



Whiteways Primary School & Owler Brook Primary School Shared Attendance Policy September 2015

1. Introduction and background

Both Whiteways Primary School and Owler Brook Primary School recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment, and are committed to working with parents, carers, pupils and each other to ensure that every child can benefit from their learning opportunities.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and it underpins our joint ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that parents and carers take responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of their children;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
- address and challenge underperformance and to focus on raising standards for every child in our care;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave our schools

The law states that:

- Parents must ensure that pupils of compulsory school age (5-18) receive a suitable full time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- The school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning session and during the afternoon session.
- The school must report to the LA pupils who fail regularly to attend or are absent for more than ten days without explanation.
- The LA has a duty to ensure that parents fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents to ensure the regular attendance at school is an offence punishable in law.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure that their children attend school, every day.
- Ensure that they arrive in good time to begin lessons promptly.
- Ensure that their children are properly prepared for school (including PE kit, homework, reading books and records).
- Communicate with the school with regard to any attendance issues and work with the school to promote full attendance.
- Arrange dental and medical appointments out of school hours and make arrangements for any siblings to attend school, if in-school appointments are unavoidable.
- Arrange holidays or extended visits overseas during published school holiday periods.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and may, therefore, affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution – this may be a fine or imprisonment.

Both schools work within the current policy and strategy statements of Sheffield City Council.

2. 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:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance through the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 96% or if there should be any concern over levels or patterns of absence.
- Contact parents / carers on the first day of absence
- Utilise our bi-lingual staff to ensure that parents / carers are made fully aware of their obligations with regard to the attendance and punctuality of their child(ren)
- Ensure that consistent information and practices are in place and enforced
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward punctuality and good or improving attendance through competitions and certificates

3. 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 any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or emergency medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time or emergencies (routine appointments are expected to be made out of school hours).

Unauthorised absences are those which a parent or carer may consider appropriate but the school does not consider 'exceptional' and for which no "permission" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school and/or Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This type of absence 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 (after 9.30am)
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips, holidays or extended periods away from school in term time which have not been agreed with the school or have not been deemed 'exceptional'.

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 a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We will use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the local Multi Agency Support Team (MAST).

4. 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 education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons given, 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 we will inform the parents/carers, seeking to act well before this figure is reached.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic tracking to monitor the effects of absence on attainment.

Where children fall below 96% attendance, pupils and their parents will be subject to formal monitoring and, possibly, an Action Plan. The plan may include the allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Learning Mentor or MAST. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

5. Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence and before 9.00am. Both schools have answer phones available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call. Notification may also be in writing.
- Any pre-arranged absence request must be in writing.

If your child is absent we will:

- Enter an absence mark into the electronic attendance register.
- An absence mark will also be placed in the register if a child is late and arrives at school after 9.15 am or after 1.35pm for afternoon registration;
- This mark will represent an *unauthorised* absence where no reason has been given or where the school does not approve permission;
- Telephone or text the named parent / carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them. This may also include a home visit if contact cannot be made;
- Reserve the right to request medical advice, or the involvement of the School Nurse;
- Invite the parent / carer in to discuss the situation with our Learning Mentor or a senior staff member at a **School Attendance Panel Meeting**, if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the MAST, in accordance with the LA policy & strategy documents, if the child's attendance approaches or falls below 94% or it is felt that the parent / carer is not engaging effectively with the school to improve their child's attendance.

6. Multi Agency Support Team (MAST)

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 Local Authority's MAST. They will work with the school to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court may be used.

Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact MAST 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.

7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable.

If a child is late for the start of the day, not only can they miss work but also miss spending time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arrivals disrupt lessons, causing embarrassment for the child involved and, in some cases, encouraging future absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.50am** registration. We expect our children to be in the playground before this time ready to line up when the bell sounds. A further register is taken at 12.30pm KS1 and 1.15pm KS2 for afternoon school.

Registers are marked by **8.50am**

At **9.15am/1.35pm** the registers will be closed. In accordance with Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

This would count towards the possibility of a Penalty Notice and fine if the problem persists so it is essential that all registers are completed accurately by school staff.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Learning Mentor or a senior staff member to resolve the problem. However, parents / carers can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to arrive on time. In such cases the school will attempt to support families, for example, by sending 'wake-up' text messages.

The school will utilise bilingual staff when required.

It is the responsibility of the Administrative Team to ensure the security of registers and produce accurate registration data when requested, for example in the event of a fire or drill.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrating good class punctuality.

Parents should note that:

Children should not arrive on the site before 8.40am as there will be no adult supervision provided by the school before that time. It is not the responsibility of the school to supervise children either before or after the school day, although it is the practice of this school to have staff available prior to 8.50am.

The school recommends that all children are accompanied to and from school by a responsible adult (at least 16 years old) and, for children up to Year 3, we insist on this.

Children can attend the school's Breakfast Club which commences at 8.15am where they will be looked after by school staff.

8. Holidays in Term Time:

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

With effect from 1st September 2013, the Government have made changes to the law under the 2006 regulations.

The amendments in the law make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time. The new law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child away during term time.

We will not authorise leave during term time unless the reason for absence is 'exceptional'.

It is then the decision and responsibility of the parent / carer whether to remove their child from school for that period.

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 Fixed Penalty Notice. In some cases, this may even result in removal from the school roll.

Targets for the school and for classes will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these.

9. Targets

The schools strive for an annual minimum target of 96% attendance.

10. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of those, named in this policy to promote and support and promote good attendance. It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure the punctual attendance of their children every day at school

It is the responsibility of the Inclusion and Administrative Teams of each school to operate the policy to ensure that every child is protected and given the best possible opportunity to achieve to their fullest potential at school through good attendance.

It is the responsibility of the Headteachers and the Governing Bodies to ensure that this policy is reviewed at least every two years and more often if deemed necessary.