



Weetwood Primary School

Attendance Policy

Written: January 2014
Review date: October 2019
Review date: October 2021

RATIONALE

The purpose of this document is to inform staff, governors, parents, carers and visitors to the school of how we ensure that current statutory regulations on pupil attendance and registration are met. This policy statement also outlines how the school will try to encourage regular attendance and punctuality of pupils and secure the support of their parents and carers.

INTRODUCTION

We believe it is important that pupils develop an appreciation and understanding of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance at school.

Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them to maximise achievement. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage and poor attainment. It is the responsibility of our school to promote regular attendance and punctuality and to take seriously problems, which may lead to non-attendance or lateness. We believe the high quality of school and classroom experience we offer and our working partnerships with parents, carers and Children's Services Attendance Advisers will enable us to maintain high attendance rates and keep lateness to a minimum.

Parents and carers must support the school by demonstrating that they themselves value education and achievement by fulfilling their legal responsibilities in ensuring the punctuality and regular attendance of their children.

PROCEDURES

- Parents and carers are primarily responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. It is the parents' or carers' responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence by **9.30 a.m.** on the first day of absence and subsequent days.
- Parents or carers can notify the school of their child's absence by;
 - note or letter
 - personally speaking to a member of school staff
 - telephone call.
- Parents or carers of pupils who fail to notify school of an absence will be contacted by one of the office staff.
- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

- If we do not have a reason for the child's absence, we will contact the first person on the information sheet we hold for the child concerned. This policy will ensure that both home and school are fully aware that the child is not at school.
- A child is classed as late if they arrive to school after 8.55am. Children who arrive late for school should be brought by parents or carers to the school office to collect a late card. Children who arrive late should not be sent in to school unaccompanied unless this is prearranged with school.
- Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.
- It is a legal requirement that the school informs the Attendance Team of continuous children's absences of at least two weeks and of those children who fail to attend regularly. If a child is, or likely to be away from school due to medical needs for more than 15 days or regularly miss school because of chronic illness the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) and the Attendance Strategy Team will be notified. Registers should be marked so that they show that a pupil is or ought to be receiving education otherwise than at school. The A.I.O. can also be contacted when we are experiencing difficulty in determining whether absences are justified.
- Attendance Strategy Meetings for the Headingley and Kirkstall School's Partnership are held regularly. Children with attendance that is a cause for concern can be referred to this team. Staff should pass the names of children causing concern to the Headteacher. The Headteacher or A.I.O. will contact parents or carers to discuss any problems with punctuality or attendance. If there is no improvement following this discussion, then Stage 1 procedures will be put in place.
- The Head teacher is responsible for considering requests for leave of absence for children from their parents or carers. Parents and carers do not have the right to authorised absence. All requests will be carefully considered in the light of the need to maintain continuity of learning. Parents may be invited to discuss the reasons with the Headteacher or a senior member of school staff.

When parents or carers request leave to take their children out of school during term time we will ask them to complete the appropriate form. Forms should be completed at least two weeks prior to the period of absence requested. Absence for holidays cannot be authorised. Extended leave can be damaging, resulting in insufficient coverage of the National Curriculum and pupils unable to reach their potential and can have a lasting effect. Therefore, Extended Leave can only be authorised for a maximum of twenty days in a school year. This should only be for **exceptional** circumstances. Holiday absence does not qualify as exceptional circumstances and if taken will be counted as unauthorised. Similarly approved extended leave absence for more than twenty days will be recorded as unauthorised.

We will also inform parents and carers throughout the year when the end of Key Stage 2 Standard Attainment Tests will take place.

Parents and carers should not expect absence to be authorised:

- If the child's overall attendance is 90% or less
 - At critical times of year, such as entering school in Reception, attainment test years
 - (Y2 & 6) or the first weeks of a new school year
 - If the Headteacher considers absence would be particularly detrimental to the education of the pupil
- Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, 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.

ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

- **Registers are completed using SIMS.** It is a legal requirement that we keep class attendance registers in which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, children are marked present or absent. Registers will remain open until 9.30 a.m. in normal circumstances. If a child is not physically in front of the teacher when the register is called the child should be marked as **N**. If they arrive whilst the register is still open, then **L** should also be marked. On no occasion should a blank mark appear against a child's name. If a child arrives at school after registration has closed, i.e. after 9.30 it will be recorded in the office as **U**. The SIMS database will record if a child has unauthorised absence.
- Children who are present should be marked with a **/** and children who are absent should have **N** marked in pen by their name. Once registers have been completed they should be saved on SIMS. Children who have arrived late after the registers have been sent to the office will be marked late by office staff if they have arrived before 9.30 a.m.
- Children who are going on an educational visit should be marked as **V**. Children who are taking part in sporting activities should be marked with a **P**. Pupils attending a pupil referral unit should be marked with a **B**.
- Absence for religious observance may be agreed by the Headteacher but will not exceed two days per school year. This will be marked absent as **R**.

- Registers are legal documents and contain information, which is required by the D.f.E., Children's Services and sometimes for evidence in cases where parents or carers are being prosecuted for school attendance offences. Parents' and carers' letters should be saved for at least half a term and for longer if a child's attendance is of concern.

DATA RECORDS & MONITORING

- The school will compare its attendance figures with the average for all Leeds Primary Schools and those nationally using data provided by Children's Services and the DfE.
- If there is concern about a child leaving unexpectedly or any aspect of a pupil transfer, which gives rise to concerns about their welfare, the school's designated teacher for child protection and the education improvement officer should be informed. The school will always exchange or upload a Common Transfer File (CTF) for every child of compulsory school age that comes off our role.
- The office staff will enter all our attendance data on to the computer and complete a termly attendance return for the A.I.S. and an annual return to the D.f.E. Attendance figures will also be included in the Head teacher's report to the Governing Body.

CONCLUSION

The Governors and staff believe that our Attendance Policy will enable us to fulfil our legal responsibilities on this issue. We also hope that our partnership with our parents, carers, children's Services and other stakeholders will enable us to continue to promote regular attendance and punctuality.