



Date: Summer 2020

Attendance Policy

Watcombe Primary School



WATCOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for every pupil. Poor attendance is detrimental to a child's educational progress and to their social and emotional development. It is therefore important that clear school policies are used to deal promptly with the causes of non-attendance.

Purposes

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for register keeping which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
2. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging good attendance.
5. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All staff will understand the registration process in the school.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and returned to the school office promptly.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters, school prospectus and parent's meetings.

4. The school will inform parents regularly of attendance figures and annually of the whole school attendance target via the school newsletter.
5. The school will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
6. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures.

Parents

1. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents are responsible for immediately informing school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. **This should be at the earliest opportunity.**
4. Parents should ensure that the school has an up to date list of contacts, ideally 4 other adults (one being a key holder to the home) who may be called in the case of an unexplained absence/emergency.
5. Parents should not take their child on holidays in term time.
6. Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by a parent. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
 - Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for **3 days** or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below **96%** and/or is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being unauthorised.

Evidence that is required could be one of the following:

- Proof of GP appointment
- Letter from the GP
- Copy of the prescription relating to the illness
- School medical card stamped by GP surgery
- Permission given to talk to the doctor re advise sort by parent

To prevent the spread of Norovirus and any other viral gastroenteritis illnesses, which is characterised by the sudden onset of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, on the advice of Public Health England children should stay away from school until they have been free of symptoms for at least 48 hours and avoid contact with others where possible

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a pupil need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence.

Leave of Absence

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As of the 1 September 2013, headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher is unable to authorise any leave of absence to any children with attendance below 96%. This will be measured over a 12 month period prior to the date of application.

Absence requests should be submitted to the HT at the earliest possible opportunity for approval. Requests must include all details as to why the absence would be deemed an exceptional circumstance. Absence requests must be submitted on the 'Absence Request Form' available on the school website or the school office.

All absence requests forms will be considered on a case by case basis and only authorised where there are exceptional circumstances.

Absences from school **will not be authorised** for:

- Holidays
- Birthdays
- Shopping

- Looking after family members
- Visiting relatives / family event unless relatives are of the first or second degree

If the absence is unauthorised and the absence is still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Penalty Notice to the parents/carers for the unauthorised absence.

If the absence request is not agreed you have the right to appeal. You may appeal to the Governors in writing (addressed to the Chair of the Children and Curriculum Committee) within 10 days of receiving the notification below (as on the Request for Authorisation of Absence form). Please state fully the reason(s) for your appeal and enclose any additional documentation and supporting evidence that you feel may help your case e.g. medical evidence/letters from employers.

If the decision to unauthorise the leave of absence is upheld, and the absence is still taken the school will send in a request for the issuing of a Penalty Notice, to The Local Authority, who will then make the final decision about whether a Penalty Notice should be issued.

If no absence request is made:

If a child is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the school will write to the parents/carers to inform them that the absence has not been authorized and that a Penalty Notice may be issued by the local authority.

If the parents/carers can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

In situations where a child accumulates 10 or more unauthorised absences (1 absence= ½ day, the equivalent of 5 school days) within any six month period, parents/carers will make themselves liable to receiving a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child.

The Penalty Notice carries a penalty of £60 if paid in full within 21 days or £120 if paid in full after this time but within 28 days. We are unable to accept part or late payments and there is no legal right to appeal the Penalty Notice once it has been issued. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid, this is likely to result in Court proceedings being taken against you for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may face a fine of up to £2500 and/or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.

Please note: only **one** Penalty Notice will be issued **in any two year period**. This means that if a Penalty Notice is paid, and the child accumulates a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days), this will result in the parent/carer receiving a summons to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act. The matter cannot be dealt with by way of a further Penalty Notice being issued.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

- Parents are reminded of the first day contact procedure at the beginning of each term via the school newsletter.
- On the first day or absence the parent/carer should ring school at the earliest opportunity but before 9:30am to inform the office that their child will be away and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is requested. A message can be left on the 'absence mailbox' on the school phone system.



Admin staff keeps a record of absence calls and reasons received each day.

- Class registers are submitted electronically to the admin office so any absenteeism can be followed up.
- If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they will liaise with the admin staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they will relay to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.
- Between 9:00 and 9:30am admin staff will phone in the first instance and then text if necessary the parents of any pupil whose absence is unexplained and on each consecutive day that the absence remains unexplained.
- If no contact is made with the parent/carer and so no reason is given for the absence the school will call any other contacts that have been provided with.
- If a child is absent without any reason and there is concern for their welfare, a member of staff may visit the home address.
- If the school has concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the school will contact the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) for advice.
- Where a child/family have children's services involvement, children services will be any absence
- If after 5 days, the child has continued unauthorised absence, a Child Missing in Education (CME) referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.

If the pupil is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns and feel the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) without waiting for 10 school days.

A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the pupil which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.

- The disruption to other pupils in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

School gates will be locked at 8:55am prompt. Pupils who arrive after 8:55am are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.

- Pupils who arrive after registration will be considered as 'Late (after registers close)' (U).
- All teachers will record the appropriate late mark in the registers and these will be entered into the computerised attendance programme.
- Late gates will be implemented on a regular basis.
- All pupils' attendance records will be checked every half term for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U).
- Where either/or these late arrivals cumulate to 5 or more in a half term the school will write to parents/carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support with the Pastoral & Family mentor.
- Parent/carers of those children logged as persistently arriving late will receive a letter inviting them to meet with the School Family & Pastoral Mentor in an attempt to rectify the situation

Managing Poor Attendance

All pupils with attendance below 96% will be analysed regularly by the school. Persistent absentees (below 10% or above) and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

The following action is taken:

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with {Family & Pastoral Mentor}

Attendance letter 3 will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the HT.

Following this, if there is still no improvement, a referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service and a Parent Contract will be agreed.

Medical Letter: if your child's attendance is below 96% and illness is the main contributing factor affecting their attendance you may receive a medical letter inviting you to make an appointment with the School Nurse Service for advice and support to achieving good health. This letter will also request that medical evidence be provided for any future absences that relate to illness. Failure to provide such evidence as, one of the following;

- Dated and signed GP appointment card
- Letter from the GP
- Copy of the prescription relating to the illness may result in the absence being unauthorised.

If, at any time, a pupil has 10 or more sessions(half days) unauthorised absences equating to 10% within a 6 months' period, the school may attend a legal consultation with the Local Authority to consider legal options available.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Certificates are awarded half termly for 100% attendance.

Children who have made a significant improvement in their attendance may receive a 'well done' letter

Collection of attendance data

At the beginning of each half term the school will analyse the results of the latest data and take the appropriate actions as per the policy.

