



Attendance Policy

Plan Administration

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Responsibility for the Plan	Lisa Whitehead, Assistant Headteacher
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Introduction

Both Whiteways Primary School and Owler Brook Primary School recognise that good attendance, punctuality and positive behaviours are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. We 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 (from 5 years old) 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.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. These routines should start as early as Nursery.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- give parents / carers details about 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;
- carry out well-being visits where appropriate;
- 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 with celebrations and certificates.

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. Examples may include illness, emergency medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (routine appointments are expected to be made out of school hours) or medical emergencies.

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;
- minor illnesses (such as headaches) which can be treated at home before arrival at school;
- 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 9.15am);
- 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'.

Any child may be off school because they are too ill to attend. Sometimes he or she can be reluctant to attend. 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 underlying cause. We will use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the local Multi Agency Support Team (MAST).

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 parents' 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 including invitations to Initial Concern Meetings and possible School Attendance Panel Meetings. 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.

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. 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 9.20am or fifteen minutes after the start of the afternoon session;
- this mark will represent an *unauthorised* absence where no reason has been given or where the school does not approve permission;
- phone or home visit the named parent / carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them. This may also be followed up with a text message 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 an Initial Concerns Meeting or School Attendance Panel Meeting, if absences persist;

- refer the matter to 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.

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 team. 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 carers 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.

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, can cause embarrassment for the child involved and, can in some cases, encourage 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. A further register is taken at the start of the afternoon session.

Registers are marked by 8.50am. At 9.20am or fifteen minutes after the afternoon register 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 a member of school staff 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:

Both schools recommend that all children are accompanied to and from school by a responsible adult (at least 16 years old) and, for children up to and including Year 4, we insist on this.

Owler Brook - Children should not arrive on the site before 8.40am as there will be no adult supervision provided by the school before that time unless children attend breakfast club. 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.

Whiteways – Children should not arrive on the site before 8.20am. The Zone is open from 8.20am for families to come to have breakfast. Children up to and including Y4 should be accompanied by an adult until 8.40am when classrooms open.

Term Time Leave

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during term time. This includes both holidays and / or family emergencies. 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 headteacher 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'.

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

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

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

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of those, named in this policy to promote and support 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 Headteacher and the Governing Body to ensure that this policy is reviewed at least every two years and more often if deemed necessary.