



Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Policy

**Primary Behaviour &
Attendance Partnership**

**Secondary Behaviour & Attendance
Partnership**

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Written By	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
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Next Review Date	ERYC Policy

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Background

Schools are required to provide education for 190 days a year and it is expected that children who are registered at a school will attend for this time. Parents do not have an automatic right for their children to have time off school and any requests for absence are entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Research shows that children do not achieve as well in their education and in public examinations the more school absence they have, for example a child absent from school for a period of two weeks each year, for exceptional circumstances and with the average absence for illness may miss the equivalent of one whole year's education over their school life.

General Principles

The following general principles underpin this policy:

- (i) The principles of honesty, openness, transparency and the spirit of co-operation underpin the policy.
- (ii) All schools within the East Riding that have adopted this policy agree to follow it through to penalty notice if appropriate. This will ensure that the policy is applied in a consistent manner and provides equity for all parents and schools.
- (iii) Support of this policy from the local authority will be as a partner in both the primary and secondary behaviour and attendance partnerships. The achievement and inclusion services of the Council will ensure other local authority departments are aware of and include the philosophy of this policy in their practice.
- (iv) Where a request for absence form is not submitted, absences cannot be authorised retrospectively; this is prescribed in law and in these circumstances the penalty notice code of conduct must be followed.
- (v) Data from each individual school in relation to requests for absence will be monitored by the local authority and shared with schools and the partnerships. This will allow the partnerships to assess the impact of this policy.
- (vi) The behaviour and attendance partnerships will review this policy annually or in line with any legislative changes.

Policy

In order for consideration to be given, requests for absence must be for exceptional circumstances only. The primary and secondary behaviour and attendance partnerships and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council agree to follow the law, in such that the provision for Headteachers to authorise absence purely for the purpose of a family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance. Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the Headteacher agrees to consult with the principal education welfare officer prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. The principal education welfare officer will discuss each case with an independent Headteacher and will make a recommendation to the referring school.

Evidence would be required in each case.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- 2) Year six transition day (for pupils in year six).
- 3) Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six).
- 4) Year nine options time (for pupils in year nine).
- 5) At any time during years 10 & 11 (for all pupils in these year groups).
- 6) At any time specified by the school (this will be communicated to parents by each school).

Consistency across our large geographical area is vital for parental confidence. If a Headteacher has any doubts their thoughts can be discussed with the principal education welfare officer for advice and guidance prior to informing parents of their final decision. Headteachers would be well advised to keep a log of their decision making rationale.



Looked After Children

This policy applies to all children, including those who are Looked After Children. The Headteacher will only approve an absence for a Looked After Child in accordance with Children, Family & Adult Services guidance. The only person who can request an absence for an East Riding Looked After Child is the area manager. Requests from foster carers and social workers should not be considered.

Headteachers should, in the cases of a child placed in an East Riding school who is a Looked After Child from another local authority, consult with the child's social worker. The social worker will enquire from that local authority what agreements or exemptions their policy on exceptional circumstances contains.

Absence From School For Exceptional Circumstances Information for Parents

You are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure your child attends school regularly. There is, however, a discretionary power held by Headteachers to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Please note this is **not an entitlement**. The Headteacher will only authorise absence in line with the East Riding Behaviour & Attendance Partnership 'Absence From School For Exceptional Circumstances Policy'. Headteachers will not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of a child's education. **Please note that supporting documents to aid decision making must be submitted at the time of your request for absence.**

If your request is authorised, you are required to ensure your child catches up on any missed school work. This is your responsibility and school are not obliged to provide work for your child to complete.

Any unauthorised absence will be recorded on your child's attendance records. This may result in legal proceedings against you, either through a Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court.

Penalty Notices

Under the Anti Social Behaviour Act (2003) the local authority and schools have statutory powers to tackle poor school attendance and/or unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the Headteacher has not given permission for or where an explanation has not been provided by the parent. If your child accrues 10 sessions of unauthorised absence you may be liable for a penalty notice (one days absence equals two sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions etc).

Penalty Notices will be used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing. They will be issued by post direct to the home of a parent after possibly just one warning, or in the case of absences without acceptable cause, warnings may not be given. This includes pupils caught on truancy sweeps, persistent late arrival after the close of registration **or unauthorised absence that has not been authorised as an absence from school for exceptional circumstances**. In these cases the warning is given on the absence request form and detailed within this information leaflet and no written warning will be given. Fines are issued for unauthorised absence of 5 or more days and each school day is divided into 2 registration periods. **For example if your child is absent for one day this equals 2 sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions.**

If your request is declined and you still take your child out of school each parent within your household will be issued with a £60 penalty notice for each child you have taken out of school. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 21 days it will increase to £120. If after 28 days it remains unpaid you may be summonsed to appear before Magistrates to explain why your child has unauthorised school absences and you may be liable for a fine of up to £1000.



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Support and guidance on attendance is always available and if you have any questions about this, or if you need help to achieve an improvement, then please contact your child's school to discuss this.

We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from their school first. Headteachers cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstance.