



**Whitmore Park Primary School**

# **Policy for Attendance**

**2017**

Amended May 2020

## Introduction

At Whitmore Park we recognise that regular attendance by pupils is an important factor in raising achievement. We also consider that the prevention of unauthorised absence forms an integral part of our policy to promote good behaviour and discipline.

## Aims

- To encourage and secure attendance and to improve the school attendance figures to over 96%
- To reduce the incidence of unauthorised absence.
- To reward good/significantly improved attendance.
- To improve the monitoring of attendance at a school and individual pupil level.
- To enhance the provision for disaffected pupils.

## Rationale

In the school's endeavours to improve attendance we consider that there are several important elements:

- The development of our computerised attendance systems.
- Children collected; who have difficulty in getting to school on time
- Close working relationships with the Early Help Service (EHS)
- First day of absence call.
- Raising the profile of attendance across the whole school.
- Encouragement of parents/carers to be involved.
- Home visits where appropriate
- Closer working relationship with parents to encourage attendance

The school has targets to improve attendance and all children have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep parents/carers updated about progress to this level and how pupil's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

## The Development of Computerised Systems

Attendance analysis work is carried out each week by the Safeguarding, Attendance & Welfare Team (SAWT)). The SAWT meet with the Head Teacher each week to discuss any actions to be taken and alert teachers to those pupils who have dropped below 90%. An attendance report will be generated each week. The register will show whether the pupil absence is authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the school has given approval for the pupil to be away or has accepted the explanation offered as a satisfactory justification for absence.

## Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid reason such as illness which the symptoms must be described, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and where a request for leave has not been authorised. If a parent doesn't inform the school of why their child is absent on the day the absence occurs this absence will be unauthorised. If the parent subsequently provides a valid reason for the absence this will be recorded on the day of notification however the absence will remain unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time will not be authorised.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

### Religious Observance

We will authorise a day for religious observance when a request has been made by a parent/carer.

### Lateness

The registers will remain open until 9.00am for KS1 and KS2 and where patterns of lateness begin to emerge the attendance team will seek to support parents.

Our IT capability will enable us to:

- Print out a pupil's attendance record over a period which can be used when discussing attendance with a parent/carer or as part of an insert into a school report.
- To identify the classes in KS1 and KS2 with the highest weeks attendance and implement current weekly reward for these classes.

- Identify lists of high attendees and the SAWT will discuss any actions with the Head Teacher and implement our rewards systems weekly, half termly, termly and end of year
- Print out of “vulnerable” groups related to attendance.
- Identify low attendees and arrange interviews with the Head Teacher and a member of the SAWT.
- Print out of the pupils who have unauthorised codes and notify parents by letter of a possible penalty notice. This also applies to unauthorised holidays
- Print out a persistent absence report

#### Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through class teacher or the School counsellor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and if deemed appropriate be offered Early Help support.

We will work closely with the Early Help Service to support our families.

When staff become concerned about a pupil’s attendance they will be required to discuss this with the Head teacher or the SAWT who will then draw a course of action and where needed liaise with the appropriate individuals. This action may involve home visits.

The school monitors below 90% and investigates reasons.

The Head teacher and SAWT meet every week to discuss any attendance issues; including Nursery and Reception pupils.

The Local Authority Attendance Officers (LAAO) may also provide the following support:

- Support school to identify pupils where attendance and punctuality is a concern
- Work with parents, supporting those in difficulties over their child’s non-attendance E.g. Parent Groups, 1:1 support for children and their parents/carers, signpost parents/carers to other agencies (Positive Parenting)
- Support strategies for improving attendance and punctuality E.g. Parent/carer meetings, Home Visits, attendance plans.
- Attend at relevant meetings; such as Early Help or Child Protection Meetings where there are concerns around attendance and punctuality for children.

#### Involvement of Parents:

We believe that the involvement of parents is one of the key issues in addressing issues surrounding improving attendance. We will ensure that parents are made aware of their responsibilities with regard to attendance as per the Government guidelines - 'that in addition to securing regular attendance they also have a responsibility to ensure that the children arrive on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn.'

We will also seek to remind parents of the need to inform the school of the reason for the child's absence. Reasons must be explained fully. Words like 'illness', 'sick', or 'poorly' will NOT be authorised.

We consider that in the case of absence it is a reasonable expectation that the reasons for absence are communicated on the first day by either:

- Telephoning the school
- Sending a message with a sibling/friend.
- Sending a text message to the school mobile or Schoolcomms/gateway app

If neither of the above methods are possible we would require a note stating the reason for absence when the child returns to school however the absence will remain unauthorised.

Absence will be carefully monitored and any unexplained absence may be followed up by the use of a school 'pro-forma' letter.

In cases where unacceptable reasons are given i.e. parents have condoned the absence for example to take a child shopping, we will seek to discuss these matters with the parents and if serious concerns do arise we will enlist the support of the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).

### **DfE Guidance Term-time Holiday**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 previously allowed head teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Head teachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that **head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

It is for head teachers to determine if the requests for leave of absence are reasonable. Each request should be judged on a case by case basis, and we expect that head teachers will use their discretion sparingly.

Where family holidays or leave of absence are taken without the permission of the school, parents will receive a Penalty notice where absence meets the Local Authority's criteria.

### **Home-School Agreement**

One of the aims of our Home School Agreement is to engage the support of parents/carers to ensure that children attend school every day and arrive on time. The school will contact parents if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance or punctuality.

### **Contact on the First Day of Absence**

The policy of contacting parents on the first day of absence if no message has been received is to inform parents that absence is a matter for concern and will be followed up.

### **Raising the Profile of School Attendance**

In order to raise the profile of school attendance, we have developed a school attendance action plan. Please refer to this for our school objectives and rewards.

The school will use the newsletter and twitter to highlight systems designed to encourage attendance.

### **In conclusion**

We will place a high priority on punctuality and regular attendance and seek to encourage it at every opportunity.