

WISBOROUGH GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance policy

Introduction

Most parents want their children to get on in life. Children only get one chance at school, and their chance of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly. Poor attendees may not be able to keep up with school work or miss out on parts of the curriculum. This can affect their rate of progress and overall level of attainment. It is not only the academic work as missing out on the social side of school life can affect a child's ability to make and keep friendships. Setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help children later on at secondary school. Arriving at school on time is also vital, as persistent lateness can be very disruptive for the child, the teacher and the other children in the class.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Feel able to discuss with their class teacher or teaching assistant any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect all parents and carers to:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their children arrive punctually and prepared for the school day
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity whenever the child is unable to attend school

- Inform the school by 9.30am, at the very latest, on the first day of the child's absence, give a reason for their absence, e.g. type of illness, and send a written note or email on their return to school, for absences of three or more days' duration
- Keep the school informed of absence on a daily basis or indicate a given period of time e.g. hospital operation, vomiting/diarrhoea (48hrs), updating school if circumstances change
- Contact the school whenever any problems occur that may keep the child away from school
- Book family holidays during school holidays unless there is an exceptional circumstance (written permission must be sought from the Headteacher in advance)
- Arrange wherever possible for medical appointments to be made outside school hours. If this is unavoidable, then the child should be taken out of school for the minimum amount of time possible.

We expect the school (staff and governors) to:

- Encourage good school attendance and provide a safe and welcoming learning environment
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and monitor all pupils' attendance
- Contact the parents or carers as soon as possible when there is unexplained or irregular absence
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on one of their regular monitoring visits to the school, if not resolved with parents
- Work with the EWO if further action, such as court prosecution, is required. (Fine of up to £1,500 and/or three months imprisonment for each absent child)
- Keep parents informed about attendance issues and report annually to them on their children's attendance record
- Keep to Department of Education (DofE) and Local Authority (LA) guidelines.

The LA expects an **average of at least** 95% attendance of pupils. Our school target is set at 97% (Autumn Term 2020). This allows for an average of 6 days of authorised absence per child in each school year and should cover all absence including sickness, medical appointments and any other authorised absence. The LA is responsible for monitoring attendance through the EWOs. Ofsted will pay special attention to primary schools that have an overall attendance rate of less than 95%.

Holidays

The school strongly advises parents and carers to book family holidays during the school holidays to minimise any disruption to their education. Absence will only be authorised in **exceptional** circumstances. Holidays should not be booked until the absence is authorised. The procedure for requesting holiday in school time is:

1. The parent or carer will obtain a "Request for Absence from Learning" form and information sheet from the school office.
2. The parent or carer will fill in and return the form, which should include a full explanation of why the request is exceptional. Parents may submit a separate letter if they wish.
3. The Headteacher may request a telephone call or meeting to discuss the circumstances in more detail.
4. The Headteacher will decide whether to authorise the absence in line with this policy and DofE guidelines. The Headteacher will consider:
 - The form and any letters from the parent or carer
 - The age of the pupil
 - The time of year proposed for the trip (and the impact on the planned curriculum and assessment)
 - The nature of the trip and the parental wishes
 - The overall attendance pattern of the pupil (including punctuality, sickness and medical appointments over the last 12 months)
 - The pupil's stage of education and progress (based on discussion with the class teacher and including consideration of any Special Educational Needs)
 - Any other specific guidelines as previously agreed with Governors, such as overall attendance to date.

Once the decision has been made, the Headteacher will return the form to the parent or carer, indicating whether authorisation is given and signed by the Headteacher.

The Headteacher has the authority to authorise absences that are unavoidable at short notice providing these circumstances are exceptional.

Holidays will only be authorised during term time in unavoidable and exceptional circumstances.

Encouraging Attendance

The school will ensure that parents are well informed about attendance issues through:

- The parent information booklets and DofE booklets
- Home-school agreement
- Letters to parents and general Newsletters
- Parent consultation evenings (as appropriate)
- School reports (more detail if concerns are evident)
- Prospectus
- The school website
- Individual phone calls
- Meetings.

School Organisation and Procedures

Class teachers will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils twice a day. The register should be taken and returned to the office by 9:10am in the morning and by 1:05pm after lunch.
- Record in the registers any reasons for lateness or absence.
- Inform the office of any unexplained lateness or absence that needs further follow up.
- Be alert to the early signs of disaffection which could result in non-attendance and to report this to the Headteacher.
- Inform the Headteacher of any unexplained lateness or absence that warrants serious concern or requires further investigation within the school.

The Office staff will:

- Ensure class registers are completed by teachers by 9:10am in the morning and 1:05pm after lunch, and collect them if they are not.
- Record in the registers any reasons received by the office for lateness or absence, ensuring adequate details have been provided.
- Monitor and record the type of absence for each child.
- Inform the Headteacher of any lateness or absence that warrants serious concern or requires further investigation within the school.
- Follow up any unexplained lateness or absence as follows:
 1. Phone the parents/carers if no information has been provided by 9:30am;
 2. Repeat the phone call after ten minutes if no-one answers and inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
 3. Phone other nominated contacts on the child's record if still no answer (there must be a minimum of three contacts in total);
 4. Leave a telephone message (or email if no answerphone facility available) to inform the parent/carer that, if no reply has been received within ten minutes of the message being left/sent two appropriately senior members of staff will visit the home to ascertain whether the child is safe, and to bring them to school in an insured vehicle if necessary;
 5. Child Protection procedures, including notifying Social Services, will be followed if deemed necessary to safeguard the child(ren).

The Headteacher will:

- Highlight school attendance in assemblies, newsletters, publications etc.
- Ensure that the above procedures are adhered to.
- Support staff in encouraging and maintaining good attendance.
- Follow up any unexplained lateness or absence that warrants serious concern or requires further investigation within the school.

- Contact parents or carers by phone and/or in writing if there is a concern about persistent absence or punctuality (below 95%), asking them to call or visit the school to discuss any issues and possible support.
- Monitor overall attendance in conjunction with the governing body.
- Evaluate policy including effect of pupil incentives and parent information.
- Compare the schools attendance record with similar ASSH schools, the LA average and nationwide data.
- Liaise with the EWO about persistent late comers or non-attenders.
- Use the LA self-review/action plan material (This may include extending the red-amber-green scheme to individual classes/individuals).
- Set attendance targets for each academic year in conjunction with the School Improvement Partner.

The Governing Body will:

- Monitor attendance – overall figures.
- Evaluate policy including effect of pupil incentives and parent information.
- Review the attendance policy regularly.
- The LA will monitor attendance levels regularly.

Legal Sanctions

When a child is recorded as absent from school without authority their parent(s) or carer(s) can be held accountable for an offence under S.444 of the Education Act 1996.

When unauthorised absence occurs, the school has the option to refer it to the local authority to consider intervention, dependent on the length and the reason for the absence. This can be by one of two pathways:

A request for the use of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)

A request for the allocation of an Investigating Officer.

If issued with a FPN, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Specific Guidelines

These guidelines agreed by Governors will be used by the Headteacher in conjunction with the DOFE guidelines, in deciding whether to authorise absence or not:

Examples of absence that may be authorised:

- Dental and medical appointments that cannot be made out of school hours - although frequent medical absences may be challenged and medical evidence requested
- Sickness – although frequent sickness absences may be challenged
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – Headteachers can use their discretion regarding travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use their discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulties if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

Examples of absence that will NOT be authorised:

- Shopping
- Days out
- Extra days tagged onto weekends throughout the year unless for exceptional reasons and with prior approval
- Days when a child could have come in late rather than not at all
- Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost / parental work commitments, with the exception of emergency services personnel with statutory leave restrictions and with prior written agreement.