

WHITEHILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL

“...putting children first...”



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date reviewed: July 2022

Reviewed by: N James

Ratified by Governors: Sept 2022

Whitehills Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Aim statement

Whitehills Primary School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality; ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled. *“Improving attendance is everyone’s business...the foundation of securing good attendance is that the school is calm, orderly and safe, and a supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are ready to learn.”* DFE Working together to improve school attendance May 2022.

All staff and governors see regular school attendance as essential for all pupils if they are to be successful and aims to work in partnership with parents to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance. Whitehills Primary School aims to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Staff will act early to address patterns of absence. We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

This policy meets the requirements of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance document (September 2022) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s non-statutory guidance on school attendance and responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Under Section 444 of the *1996 Education Act*, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are registered as a pupil.

- [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](#)

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:-

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, e.g. family bereavement

Please note that these lists are not exhaustive.

Rights and responsibilities

Improving attendance at Whitehills Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents, governors, staff and the Local Authority (West Northamptonshire Council).

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher and if the need should arise, from the Headteacher. All pupils whose attendance is either very good or improved will be presented with awards during the year.

Parents/Carers

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented, for any reason, from attending, parents are requested to notify the school on the first day of absence. Should their child be off school for a longer period of time, an email or letter explaining the reason for absence should be produced when the child returns. If this does not happen, the school administration staff will contact parents, so it is important that all personal details must be updated by parents. If the absences persist the school will then have a meeting with the parent to share the concerns and to identify any barriers preventing the child attending school. If attendance still does not improve over a six week period, (a term) then parents will be requested to complete a parental contract. In the event of no further improvement, we will then refer to the School Attendance Support Team who will act on this by making contact with parents. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents should avoid taking holidays in school time and making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.

Parents whose first language is not English, or who need support with literacy, will be offered appropriate help from the school in matters of communication.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all staff. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Registration procedures

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. Pupils must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm.

It is a legal requirement that registers are taken at the beginning of a school session. It is also very important in the case of fire or evacuation of the school that there is an accurate record of which pupils are in the building. Registers are taken promptly by the class teacher twice a day, at the start of the morning session and the afternoon session.

Attendance at Whitehills Primary School is electronically recorded on an attendance system.

Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – as soon as practically possible.

Parents should call the school either leaving a voice message with an explanation of their child's absence or calling the school from 8.30am.

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 will 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.

Procedures for following up absence

Class teachers will monitor their class register and the office staff check absences daily. If no telephone message letter or email has been received, the office staff will attempt to contact parents by telephone.

If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and the parent fails to explain the absence, or if the explanation offered is unsatisfactory, the school will contact the parents. If a child is absent for more than 5 consecutive days and no reason has been provided, they will be classed as 'Missing in Education' and the School Attendance Support Team will be contacted.

If a child has less than 90% attendance for two consecutive months, parents will be informed, unless there are extenuating circumstances. If the school has concerns about a pupil's attendance record, they will request notification of all absences in writing.

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. Parents should inform the school of an appointment either as a note to the teacher or to call the office. Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Reporting to parents

Attendance is shared with parents annually in the written end-of-year written report but also shared in our learning conferences in the autumn and spring terms.

Lateness procedures

If a child misses registration it is the responsibility of their parent to enter their arrival in the signing in/out book at the school office.

Persistent late arrival after the register has been taken will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

If the school's efforts to improve a pupil's absence (or lateness) have been unsuccessful the situation will be discussed with the School Attendance Support Team.

Schools are required to provide the local authority with details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or who have 5 days of continuous unauthorised absence. They are also required to inform the local authority before pupils are deleted from the register if:

- A pupil has been permanently excluded
- The pupil's parents have advised in writing that they are withdrawing their children to educate them at home
- The pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within travelling distance of the school (this includes pupils moving away from the area and who are not known to have registered at another school)
- The school medical officer has certified that the pupil's health means they will not return to the school before reaching the end of their compulsory school age.

Absence during term time

Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. Any days taken as a family holiday will be marked as unauthorised. The School Attendance Support Team will be notified should one or more of the following occur:

- A period equal to or more than 5 consecutive days of unauthorised absence
- A minimum of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a six school week period (a school day is two sessions, a.m. and p.m.)
- An accumulation of unauthorised absence leading to an attendance of 90% or less

The School Attendance Support Team will determine whether to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice in these circumstances. The Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 is issued to each parent for each child, i.e. a two parent family with two children would incur a fine of £240. A parent cannot be fined more than twice in an academic year. Please refer to [A Brief Guide to Penalty Notices](#) on the Parent Information section on the school website.

Further information and guidance on school attendance can be found on the [Department for Education](#) website.

Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as chronic illness, a bereavement or a family crisis.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- 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

Roles of staff involved with attendance

Class Teacher

- ~ Takes registers twice daily
- ~ Notify office of non-arrival of children
- ~ Enters absences when notified
- ~ Obtains reasons for absence if not already notified
- ~ Looks for absence patterns

School Administration Staff

- ~ Manages Attendance System
- ~ Receives notification in writing, by telephone and in person of any absences
- ~ Monitors registers daily
- ~ Enters authorised absences on to the Attendance System
- ~ Investigates any outstanding unexplained absences
- ~ Produces reports as and when required for Headteacher, class teacher, governors and School Attendance Support Team
- ~ Produces official annual return for the Department for Education and the Governing Body

Headteacher

- ~ Monitors registers to ensure all registers are completed promptly and accurately
- ~ Reports termly to Governing Body on school attendance
- ~ Ensures all staff are aware of attendance policy and apply it consistently
- ~ Liaises regularly with the School Attendance Support Team, if appropriate
- ~ Sets annual targets for attendance with the local authority

Reward systems

Whitehills Primary School offers an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos will aim to demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.

Attendance awards will be given at the end of the end of the school year. A certificate will also be awarded weekly to the class with the highest attendance and shared in assemblies and with parents.

Target setting

Pupils whose attendance has been identified as a cause for concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Headteacher monitors pupil absence on a monthly basis. For those children who have persistent absence or are causing concern, this will be weekly.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving the School Attendance Support Team.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Attendance data will be monitored and analysed regularly in order to identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements and support and inform policy/practice.

The Headteacher will give termly and annual reports to governors on attendance matters.

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Headteacher must:

- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Work with Education and Inclusion Partnership team to tackle persistent absence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advise when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Admin responsibility

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed biennially by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

This policy was drawn up following guidance from *The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Act and amendments* and *The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 Act and amendments*.

- **Policy revised – February 2010**
- **Policy revised – December 2012**
- **Policy revised – September 2013**
- **Policy revised – May 2014**
- **Policy revised – July 2015**
- **Policy revised – September 2016**
- **Policy revised – March 2018**
- **Policy revised – July 2020**
- **Policy revised – July 2022**