



ATTENDANCE POLICY

www.wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk

1. Introduction

Watton at Stone school (Watton) is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

2. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at Watton school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of our attendance policy
- impress upon their children the need to observe the Home School Agreement
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with Watton school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify school if they are absent, which should be done before 9.15am on the first day of absence; providing an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed - preferably in writing - when the children return to school
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- should not book holidays during term time

3. Responsibilities - School

We are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

We complete attendance registers at the start of the morning session (between 8.50am and 9.00am) and at the start of the afternoon session to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity. We will contact any parent who has not given an explanation for their child's absence by 10am on the first day of absence.

For pupils of compulsory school age, all schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

We will:

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this will be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. We recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. We also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school.
- work with the Attendance Officer

Punctuality

We take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness will be monitored and followed up.

We will clearly state on our website the time at which each school session begins and finishes, including the time at which registers open and close.

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and parent provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session using the correct code.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. (Code U)

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

4. Responsibilities – ISL Attendance Team

The ISL Attendance Team (Integrated Services for Learning) fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

Each maintained school in Hertfordshire will have a named Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who will work in close partnership with the school.

The Attendance Improvement Officer will offer the following services:

- identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This may include an examination of attendance registers
- agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO. Before accepting a piece of work the AIO will expect school staff to have first undertaken some preliminary work themselves, eg action by the class teacher or year head, contact with parents, etc
- feed back and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the AIO and/or the school
- identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
- advise the school on individual and whole school strategies for improving attendance
- assist schools in identifying PA (Persistently Absent) pupils and those at risk of becoming PA and ensuring that effective plans of action are in place

5. Authorising Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

We communicate to parents our procedures with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence. Some parents, such as those whose first language is not English or who do not read or write may experience difficulty in providing notes. In such cases schools should seek to make alternative arrangements.

We keep all absence notes for at least a term and when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern to retain the notes until there is no longer a concern.

Absence will be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision
- there is a close family bereavement
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence)
- leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued.

6. Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as attending (or absent from) an approved educational activity using the appropriate code.

The key features of approved educational activity are that they must be:

- educational *and*
- approved by the school *and*
- supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school

7. Requests for Family Holidays During Term time

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

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