

Stoke Damerel Primary Academy



POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

This policy explains the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It contains information for staff and parents and includes a copy of Plymouth City Council's official documentation.

Please be aware that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the timings in this document differ from the day to day timings. Current and up to date information can be found in appendices 4 and 5.

1. GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY AT STOKE DAMEREL

Children succeed best when they arrive in school on time at 8.50am and attend regularly. Irregular attendance or lateness means that children miss out on their education, or miss important parts of the day or week, finding it difficult to catch up with those in their class. Irregular attendance or lateness is also unsettling and can affect the child's relationships with friends. When children attend regularly teachers can plan for them to work on the curriculum at a pace which is suitable to them as individuals.

When children arrive on time, the teachers are able to greet all the children in the class at the beginning of the day. **A good start to the day is crucial to children.** Late comers are often embarrassed at being late. In addition it can be disruptive for a teacher and class to have to repeat what all the other children have been told already. It is also important for children to be on time, as they may miss vital instructions or activities which they will need to experience as part of the session of work. If there are circumstances which will prevent normal attendance or punctuality over a period of time, **please inform the school**, as we may be able to offer support.

2. ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY AND THE LAW

Schools are now **required, by law**, to publish their attendance figures (and to put individual attendance details on children's reports). Unauthorised absence is regarded legally as truancy. We hope that parents will support Stoke Damerel in making sure that we do not have to record absence as unauthorised on pupil's reports.

An explanation of what counts as Authorised and Unauthorised absence is explained in appendix 1: Plymouth City Council – School attendance and absence.

If your child is unwell or is away for any reason, **you must inform us on the first day of absence, before 9.30am**, and then update us should the absence be prolonged. Should you fail to call we will call you each day to ensure that the child is safe.

It is extremely important that your child comes to school on time. Failure to do so impacts on your child's attainment and their attitude to learning. If your child is late more than five times, or if their attendance falls below the expected level of 95%, you will receive a letter from the School. If this persists you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to explain the reasons for the lateness and/or low school attendance. Punctuality may also refer to lateness when picking pupils up at the end of the day. **It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child is collected at 3:30pm.** If there are problems with getting to school on time, please phone the school to clarify what is happening. The school is advised to phone Safeguarding and Social Care if a child is not collected by 4:30pm.

3. ATTENDANCE & HEALTH

In encouraging regular attendance we do not want to encourage children to come to school if they are unwell. Children who are ill (including those with heavy colds, earache, 'flu etc.) are miserable in school and cannot work well.

Children who have recovered but still need to finish a course of prescribed medicine can return. Medicine needs to be handed to the school office, clearly labelled, along with the Administering Medicines form (found on the school website) filled in and signed by the parent.

Please make sure that our office has up to date emergency phone numbers for your children, in case they are taken ill or have an accident in school.

Is my child too ill for school?

It can be tricky deciding whether or not to keep your child off school, nursery or playgroup when they're unwell.

But there are [government guidelines](#) for schools and nurseries that say when children should be kept off school and when they shouldn't.

Please follow this link for further guidance (including Covid-19 information):
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

4. EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE IN TERM TIME

Any leave from school must be authorised by the Head. This must be done in advance by filling out a leave request form which you can get from the office. The local authority and the government strongly encourages schools not to authorise leave during term time. Parents must plan to take their holidays during the thirteen weeks of school holidays. Parents may request, **in advance**, leave during the school term for their children, but only if there are **exceptional circumstances**. These need to be explained to the Head. Only the head teacher may authorise exceptional leave. Parents need to ensure that if a sibling attends another school, the Head of that school is also asked to authorise the same leave of absence. If exceptional leave is authorised and a child does not return to school on the agreed date, following consultation with the Education Welfare Service, the child may be removed from the school roll and their place offered to another child.

If the Head does not authorise an absence, but the parents take their child on leave, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A penalty notice referral for both parents may be made to the Education Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Service may ask the parents to attend a legal advisory meeting, or they may issue each parent with a penalty notice, which is a £60 fine, per parent, per child. In some cases the Education Welfare Service may decide to take the case straight to court. (See appendix 2 – Plymouth City Council – Penalty Notices for Absence from School)

5. REGISTRATION & PUNCTUALITY

By law, teachers are asked to record information about absence and lateness in a more detailed way. Children who arrive on time, at 9:00am, are marked present. Children who arrive after 9.05am are marked late. **Children who arrive after 9.30am are recorded as an unauthorised absence** for the whole of the morning, unless parents inform us of a valid reason. (This also applies in the afternoons if children are very late.)

If a child is absent, we are required to give the reason for the absence. By law, only the school can authorise an absence, not the parent. A child's absence will be deemed authorised if they are absent due to:

- Illness (school must be notified daily)
- Medical treatment
- Educational visit
- Off-site education
- Exceptional leave (authorised by the Head)
- Religious observance (authorised by the Head)
- Exclusion
- Circumstances (e.g. bereavement, moving house, etc.)

(Please see appendix 1 for clarification)

Absence is unauthorised if there is no reason given for the absence, or if the reason does not fall into the categories above. For example, a child missing a day because it is their birthday, or because they are taken shopping, are not considered valid reasons for missing school and these would be marked as unauthorised. The Head makes the final decision about whether to authorise absences.

6. LINKS WITH THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer liaises with the school regularly. During the term, routine register checks are carried out for each class. Parents will be informed by the school if there are any concerns over a child's attendance or punctuality. This may be because of a pattern of irregular attendance or lateness over a long-term period (e.g. odd days off), or because a child has had a lot of time away from school. The main purpose of this is to let parents know that their child has missed an above-average amount of time, which is affecting the child's ability to access education. If the pattern continues the school and the EWO will follow this up with the parents.

Parents may receive an attendance letter even if absence is authorised and school has been informed. In this case, parents should not worry but get in touch so that help for the family can be given if needed, from school-home liaison or the school nurse.

In extreme cases, should poor attendance persist, parents may be subject to a penalty notice or court proceedings may be started against them by the local authority. However, we would wish to work with the parents and try to support them before this action would need to be taken.

At Stoke Damerel, we want your child to be happy and to achieve highly. Attendance and punctuality have a big part to play in this. Most children at Stoke Damerel attend regularly and are punctual. Parents are usually extremely co-operative and follow the guidelines outlined in this document. We value very highly the partnership we have with parents and understand the great efforts that are made to ensure their child has a good attendance and punctuality record.

Annie Blackie
Deputy Head Teacher

APPENDIX 1

Plymouth City Council - School attendance and absence

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a full-time education which is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. As a parent, you're responsible for registering your child at a school or making other arrangements to provide a suitable education.

Compulsory school age is defined as the start of term following a child's fifth birthday until the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday.

There may be times when your child doesn't attend school. This will fall into two categories, authorised absence or unauthorised absence:

Authorised absence

- Illness
- Medical appointments (routine medical/dental check-ups should be made out of school hours whenever possible), if the medical appointment occurs in the morning or afternoon, your child is expected to attend school before or after the appointment (you'll need to provide evidence of the appointment)
- Transport that wasn't provided by us when it should have been
- Unavoidable cause (this means an unusual/extraordinary event that couldn't be avoided)
- A specified, limited period for an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness
- A funeral of an immediate family member
- Religious observance (you'll need authorisation from the school at least four weeks before the event)
- A specified, limited period for children of service personnel about to go on deployment (you'll need to provide a letter from the Commanding Officer as evidence)
- **One** day for a wedding of an immediate family member (you'll need to provide the invitation as evidence)
- **One** day for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade (you'll need to provide the invitation as evidence)
- A one off sporting events/performing arts competitions if your child is participating and is at county standard or above (you'll need to provide a letter from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence)

Unauthorised absence

- Caring for other family members
- To interpret for family members /Attending immigration interviews with parents or guardian
- Having no school uniform/shoes
- Bullying/Friendship problems

- Head lice
 - Learning difficulties
 - Family holiday/Weddings abroad (even if it's immediate family)/Family anniversaries/Death of a pet/Moving house /Birthdays
 - Travel problems
 - School refusal
 - Lateness after the school's registration period
- (This list provides examples and isn't exhaustive.)

If your child is ill or absent for any reason, you need to contact the school on the first day of absence and let them know of any days that your child will be unable to attend. Only your school can decide if the absence is authorised or not.

Getting your child to school on time is also important. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher and other children in the class. You'll need to check the times of the school before your child starts their first day as late arrival after the school's register closes, counts as an unauthorised absence for whole the morning session.

If you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly (even if they're missing school without your knowledge), you may be issued with a [penalty notice](#) or subject to a criminal prosecution.

If you suspect your child may be missing school, is unhappy at school or if you've any concerns you should contact the school as soon as possible. If the school is concerned about your child's attendance they may refer you to our Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service who'll work with you to resolve any difficulties.

The function of the Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service (IAWS) is to ensure that all statutory school aged children are accounted for, receiving and attending suitable, full time education.

The service acts as a champion for children and fulfils Plymouth City Council's legal responsibilities in relation to children missing education, persistent absence, exclusion matters and child employment and performance. Promoting regular school attendance and addressing persistent absence through compliance with government expectations, Plymouth City Council service standards and the law.

If you would like further information or advice please contact educationwelfare@plymouth.gov.uk or call 01752 307405

The Plymouth Online Directory is provided by Plymouth City Council and our closest partners to help and support people living in Plymouth. You can access the directory at www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com

APPENDIX 2

Penalty notices for absence from school

If you fail to make sure your child attends school regularly (even if they're missing school without your knowledge), you may be issued with a penalty notice (a fine for children who miss school without authorisation) or subject to a criminal prosecution.

A penalty notice of £60 may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will normally lead to prosecution.

We can issue penalty notice if:

- your child has eight or more unauthorised absences from school over a six month period (eight absences are equal to four school days as there are two sessions in a school day)
- your child has been late to school after registration has closed eight or more times over a six month period
- your child is found during a truancy sweep and the absence hasn't been authorised by the school, and there are already eight previous unauthorised absences
- you repeatedly fail to provide the school or our Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service reasons for your child's absences (this includes ignoring our attempts to contact you)
- your child is found in a public place during the first five days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion

Headteachers don't have to authorise absence during term unless there are exceptional circumstances. If leave is authorised, headteachers will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school and you'll need to provide evidence that the circumstances are exceptional.

You'll receive warning about your child's unauthorised absences in writing and get a chance to talk to us about this. If your child has one more unauthorised absence within 15 days of you receiving this letter, we can issue a penalty notice.

How to pay

Payments must be made in full by the dates given on the notice (you can't pay in instalments). Make sure you know these dates as your fine will be doubled if it isn't paid by the 21 day deadline.

If you don't pay your penalty notice, you'll be prosecuted for failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school (not for non-payment of the fine), meaning if you're found guilty, you could receive a more serious penalty and a criminal record.

You can't be prosecuted until after the notice payment deadline has passed (28 days). If you pay the penalty within 28 days, no other legal action can be taken against you for that offence.

Any further unauthorised absences will be treated as separate offences and can result in legal action.

How to appeal

You can't appeal against a penalty notice, but it can be withdrawn for the following reasons:

- it shouldn't have been issued (it's been issued outside our code of conduct or no offence has been committed)
- it's been issued to the wrong person
- it was materially defective

If you believe your notice was wrongly issued, you need to contact us, in writing (within 14 days of receiving the notice), stating why you believe the notice has been incorrectly issued. We can't offer a payment extension whilst we consider your statement.

Send your representations to Penalty Notice Officer, Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service, Ground Floor, Windsor House, Plymouth PL6 5UF or email penaltynoticeofficer@plymouth.gov.uk.

If a penalty notice is withdrawn, you'll receive a notice of the withdrawal and any amount you've paid will be refunded. Proceedings won't continue for the offence for which the withdrawn notice was issued.

Attendance at Stoke Damerel Primary Academy

At Stoke Damerel Primary, we monitor the attendance of our children, to ensure our children regularly attend school. We understand that all children need to be in school every day, to benefit from the teaching and learning they receive. We want our children to enjoy coming to school and recognise the importance of being here.

“Over a school year 90% means a child misses ½ a day every week.
This adds up to 4 weeks of lessons missed in one school year....”

At the start of each school year, we send an information booklet to parents to ensure they are aware of the effect missing school can have on a child's education.

We work closely with the Local Authority and have an assigned Education Welfare Officer (EWO), to ensure our children attend school regularly.

Routine:

The school day starts at 8:50am, where registration closes at 9am. After this point, a child will be signed in as being late; recorded in our school signing in book.

All class teachers take the attendance register using ARBOR, our data reporting system.

The afternoon registration is open at 1pm, until 1:05pm. After this a child will be absent until signed into the signing in book.

Monitoring:

The Deputy Head and Administrative Assistant work together with the EWO to track whole school attendance and monitor all pupil attendance. We liaise with families when necessary, providing support and advice to help get children into school on time and every day.

Monitoring Our Attendance at Stoke Damerel

Class Teachers take the register twice daily: for a morning and afternoon registration.



The school administrator (GS) record reported absence onto the register; contacting any parent/carer of an absence child by phone, where no message has been left. The reason is recorded on the register.



No response from the absent child's parent/carer will result in a follow up call during the day, asking them to contact the school as soon as possible, to provide a reason for their child's absence.



No response will mean the child is recorded as (N) for no reason given.



Attendance is checked daily and followed up swiftly, so all children on roll, are accounted for. No contact after 3 days, will result in the school's PSA making a house visit. If we are unable to locate or source any information about a child's absence, the school EWO at the Local Authority is informed.

Once the EWO is involved, a plan will be drawn up to improve attendance. This may include the issue of a court warning letter. If there is improvement, no further action will be taken.

We will always follow up on any absences and encourage children to come to school everyday.