



## **Attendance Policy**

This school's Attendance Policy is based upon the requirements contained within the following:

- The Education Act 1996;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and
- Department for Education Guidance as from time to time issued in respect of school attendance matters.

### **Introduction**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Supreme Court has determined that 'regular' attendance means that which is **"in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school"** (Isle of Wight Council v Platt) (6<sup>th</sup> April 2017). Regular attendance for our school means attending school on every day that the school is open.

### **Commitment to Attendance**

Along with the other schools in the Wokingham Town West Cluster (Bearwood Primary, Emmbrook Infant, Emmbrook Junior, Hawthorns Primary, St Paul's C of E Junior, Walter Infant and Winnersh Primary) we recognise the clear connection between regular attendance and achievement and will, therefore, work in partnership with parents, the school's governing body and the Local Authority to ensure that pupils achieve maximum attendance.

### **Expectations**

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there are good reasons for their absence;
- Arrive at school on time;
- Be appropriately prepared for the day; and
- Notify their class teacher of any issues that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents will ensure:

- They are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, their legal responsibilities; with regard to their child's education and the requirement to ensure their child's regular attendance at school;
- Their child attends school every day throughout the academic year unless school has approved the leave of absence;
- Their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day;
- They telephone the school each day if their child is unable to attend due to illness or any other unavoidable circumstance;
- They provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school, including providing medical evidence where requested;
- They avoid making medical, dental or other appointments during the school day;
- They notify school of any issues that may affect their child's attendance; and
- They advise school immediately of any changes to contact details.

School staff will:

- Ensure registers are taken promptly at 8.50 a.m. and again at the start of the afternoon session;
- Contact parents when a pupil has failed to arrive at school and where no message explaining absence has been received by 9.30 a.m.;

- Send a written request to parents where a pupil's absence is unexplained – see *note below on Authorised and Unauthorised Absence*;
- Provide parents with their child's percentage attendance at regular intervals (End of year reports);
- Work with parents when there are concerns over a pupil's lack of regular attendance;
- Notify the Education Welfare Service when a pupil fails to attend school regularly or when a pupil has missed 10 school days or more without permission: this being a legal requirement; and
- Where absences persist then a formal referral should be made to the Education Welfare Service, which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification or when the school considers the circumstances highly exceptional and has given approval in advance.

Unauthorised absence is when school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence, OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to parents, OR when the Headteacher has not approved a request for leave of absence.

Parents should be aware that it is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise an absence or not. In the case of long term or frequent absences due to illness or a medical condition, supporting medical evidence may be requested. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of a prescription. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost.)

### **Punctuality/Lateness**

It is crucial that pupils arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of other pupils in the class. It is paramount, therefore, that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school site is open at 8.30 a.m. and the school playground gate closes at 8.50 a.m.

- Registration takes place at 8.50 a.m. and pupils who arrive after that time will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9.15 a.m. after which lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence, (This could lead to formal legal action by the local authority if the problem persists).
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff and, if not resolved, will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- A letter will be issued to parents following four late entries in the register.

### **Pupils Leaving During the School Day**

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Parents should arrange medical, dental and other appointments outside of school time unless it is an emergency. Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out at the School Office on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
- When a pupil is being collected from school, parents are requested to report to the School Office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family, it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person, or to contact Social Services.

### **Term Time Leave of Absence**

In keeping with the schools in the Wokingham Town West Cluster, we actively discourage term time absence. Our purpose is to ensure pupils achieve their full potential and there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a parent considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for such absence. The law has removed the right for schools to grant up to 10 days' leave of absence in special circumstances for the purposes of a family holiday and there is no automatic right to take any leave or holiday in term time. As outlined in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the Headteacher can only grant

leave of absence if the circumstances are considered 'exceptional' in which case the pupil's absence will be authorised. The Headteachers of Wokingham Town West recognise that siblings from the same family may not attend the same school and will therefore work in close partnership to ensure a consistent and fair approach to authorising absence.

The school holiday dates, INSET days and other important dates are published on the school's website and parents are asked to note these when planning holidays and family events. If there are exceptional reasons for requesting leave of absence during term time, the following procedures will apply:

- The parents with whom the pupil normally resides must complete and submit a Leave of Absence form at least one school month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office and our website. The Headteacher will consider the application, and will decide whether the application can be granted because of 'exceptional' circumstances. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the specific circumstances of the particular application. School will endeavour to respond within 5 working days of its submission.
- Where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's absence will be authorised.
- Supporting evidence may be asked for when considering 'exceptional' circumstances (Celebration invitations, letters from employers, travel itineraries, written evidence from employers restricting annual leave, formal notification from travel companies confirming changes to flight times/dates, written confirmation of secondary school interviews etc.)
- A one-off period of irregular attendance, such as an unauthorised period of leave in term time, can result in a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service and this may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct.
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days (Figures correct as of 01.09.17).
- If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school contrary to Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

We collect attendance and absence data daily and weekly from the Registers. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. This collecting of data also enables us to identify those pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern. Should this apply to your child, the Headteacher will write to you to make you aware of the concern. If your child's attendance does not show an improvement, you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to agree an Attendance Action Plan.

### **The Education Welfare Service**

If your child's Attendance Action Plan fails to bring about the required improvement in attendance, we will consider making a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service that works to support schools, parents and pupils to promote and ensure good school attendance and punctuality. However, the Service also has a statutory responsibility to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service, various actions can be taken to address attendance concerns. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, Penalty Notices may be used to bring about an improvement in a pupil's attendance. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

The Fast Track Intervention may also be offered as an early intervention measure designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address school attendance concerns. Fast Track involves engaging parents and identifying what improvements and actions need to be achieved over a fixed period (usually 8 or 12 weeks).

Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified period, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

### **Promoting Good Attendance**

Excellent attendance throughout the year will be celebrated in a number of ways:

- Class attendance celebrated in assemblies and the newsletter
- Individual pupil Certificates for 100% attendance.
- Letters to parents for improved attendance and punctuality.

**Changing Schools**

It is important that if parents decide to send their child to a different school that they inform the school in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next;
- The address of the new school; and
- A new home address if appropriate is supplied.

The pupil’s school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and after four weeks, the pupil will be registered as a Pupil Missing Education.

**Elective Home Education**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education.

Should parents wish to follow this route, they need to put this in writing to the Headteacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll. School will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to monitor the education put in place at home.

**Governors**

It is the Governors’ legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate attendance at our school and our figures are presented to the Governing Body on a half-termly basis. The Learning and Teaching Committee has specific responsibility for overseeing attendance matters in our school.

**HISTORY**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Reference</b> | <b>Amendments</b>   |
|-------------|------------------|---|
| March 2018  | Version 1        | Policy produced in consultation with Wokingham Town West Cluster Schools. |
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