



To Care

Pickering Community Junior School Attendance Policy

Regular attendance and punctuality is an essential prerequisite of effective learning. It ensures continuity of learning and gives children the best chance of academic success. School encourages good attendance through making the school day and learning enjoyable. We aim to encourage a positive attitude to school to nurture learning in all children. Children need to feel that their contribution in school is valued and all staff care about them as individuals. Parents have the responsibility to ensure that children attend punctually, regularly and stay at school. The staff and governors aim to ensure that procedures for monitoring absences are thorough and rigorous.

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

As a school we

- ensure all registers are completed promptly and accurately in line with government and LA guidelines
- support parents in promoting regular and punctual attendance of their children
- work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and NYC so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- aim to respond promptly to any issues which may lead to non-attendance and deal with them following school guidelines
- keep records of absences, including reasons for absence in order to record authorised/ unauthorised absences
- monitor attendance records regularly and communicate concerns with the NYC Attendance Team or Early Help
- communicate the monitoring of lateness and absence to the full governing body through the annual attendance report
- provide absence figures to parents in pupils' annual reports
- provide a positive school environment, making the children's' time at school interesting and worthwhile
- consider requests for absence individually, taking account of the needs of our school community, following government and LA guidelines
- provide a staggered re-integration programme for children who have had long term absences

Definitions

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence will generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments. Parents are encouraged, where possible, to arrange these after school or in school holidays. However, where this is not possible, the school will require notification prior to the absence, including a copy of the appointment card or letter. When a child is absent for a medical appointment it is expected that they will return to school immediately following the appointment.
- days of religious observance
- exclusion or suspension
- family bereavement
- involvement in a public performance
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence will **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, birthday)
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)

Attendance Procedures

Parents are legally obliged that, unless there is illness or some other acceptable reason for absence, children should attend school for each session during the prescribed school days of the academic year. Parents must ensure that children are supervised outside the school gate before school opens at 8.30am. The school gate is closed at 8.50am, shortly after which registers are taken.

Lateness

Once the gates are closed at 8.50am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. If a child arrives late but before 9.30am they will be marked as late, and counted as present for that session. If a child arrives after 9.30am, provided a satisfactory explanation is provided, the child will be marked as an authorised absence. Lateness will be monitored by the Headteacher and appropriate action taken to support families in getting to school on time. *Please note that this is based on the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 and could be used as evidence against parents if legal action were to be considered by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.*

First Day

As a vigilant and caring school we apply first-day response to absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a text message initially and then a follow up telephone call where necessary.

Illness/sickness absence

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the first day, in person, by telephone or email. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure.

To minimise the unnecessary spread of infection from sickness and diarrhoea bugs, the 48 hour rule of absence applies, ie, a child must not return to school until 48 hours after their last case of sickness or diarrhoea.

Absences for part of the day

From time to time, pupils show symptoms of illness at school. School will contact parents or other family members if a child needs to go home. School asks that parents ensure that we have up to date contact names and telephone numbers for this purpose.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Department for Education requires Local Authorities to implement government regulations regarding the taking of Leave of Absence in term-time, which came into force on the 1st September 2013. The law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional. Therefore Headteachers will only be able to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and this will still be at the discretion of the Headteacher. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as a right.

The Education Regulations state that applications must be made in advance by a parent/carer with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each leave application is considered individually by the school taking into account any factors presented by the family. Application forms are available from our school. Head teachers will also welcome early discussion with parents around potential applications.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

This is not an exhaustive list and the Headteacher must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Leave is only acceptable against exceptional circumstances and should not be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school.

Where the Headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is, however, final. Please note that the ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Where a child is taken out of school for the purpose of leave of absence in term time without the permission of the school, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and as such may result in a Penalty Notice. Penalties are applied by the Local Authority and as such are not at the discretion of the head teacher. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, the matter may be taken to prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Amendments to 2024 Penalty Notice regulations have increased the fines. Parents must, from 1st September 2024, pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices

in line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecution if the fine is not paid.

It must be noted that taking a child on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt your child's educational progress.

Persistent absence

As a school, we expect attendance of at least 95% but a child will be identified as a persistent absentee if their absence is below 90%. Absence below this will be investigated through phone calls or by a letter to parents. The NYC Attendance Team may be contacted if absence continues or support may be offered through the Early Help Team, with parental consent.

Recording and use of Absence Data

Data is collected and subsequently collated. Attendance figures are published for individual pupils in their school report and/or at the end of each term. Where pupils' attendance causes concern the parameters and procedures as shown in the NYC guidance, will be followed and shared with the NYC Attendance Team. Attendance information is passed on when pupils transfer to other schools.

In the event of School Closure

Due to unforeseen, extreme circumstances and, during winter months, it occasionally becomes necessary to close the school due to adverse weather conditions. If this closure takes place at the start of the day it will be broadcast on BBC Radio York, Minster FM and Yorkshire Coast Radio. A message will also be put on the school website and our Twitter feed. If the weather or other conditions mean that a decision is taken to close school during the school day parents and carers will be contacted as soon as possible; parents and carers will be informed via text and email and they will be asked to collect their children as soon as possible. Parents will be telephoned if text messages are not delivered. Appropriate ratios of school staff will remain on the premises until all children have been collected.

Reviewed by M De Barr – September 2025

Approved by Governing Body – 16th September 2025

To be reviewed – September 2026