



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Western Community Primary School

Ratified by Governors January 2019

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Western Community Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

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 and paper copies are available via the main office.

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 Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils 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 school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance and Placement Team so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility
- 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, in promoting good attendance

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent or carer.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes
- To maintain appropriate attendance data
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness
- First day contact with parents/ carers for all pupils who are absent without a known reason
- Procedures to investigate and resolve unexplained absences within a week
- Analysis of individual pupil data to identify early patterns of absence which cause concern
- Systems for regularly checking the attendance of pupils on approved educational activities off-site
- Providing attendance certificates to parents/ carers regularly, so they are aware of their child's attendance and any concerns
- Regular monitoring of attainment in relation to attendance
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions used to improve attendance
- Regular updated to the Senior Leadership Team and Governors about attendance
- Use of data including comparison of attendance rates across year groups or to other schools
- Analysis of attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Raising awareness of the implications of poor attendance through newsletters, induction meetings, parent's evenings, school website, etc.
- A comprehensive and clear school attendance policy which includes expectation and school procedures in relation to all aspects of attendance
- Rewarding good attendance and acknowledging improved attendance

Responsibilities

All members of school staff 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.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping 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
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- 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 the Attendance and Placement Team
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Attendance and Placement Team
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping 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 Head teacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Parents/ Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Head teacher, Care, Guidance and Support Leader, Learning Mentor and School Administrator to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Registration

All the school gates open at **8.35 (KS2) and 8.40 (KS1) am until 8.55 am**. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by **9.00 (KS2) and 9.05 (KS1) am and by 1.20pm**. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present) These registers are then returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at **8.55am** the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from **8.55am** will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is

documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later **than 9.30am** will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a medical appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children 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 parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school 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 details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent/ carer, then we initiate a first day contact process.

Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

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

Leave of Absence during Term Time

From 1st September 2013 it became law that schools adhere to the Government's policy of not authorising holidays of absences during term time, except in exceptional circumstances. If the Head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the Head teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

While leave of absence may be granted during term time, it is entirely at the Head teacher's discretion and it is not a parental right.

Parents/ carers should seek permission for a leave of absence during term time **at least 2 weeks prior** to the leave, fully explaining the reasons for the request. Each request will then be judged on a case by case basis by the Head teacher. You may be contacted by the Head teacher to discuss the reasons for the application (especially when the reasons are unclear) and the impact the absence may have on the child's education.

School will reply in writing to all applications stating whether or not the absence has been agreed.

Leave of absence request forms are available from the main office.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. At Western Community Primary School we rely upon parents/ carers to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

Once a concern has been identified school will adopt a staged response to try and improve the attendance. The stage response will include:

- First day response
- Discussion about attendance with the pupil (if age appropriate)
- Contact with the parent/ carer by telephone or letter to ensure they are aware of attendance concerns
- An invitation for the parent/ carer to meet with the Head teacher/ Senior Leader to discuss attendance concerns
- Request medical information from parents and where appropriate advise that further absences will not be authorised without provision of notes from a health care professional
- Support of School Governors (including linked Governor for attendance)
- Referral to outside agencies where appropriate

Action following a referral

The Attendance and Placement Team will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Criteria for a referral

Before making a referral the school must ensure there are a minimum of **10 sessions of unauthorised absence** in the past 12 weeks. The period of the offence when the non-school attendance occurred should cover between 6 and 12 school weeks.

Penalty Notice Warning

In cases where a child's attendance has failed to meet 95% target the parent will be issued with a Penalty Notice Warning and the process will be repeated with immediate effect. This will give the parent/ carer the opportunity to sustain the improvement in attendance and achieve the attendance target required resulting in for further action of the Local Authority.

Penalty Notice

Penalty Notices can be issued when: -

- A leave of absence has been taken without the permission of the Head teacher
- A leave of absence has been agreed and the pupil returns to school after the agreed date without explanation
- No application for leave has been made

- The child has been removed from school for 10 or more sessions
- The Local Authority is satisfied that the parent/ carer had full knowledge of the procedure and the possible consequences
- The request is made within 4 weeks of the child's return

Penalty Notices in relation to poor school attendance were introduced in Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003). If a parent/ carer is issued with a Penalty Notice, they may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under section 444(1) by paying a penalty.

The fixed penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. A Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent of a child. If the Penalty Notice is paid, the case will be closed to the Attendance and Placement Team and subsequent unsatisfactory attendance dealt with as per the usual school procedures.

However, if the Penalty Notice is not paid, the case may proceed to the Magistrates Court for the prosecution of the original offence or failure to secure the child's regular attendance at school. The Local Authority will issue a letter to parents/ carers informing them that the Notice has not been paid and that the matter will proceed to court. The Attendance and Placement Team will collate school witness statements and evidence for the prosecution and liaise with Legal Services.

Important information for Parents/ Carers

As a parent/ carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, which may ultimately affect exam and test results.

Parents/ carers are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure their child attends school regularly. There is no automatic right to take a child out of school during term time but the law allows Head teachers to consider individual requests to authorise leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances**.

The Head teacher must be satisfied that the exceptional circumstances justify an authorised absence and it is entirely the responsibility of the parent/ carer submitting the request to provide sufficient information and evidence in order to establish this fact.

The request for an authorised leave of absence must be made in advance and the Head teacher may invite the parent/ carer into school to discuss the request before a decision is made.

If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the Head teacher, the expectation is that the child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request.

If the request for a leave of absence is refused and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the Head teacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice to be issued against you.

A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 per parent, per child if the notice is paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.