

# **WHITLEIGH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**



# **ATTENDANCE POLICY (Pupil)**

**2015**

# WHITLEIGH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY 2015/16

### **Introduction:**

This is a successful and happy school and your child plays their part in making it so. However for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Once termly give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter (including % attendance per class, number of children with 100% attendance).
- Once termly, inform you of your child's attendance rate by letter (Red, Amber, Green). (Appendix 6 - 8)
- Report to you at least each Parents Evening on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate attendance through weekly and termly rewards – bear/ stickers/ certificates
- All children achieving 100% and above by the end of the summer term will be entered into a draw. The winners, one from each key stage, will be presented with a bicycle.

### **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 each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Sessions missed through medical appointments will be authorised upon receipt of written support by your Doctor or the appropriate medical authority. Failure to provide such evidence may result in unauthorised absences being recorded.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the 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
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays

- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

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 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 makes things worse.

### **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 you 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.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence giving reason for absence.
- Keep the school informed as to when you anticipate your child will return to school.

It is also **helpful** if you send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Make contact (through text or telephone) with you as soon as possible on the first day of absence if we haven't heard from you.
- If reasons for absence are not provided a letter will be sent requesting an explanation (Appendix 4). If we receive no response, a further letter will be sent (Appendix 5). Should a reason for absence still not be provided, an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Unauthorised absences will be monitored and could lead to a Penalty Notice warning letter being sent.
- If we have concerns about your child's attendance we will inform you in writing and you will be given the opportunity to discuss any concerns with the school or Education Welfare Officer (Appendix 1). This includes a pattern of erratic attendance as well as extended periods of absence.
- Following this, request that medical evidence be provided to support further absence if there is no improvement in your child's attendance (Appendix 2). Failure to provide evidence will result in unauthorised absences which could lead to a Penalty Notice.
- Inform the Educational Welfare Officer of any attendance concerns who will monitor the situation closely. He/she may decide to contact you directly unless there is an improvement in your child's attendance.

### **Contact**

To aid communication please ensure we have an up to date telephone number and if possible an email address.

### **The Education Welfare Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but where other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as

Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance in school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and this can be embarrassing for the child. Lateness can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

Registers are marked at **8.50** am and the registration period closes at **9.00am**. If a child is not in at that time they may receive a late mark. In accordance with Regulations if they arrive after the close of registration and receive a late mark, an unauthorised absence will be recorded and you may face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

In the afternoon your child must be in school for **1:00pm**. The registers will be closed again at **1:10pm** and again arrival after this time will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

### **If your child is persistently late we will:**

Contact you by letter and inform you of our concerns. (Appendix 3)

If there are further concerns following this we may need to consult the Educational Welfare Officer.

### **Leave during Term Time:**

As from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the government has deemed it necessary to amend the regulations concerning holiday leave within schools. Headteachers may no longer grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you need to take your child out of school during term time, a leave of absence form must be completed prior to the event and evidence related to the exceptional circumstances will need to be provided.

There is **no** automatic entitlement by law to time off during school time. The decision will be that of the Headteacher who will determine whether or not the request is deemed acceptable and the reasons given meet the criteria for authorisation on exceptional grounds, as laid down by Government guidelines.

Taking leave will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by trying not to take children away in school time.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand the circumstances when we will not usually agree leave in term time:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS)
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95%.
- When a request is not deemed as exceptional circumstances.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than 95%. We are aiming for this level because that is the attendance needed for pupils to achieve the best from their schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the City.

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

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school:**

Mr Ian Cording, Headteacher/Mrs Jo Burke, Deputy Headteacher and Mrs Lizzie Lethbridge, Assistant Headteacher.

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Date

Parent of:

Dear

We, at Whiteleigh Primary School and the Education Welfare service work together to support our students and part of our duties include monitoring the progress of attendance for all pupils.

As you may be aware, the Department for Education has changed the threshold for 'persistent absence' to 10% to deal with the reality of pupil absenteeism in schools and the impact this has on their learning. Put into context, a 90% attendance rate over a school year means your child will have missed around 19 school days.

With this in mind, we have a duty to inform you if attendance is below or in danger of falling below 90% and currently, (child's name) has a rate of .....%. If your child is absent for medical reasons or as a result of ongoing illness, written support from your doctor or the appropriate medical authority would be helpful for future attendance monitoring. It may be necessary for us to request such evidence in the event of any further absence, should we feel it necessary.

We would like to assure you that all children registered at Whiteleigh Primary School and other schools in Plymouth have their attendance monitored on a regular basis and letters such as this is part of that monitoring process.

We are able to offer advice and support to parents who may be experiencing difficulties with their children's attendance. If you would like to have the opportunity to meet and discuss this further, please do not hesitate in contacting us.

We hope that in bringing this to your attention now, we may prevent any problems that could arise in the future as a result of interrupted schooling.

We thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Mr I Cording  
Headteacher

Mr V Penprase  
Education Welfare Officer

## APPENDIX 2

Date:

Parent of:

Dear

Further to our previous correspondence and discussions with our Educational Welfare Officer, we are writing to advise you that concerns have been raised regarding (child's name) attendance so far, this year.

We appreciate that absence is sometimes unavoidable however, (child's name) attendance has become very erratic and to date he/she has missed a total of ..... full days at school. This means that his/her attendance level has fallen considerably to .....% which, according to Department for Education guidelines, identifies your child as being at risk of failing to achieve his/her full potential.

I must therefore advise you that we cannot authorise any further absence unless evidence is received, in writing, by your Doctor or the appropriate Medical Authority. Absences without written support will be recorded as unauthorised which could lead to a Penalty Notice issue. The Educational Welfare Officer may also decide to contact you in the event of continued absence.

We thank you for your understanding and hope to see a significant improvement in (child's name) attendance in the future. In the meantime, should you have any concerns or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

### **APPENDIX 3**

Date:

Parent of:

Dear

Following a review of our registers, it has been brought to my attention that there have been occasions when (child's name) has arrived late into school.

Please remember that children should arrive for 8.50 am in time for the registration period. If your child arrives after the close of registration then officially, this counts as an unauthorised absence. Lateness can also be disruptive to lessons and vital information given at the start of the day may be missed.

Whitleigh Primary School and the Education Welfare Service work in partnership to ensure regular monitoring of both attendance and punctuality of all pupils. If lateness persists, the Education Welfare Officer may decide to contact you directly.

We hope that in bringing this to your attention we shall see an improvement in (child's name) punctuality in the future.

We thank you for your understanding but should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

**APPENDIX 4**

Date:

Parent/Carer of:

«chosen\_forename» «chosen\_surname»

Dear «salutation»

Our records show that «chosen\_forename» was absent from school on the dates detailed below but we do not appear to have received an explanation for his/her absence.

Would you please provide an explanation, preferably in writing, so that we can put a reason for absence in the register.

We thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

.....  
**WHITLEIGH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Child's Name: «chosen\_forename» «chosen\_surname»

Dates of absence:

(Date): .....

(Date): .....

Signed: ..... Parent/Carer

**APPENDIX 5**

Date:

Parent of:

Dear

Further to our previous correspondence to you we do not appear to have received a response concerning (child's name) absence, as detailed below.

Would you please provide an explanation, preferably in writing, so that the reason for absence may be recorded on the register.

May we remind you that it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform us when their children will be absent from school. If we do not receive a reason, the absence will not be authorised. The Education Welfare Officer may decide to contact you in the event of any concerns following unauthorised absence. A Penalty Notice could also be issued should we feel this necessary.

We thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

.....  
**WHITLEIGH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Child's Name:

Date of absence:

(Date) : .....

(Date) : .....

(Date) : .....

Signed: ..... Parent/Carer

**APPENDIX 6**

Dear Parent

You will be aware that we are continually working to improve our attendance rates. Our target rate for attendance is 95%. I am writing to congratulate you and your child ..... as they currently have a rate at or above this. If children are to make the most of their potential, they need to be here as much as it is possible. Poor attendance affects the rate of progress that children are able to achieve. Your child is making the most of every opportunity and that is a fantastic achievement and you should all be very proud of that.

Thank you for your support in making sure your child has the best chance of succeeding in their education.

Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

|  |  |                               |  |                               |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>175 Non - School days in a year</b><br>175 days to spend on :-<br>Family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and appointments. |  |                               |  |                               |
| <b>190 School days in each school year</b><br>190 days spent in school improving your education & life chances                                 |  |                               |  |                               |
| <b>10 DAYS<br/>ABSENCE</b>   | <b>19 DAYS<br/>ABSENCE</b>   | <b>29 DAYS<br/>ABSENCE</b>    | <b>38 DAYS<br/>ABSENCE</b>   | <b>47 DAYS<br/>ABSENCE</b>    |
| <b>180 days<br/>in school</b>  | <b>171 days<br/>in school</b>  | <b>161 days<br/>in school</b> | <b>152 days<br/>in school</b>  | <b>143 days<br/>in school</b> |
| <b>100% - 95%</b><br><b>Good</b><br><b>Best chance of success</b><br><b>Child off to a flying</b><br><b>start</b>                              | <b>90% - 85%</b><br><b>Worrying</b><br><b>Less chance of success</b><br><b>Harder to make progress</b><br><b>Starting to have gaps in</b><br><b>learning</b> |                               | <b>80% - 75%</b><br><b>Serious Concern</b><br><b>Serious impact on your child's</b><br><b>progress</b> |                               |

**APPENDIX 7**

Date

Dear Parent

You will be aware that we are working on an initiative to improve our attendance rates. Naturally we would love all children to have 100% attendance, but we understand that this is not always achievable as children are only human after all and do get poorly!

On checking our records, I have identified **all** the children who have attendance below 95% as this is our target and the national target rate for attendance. Your child ..... currently has an attendance rate of %.

I am writing to make you aware of your child's current rate as it is possible you may be unaware. I appreciate that there are many different reasons for absence, many of which are perfectly legitimate and I understand that you may have already spoken to us about your child. However, I still feel it necessary to ensure you are fully informed as it may help you to encourage your child to come to school regularly. To make the most of their potential, your child will need to be in school as much as it is possible as poor attendance affects the rate of progress that children are able to achieve. It is also important to note that fixed penalty notices can be issued as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absence developing.

Finally, it is possible that some percentages are lower than you might expect. This could be due to your child arriving late on a regular basis. Lateness after the close of registration is considered to be an unauthorised absence by the local authority, therefore your child will be registered as absent for the morning session, thus affecting the overall attendance rate.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

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**APPENDIX 8**

Date:

Dear Parent

You will be aware that we are working on an initiative to improve our attendance rates. Naturally we would love all children to have 100% attendance, but we understand that this is not always achievable as children are only human after all and do get poorly!

On checking our records, I have identified **all** the children who have attendance below 95% as this is our target and the national target rate for attendance. Your child ..... currently has an attendance rate of % . As this rate is below 90% it will have been discussed with the Educational Welfare Officer who may get in touch, depending on the circumstances. He will continue to monitor attendance very carefully.

I am writing to make you aware of your child's current rate as it is possible you may be unaware. I appreciate that there are many different reasons for absence, many of which are perfectly legitimate and I understand that you may have already spoken to us about your child. However, I still feel it necessary to ensure you are fully informed as it may help you to encourage your child to come to school regularly. To make the most of their potential, your child will need to be in school as much as it is possible as poor attendance affects the rate of progress that children are able to achieve. It is also important to note that fixed penalty notices can be issued as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absence developing.

Finally, it is possible that some percentages are lower than you might expect. This could be due to your child arriving late on a regular basis. Lateness after the close of registration is considered to be an unauthorised absence by the local authority, therefore your child will be registered as absent for the morning session, thus affecting the overall attendance rate.

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Yours sincerely

Ian Cording  
Headteacher

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