



Attendance Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 Westgarth Primary School's expectation is that all children on roll attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate, consistent procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good and we will also make the best provision possible for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school. We take a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents or carers, pupils and all members of staff that children are attending school as often as they should be.

1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Local Governing Committee is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

2 Definitions

2.1 Authorised Absence

- Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered as justification for absence. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent contacts the school on the first day to explain the absence, and on any subsequent days of absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents or carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents or carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent or carer takes a child out of school to go on holiday during school hours, or there is doubt about an illness, the absence will not be authorised.

2.2 Unauthorised Absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent or carer. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent or carer.
- If a child is late after registration closes, with no good reason, this is classified as an unauthorised absence.

2.3 Medical or Dental Appointments

- Parents/Carers should make every effort to ensure appointments are made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, children should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- If registration is missed due to a medical or dental appointment, the absence will be authorised.

3 Absence Procedures for Parents

3.1 If a child is going to be absent from school, the child's parent or carer must contact the school as soon as possible on the day of absence. The parent or carer can either leave a message detailing the name, year group and reason for absence or report this information to a member of staff in the school's office. The school's telephone number is: 01642 485560. Absences can be reported via Parentmail, or by emailing the school office: westgarthoffice@westgarth.rac.sch.uk

3.2 Notification may be given to school prior to the day of absence if, for example, a child has a medical appointment.

- 3.3** If a parent or carer does not call the school to report an absence, the school will telephone them to determine their child's whereabouts in compliance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- 3.4** Regular absence due to illness may require parents to provide the school with medical evidence such as an appointment card or a prescription note. If these items are not presented, it may result in the absence being classified as unauthorised.
- 4 Absence Procedures for School Staff**
- 4.1** When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register to inform the school office staff, who will endeavour to contact a parent or carer on the first day of absence by 9:30am.
- 4.2** If the school is unable to contact the parent or carer, they will use the other contacts that are recorded on SIMS. If the school is still unable to make contact, the Trust's Education Welfare Officer or a member of school staff may make a home visit to ascertain the safety of the child in compliance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- 4.3** Attendance is monitored half-termly by the Headteacher in conjunction with the Trust's Education Welfare Officer.
- 5. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**
- 5.1** A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of schooling across a rolling 12 month period for whatever reason. Absence at this level will damage the child's education and the school needs parents' support and co-operation to tackle this.
- 5.2** The school, alongside the Trust's Education Welfare Officer, thoroughly monitors all absence and the reasons given on a half-termly basis. When pupils who are persistently absent or in danger of being persistently absent are identified, the school takes action as detailed below.
- 5.3** If a child's attendance falls below 95% in a rolling 12 month period, parents/carers will receive a letter from the Headteacher, informing them that the child's attendance could be a cause for concern.
- 5.4** If a child's attendance falls below 90% in a rolling 12 month period, parents/carers will receive a letter from the Headteacher informing them that their child is a persistent absentee, and inviting them to speak with school to plan for an improvement in the child's attendance.
- 5.5** If the child's attendance does not then improve or stays the same, an immediate referral will be made to the Trust's Education Welfare Officer. The EWO will contact the parents or carers of the child to discuss the issue and to offer any support needed. All our persistent absentee pupils and their parents/carers will have a personalised action plan which may include allocation of additional support through the School Nurse or Education Welfare Officer. This is also combined with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.
- 5.6** If the child's attendance does not improve or continues to stay the same, a formal Attendance Case Conference meeting will then be arranged by the Education Welfare Officer with parents or carers.
- 5.7** The Education Welfare Officer can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Trust's Education Welfare Officer.
- 5.8** The school, supported by the Local Authority, reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child to school on a regular basis.
- 6. Repeated Unauthorised Absences**

6.1 The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers to discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may then refer to the Trust's Education Welfare Officer, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

7. Long-term Absence

7.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for several days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work, if parents and carers feel that this is appropriate.

7.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

8. Lateness

8.1 Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss learning and vital information for the day ahead. Late arriving pupils may disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

8.2 If a child arrives later than the start of the school day, 8.55am, but within the first 30 minutes, they will be marked in the register as late. If a child arrives at school after the first 30 minutes of the school day, they will be marked as 'U' in the register (an unauthorised absence) and a reason for their lateness will be recorded by office staff. Regular lateness may result in a referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

9. Children Leaving School During the School Day

9.1 Children are not allowed to leave the school premises without prior permission. Children must be signed out on leaving school. If a child leaves school without permission, their parents will be contacted and then the police to report the child as missing.

10 Requests for Leave of Absence

10.1 Since September 2013, Headteachers have been unable to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

10.2 Requests should be made **at least four weeks before the intended absence**. Parents and carers should not risk making any arrangements before a school decision is made on their leave of absence request application.

10.3 The exceptional circumstances of the request must be given in writing on the correct form issued by the school office and consideration will be given to the individual circumstances and the time of school year, as well as the child's attendance, progress, behaviour and wellbeing.

10.4 Where leave of absence is taken without authorisation, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. If a child's attendance is 95% or above for the previous 12 months prior to the leave of absence being taken, a warning letter will be issued. If a child's attendance is below 95% for the previous 12 months prior to the leave of absence being taken, a penalty notice is likely to be issued to each parent or carer. Two warning letters will not be issued in any 12-month period as the second leave of absence request would result in a penalty notice.

10.5 The Education Welfare Officer will request that the Local Authority raises a penalty notice if unauthorised absence is taken at the following critical times:

- During September
- During July transition
- During testing periods (e.g. the Year 1 Phonics Screening Test, Year 6 SATs/end of key stage writing assessment)

10.6 For children below compulsory school age in Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) term time absence will be recorded as unauthorised on the child's record but penalty notices will not be issued.

11 Pupils with Medical Conditions

11.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's policy on 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions', available on the school website, which sets out how the school will provide support.

11.2 The school is committed to ensuring, upon notification of a medical condition, that arrangements are in place to support pupils so that they have full access to education. With this in mind, Headteachers have discretion in applying this policy where children have medical conditions, of which the school has been notified.

12 Attendance Targets

12.1 The school sets internal attendance targets each year, which are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved nationally, including groups, such as disadvantaged children and persistent absentees.

13 General Reporting to Parents

13.1 All parents will receive information regarding their child's attendance on their end of year report, and spring report (Y1 to Y6) using the following statements:

- Excellent – 100%
- Good - above 96%
- Below average – 95% – 95.99%
- Cause for concern – 90% – 94.99%
- Persistent absence – 85% – 89.99%
- Serious concern – below 85%

14. Rewarding Good Attendance

14.1 All children who have 100% attendance in any one term will receive an excellence certificate, awarded in a celebratory assembly. There are special certificates and a book reward given to any child who achieves 100% attendance for an academic year.

15. Monitoring and Review

15.1 It is the responsibility of the school's Local Governing Committee to monitor overall attendance and thus they receive a termly update in the Headteacher's Report. The school governors examine closely the information provided to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as they can be and that this attendance policy is being adhered to by the school.

- 15.2** The school's office staff will be responsible for monitoring attendance daily throughout the school, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence on a particular day by any member of staff, the member of staff should contact the school office immediately and they will take the appropriate action. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher.
- 15.3** This policy will be reviewed by the Local Governing Committee, in consultation with the Trust's Education Welfare Officer, biannually or earlier if considered necessary.

Date Policy Written: January 2019

Date of Next Review: July 2020