



Attendance Policy

1 Principles

- 1.1 Poor attendance harms educational progress. The School has a legal duty to publish attendance figures and therefore, electronic registers are taken twice every day and individual absences are monitored. Children should attend school every day it is open, unless there is a valid reason that prevents attendance.
- 1.2 Children should only be absent from school if the reason is “unavoidable”. Allowing a child to be absent from school without good reason is against the law and parents can be fined up to £1000 as well as facing a custodial sentence in the case of persistent unauthorised absences.
- 1.3 Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.
- 1.4 **Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason. Examples of this might be illness, specialist appointments or family bereavement.
- 1.5 **Unauthorised** absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no prior permission has been sought and given for the absence. This includes children being absent for trivial reasons; truancy; or absences which have never been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to receive an attendance mark. Providing a note or explanation may not be sufficient if the reason given is considered by the Head teacher to be avoidable.
- 1.6 **Pupil Leave of Absence in Term Time**: Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law have to apply for permission in advance. The School may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are EXCEPTIONAL circumstances. A pupil’s attendance record is also taken into consideration when determining any such requests.
- 1.7 A Leave of Absence Request Form can be obtained from the school office. Applications cannot be made retrospectively.
- 1.8 By law, the school has to notify the Local Authority if a pupil accumulates 10 or more sessions of unauthorised leave of absence within the previous 6 month period of a current academic year. The Local Authority then issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child where that applies. Timescales for paying a penalty notice have changed and from 1/9/2013 a penalty of £60 will apply if paid within 21 days or £120 up to 28 days. If after 28 days the penalty has not been paid, legal proceedings will be taken through the magistrates court for the unauthorised absence.
- 1.9 Some children need encouragement to attend regularly. Any problems are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. It is better not to cover up their absence or

to give in to pressure to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together.

1.10 If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school will involve the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO). He/she will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

1.11 Parents or children can contact the EWO to ask their advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting Wiltshire Council.

2. Procedures

2.1. The school applies the following procedures in dealing with individual absences.

2.2. **Illness and other legitimate reasons:** If a child is unfit for school, parents/guardians should contact the school before 9.30am on **the first day**, in person or by phone and records are kept of all phone calls. Otherwise, when the child returns, a **written note** of explanation from parents/guardians **must** be provided for each period of absence. Absences will only be authorised if this procedure is followed. These records/notes remain on file and are made available to the Education Welfare Officer for inspection. Other reasons for absence during school time must be discussed with the school and authorised absence may be granted in an emergency.

2.3. **Leave of Absence:** Any leave of absence request in term time is at the discretion of the Head teacher. (See 1.7) Requests must be made in advance on a Leave of Absence Form. The Head teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are EXCEPTIONAL circumstances. Any leave may be refused where children have already missed a lot of work or at the crucial times of the year (eg. during National Curriculum examination periods).

2.4. **Lateness:** To receive an attendance mark a child has to attend for a full session. Parents are expected to ensure their children are present in class at the start of the registration period. This is 0845hrs in the morning and 1330hrs in the afternoon.

2.5. Registration closes shortly after 0850hrs and 13.30hrs. Children who arrive after 0850hrs but before 0900hrs will be recorded as present but the number of minutes late will be recorded. Children arriving between 0901hrs and 0915hrs will be recorded as late, so staff are aware of who is on site, but they will be considered as absent because they have not completed a full session. Children arriving after 0915hrs will receive an unauthorised mark.

2.6. If a child arrives after the closure of the register but has an acceptable reason for being late, this will subsequently be recorded as an authorised absence. Otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for that session.

2.7. In certain cases, where a child frequently arrives after the start of the session staff should inquire as to the reasons and remind parents that the school bell is at 0845hrs in the morning and 1330hrs in the afternoon.

- 2.8. Where attendance is poor, parents will be invited to a SAM (School Attendance Meeting) where attendance will be discussed and targets set.

3. Summary

- 3.1. The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Parents will receive information relating to their child's attendance in their annual progress report. Excellent attendance is rewarded with individual/ class prizes.
- 3.2. The School has a duty to make your child's time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to make sure their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

This Policy should be reviewed annually.

Revised September 2013 from Wiltshire "Guidance for Schools" June 2013

Review Date: September 2015

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