 days, the absence is recorded as unauthorised (attendance code O) in line with Department for Education Guidance.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school/academy parents/carers should contact the school/academy. Where we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent/carer, then the staff member responsible for Attendance Officer duties will telephone home daily. If no response is received, other contacts held for the child will also be contacted. If we have not heard from any contacts, then a home visit may be conducted.

If no response is received to this home visit the child is referred to the Local Authority as a possible Child Missing Education. Contact may also be made with Children's Services and/or the police in line with safeguarding procedures.

Illness

Students have an illness that means they will be away from school/academy long term, the school/academy will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school/academy work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school/academy will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school/academy.

Where over the course of an academic year, a pupil/student has repeated periods of illness, the school/academy will write to parents/carers 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/academy to make their own enquiries.

Parental/Carer Request for Absence from School/Academy for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of the Headteacher to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year. Instead, the Headteacher will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that **exceptional circumstances** exist.

Should parents/carers be considering a holiday during term time a leave of absence request form must be completed by all adults with parental/carer responsibility BEFORE the holiday is booked. Where a holiday is not authorised, consideration will be given to requesting a penalty notice from the Local Authority for this period of absence if a child's attendance is deemed as 'not regular'.

If your child is absent from school/academy without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Suffolk/Norfolk County Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school/academy may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

Promoting Good Attendance

At Stowmarket High School the Heads of Year and their tutors constantly review and analyse the attendance of students. It is important that we recognise improvements in the attendance of our young people.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school/academy expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for pupils/students to establish good attendance habits early on in their school/academy career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the School/Academy Committee to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Parents/carers should ensure their child attends school/academy regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents/carers are always informed.

Concerns about attendance are raised with parents/carers via texts/letters and phone calls home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school/academy with the aim to improve attendance.

Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period the following process will take place

- 95% letter to inform parents/carers of attendance
- 92% if no improvement following the 95% letter
- Parents/carers to attend meeting to discuss attendance
- Attendance action plan with parents/carers (4 weeks)
- Review action plan
- No improvement legal interventions

Fixed penalty notices will be issued for unauthorised absence, which will include unauthorised holiday requests, unauthorised lates and unauthorised absence.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance and if they fail to do so, may commit an offence under Sections 7 & 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Monitoring and Review Attendance within School/Academy

The Headteacher will ensure that:

- A recording and reporting system is in place and is maintained
- Attendance statistics, strategies and impacts are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and to the Trust
- The Academy/School Committee receives monitoring reports on attendance and the implementation and effectiveness of this policy

The effectiveness of the policy will be measured by the overall rates of pupil/student attendance and the numbers of pupils/students falling into the Persistent Absence category. This data will be shared with Trust to improve our aspirations for our communities

Reviewed and approved by:

Trust Attendance Lead

Approval Date

1.12.2022

Appendix A

IMPORTANT: Please read carefully the information below.

WARNING: If you allow your child to miss school/academy in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school/academy, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice* per parent per child or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996. As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school/academy for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. *Penalty notice £60 if paid within 21 days increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days.

AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM TIME	
The Facts	The Law
<p>School/academy aged pupils/students are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school/academy is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil/student might be away from school/academy (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc.) the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school/academy if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school/academy may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school/academy, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school/academy is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school/academy, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and you may receive a £60* fine per parent/carer per child if your child's attendance is deemed to be 'not regular', falling below the threshold of 96%.</p>	<p>The law allows the school/academy to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However, before the school/academy can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent/carer submitting the request to provide sufficient evidence/information in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides.</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school/academy for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away for a period of four weeks or more, the school/academy may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil/Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006</p> <p>In case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school/academy as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school/academy.</p>
<p>Unavoidable absence from school/academy will be authorised. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuine illness • Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school/academy if at all possible). • Days of religious observance • Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces • External examinations 	<p>Other examples of absence from school/academy that <u>will not</u> be authorised include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any type of shopping • Looking after siblings or unwell parents/carers • Minding the house • Birthdays • Resting after a late night • Relatives visiting or visiting relatives. <p>Parental/carer appointments</p>

When traveller children are on the road with their parents/carers for work purposes	
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Please contact the Headteacher if you wish to discuss this issue.

The law requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive an efficient full-time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.

We hope that when you have read this you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school/academy for avoidable reasons.

Appendix B

INFORMATION LETTER TO ALL PARENTS/CARERS (ANNUAL)

Whole School/Academy Warning Letter regarding unauthorised leave of absence (holidays)

NAME AND ADDRESS

Dear Parent/Carer

At Stowmarket High School, we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil/student is genuinely too ill to attend school/academy, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school/academy hours or a request for leave has been agreed in exceptional circumstances.

However, the Government does not support parents/carers taking children out of school/academy unless the school/academy agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school/academy request form.

If your child is absent from school/academy without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Suffolk/Norfolk County Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school/academy may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

'Parent'
as set
out in
Section
576 of
the

Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents/carers, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child. You are welcome to contact the school/academy to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Stowmarket High School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils/students and aims to work with parents/carers to ensure this can be achieved.

The decision to submit a request for the issue of a Penalty Notice will be considered when a child's attendance is deemed to be 'not regular'. The definition of 'not regular' in this instance is when it is below the threshold. For all trust schools/academy, this attendance threshold is set at 96%, in line with national attendance data. In the Autumn Term, a child's attendance for the previous academic year will be considered before deciding on a course of action. From January onwards, the decision will be based on attendance data from the current academic year.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher

Appendix C

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE LEAVE REQUEST NOTICE TO PARENTS /CARERS

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their child out of school/academy during term time. Any absence from school/academy will disrupt your child's learning. You may consider that a holiday will be educational, but your child will miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive during your holiday. Attendance is vital to academic success and lost education poses a potential risk of underachievement. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

The Department for Education no longer allows Headteachers to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you consider that your request for absence is exceptional you will need to complete the form attached to this notification. A response will be sent to you as soon as possible. If leave is not authorised and you nevertheless withdraw your child from school/academy, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

If your child is absent from school/academy without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Suffolk/Norfolk County Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school/academy may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

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All requests must be completed on this form; letters will not be accepted. This form should be returned to the Attendance Office at least 15 school/academy days before the start of the absence.

I hope you will support our efforts in raising attendance and attainment at Stowmarket High School.

APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER (to be completed by each parent/carer)

If you consider an absence during term time to be an exceptional circumstance, please complete this form and return it to the Attendance Office **at least 15 school/academy days** before the date you wish to remove your child from school/academy.

Pupil/Student Name: _____ DOB: _____
Year/Tutor Group: _____

Home Address: _____
_____ Post Code: _____

Name of Parent/Carer completing this form: _____

First day of absence: _____
Date of **return** to school/academy: _____

If leaving your home address before the first day of absence, please provide the date on which you will leave _____

Total number of days missed: _____ days Reason for absence: _____

*I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised the school/academy may request that Suffolk/Norfolk County Council issue a Penalty Notice. I understand that a Penalty Notice is issued to each liable parent/carer of each child taken out of school/academy and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days. I understand that if I do not pay the fine, it may result in legal action being taken against me. **I understand that parents/carers have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school/academy and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) and Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.***

Please inform us if you have a child in another local school/academy – we will need to contact the school/academy to discuss the absence request. Please note, we will need to share information about your child with the other school/academy.

Name of child _____ Year _____ School/Academy _____

Signed Dated
.....

(Please ensure you give at least 15 school/academy days' notice of the proposed absence)

Below to be completed by the school/academy:

FAO – Headteacher

% Current	% Last Year	Comments

Pupil/Student Name: Tutor:
Year:

AUTHORISED:

Request has been authorised for the following dates **only**:

___ / ___ / ____ to ___ / ___ / ____

UNAUTHORISED:

Signed **Headteacher**

Date ___ / ___ / ___

Letter sent / Phone Call / other	Signed:	Date:
Action: PN Request	Signed:	Date:

Appendix D

PN Model Leave Refusal Letter (for school/academy use)

NAME AND ADDRESS

Date

Dear Name of parent/carer(s)

I am writing regarding your request to take (student Name) out of school/academy on Date until Date. The law states that a planned absence from school/academy should only be authorised for pupils/students in 'exceptional circumstances'. At Stowmarket High School we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence; we look at each request on its own merit, before reaching a decision.

Under the circumstances, we regret that on this occasion we are unable to authorise your request for absence. If (student Name) does not attend school/academy on the dates concerned, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In cases where parents/carers subsequently report their child as ill during this period, medical evidence may be requested to support this.

I urge you to reconsider your decision.

If your child is absent from school/academy without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Suffolk/Norfolk County Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school/academy may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the

Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents/carers, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

I would like to offer you the opportunity to contact your son/daughter's Head of Year at Stowmarket High School if you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Stowmarket High School is committed to maximising the education of all its students and aims to work with parents/carers to ensure this can be achieved. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact the school/academy.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher