

Great Whelnetham Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy

Approved by Governing Body:
Date of approval: 21st June 2017
Review by: 21st June 2018

Introduction

Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. There is clear evidence of a link between good attendance at school and high levels of attainment. Only by attending school every day the school is available and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The whole school community – pupils, parents/carers, school staff and governors have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance.

This policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance/statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community know of the policy and have access to it.

The school's roles and responsibilities

All staff at Great Whelnetham have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. Staff will work together to provide an environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Officer

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will lead the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance, ensuring that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Attendance Officer will be appropriately trained to ensure that up-to-date attendance data and attendance issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team as soon as a trigger point is reached or earlier where there are other concerns. The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that support is put in place to deal with any attendance issues. The Attendance Officer will also meet with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Officer and share information with them regarding any concerns about a pupil's attendance. Attendance information and reports will be prepared by the Attendance Officer. Information on attendance will be made readily available to staff and parents/carers. Attendance reports will be made available to the Governing Body each term.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the codes detailed below.

REGISTER CODES

<i>CODE</i>	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity

C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Holiday (requested in advance) not authorised by the Headteacher	Unauthorised absence
H	Holiday (requested in advance) authorised by the Headteacher	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

The register will be called promptly at 9.05am and 1.00pm (for Reception and KS1). The register will be called by the class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

The register will close at 9.15am and 1.10pm. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will be counted as absent. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

Categorising absence

- A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child not present at this time will be recorded as absent. This absence will be categorised as an 'unauthorised absence' unless leave has been authorised by the school in advance, or where a reason for absence is known and is accepted by the school as a legitimate reason for absence. Where a reason for absence is given to the school at a later stage, the register will be amended (if required) so that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable.

- Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School recognises that there are clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. The school recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence may potentially send a message to parents/carers that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, excluding where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School will challenge parents/carers about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean that an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always be at the discretion of the Headteacher.
- Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - Where leave has been granted by the school in advance:
 - A pupil is to be educated off site, for example to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.
 - A pupil is participating in an educational trip or visit authorised by the school.
 - A pupil is involved in an exceptional special event/occasion and permission has been granted by the Headteacher in advance. In authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case as well as the pupil's attendance, attainment, and ability to catch up on missed schooling will also be considered.
 - In other exceptional circumstances, where permission has been granted by the Headteacher for absence and where the parents/carers with whom the child normally resides have sought permission in advance. In authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case as well as the pupil's attendance, attainment, and ability to catch up on missed schooling will also be considered.
- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents/carers should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand).
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions.
- Where the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong.
- Where the Local Authority have a duty to make travel arrangements for the purpose of facilitating the child's attendance at the school and have failed to discharge that duty.

- Where the pupil is of no fixed abode, their parent/carer is engaged in a trade which required them to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months.
- Where the pupil has been excluded from the school and no alternative provision has been made.
- In other very exceptional circumstances where a request could not have been made in advance (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a very limited period.
- Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:
 - No explanation has been given by the parent/carer.
 - The school is not satisfied with the explanation.
 - The pupil is staying at home to mind the house.
 - The pupil is shopping during school hours.
 - The pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday.
 - The pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent/carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

Approved educational activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Class registers

In order to track pupils' whereabouts throughout the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration, and to ensure the safety of pupils teachers will take a register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions to record absence and lateness. Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by classroom staff and urgent measures will be taken to locate the pupil. See section on post-registration truancy.

Staff Training

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and analysis of data

- The Attendance Officer will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Senior Leadership Team, parents/carers and the governing body. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance.

- Accurate attendance returns will be made to the Department for Education within the stipulated time frame.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- Attendance has a very high profile at Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School and is regularly discussed at Collective Worship and in class groups. Parents/carers are regularly reminded in newsletters and at school meetings about the importance of good attendance. The Attendance Policy will be made available on request and via the school website.
- Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School will contact parents where there is a concern regarding the level of attendance or late arrivals at school.
- Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within the week:

- First-day calling

Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School has in place a system of 'first-day calling'. This means that parents/carers will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent where no explanation for the absence has been received. This phone call will be made by 10.15am. The system helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parent's/carer's knowledge. Where it is not possible to make direct contact with parents/carers a message will be left on the parent's/carer's telephone(s) and a text message sent. If contact has not been made with the parents/carers by the end of the week, or earlier if there are reasons for concern, a letter will be sent home asking the parents/carers to contact the school immediately.

- Meetings with parents/carers

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence or where staff are particularly concerned, the school will contact parents/carers to notify them of their concerns. A meeting may then be arranged to discuss the reasons for the absences. At the meeting plans should be put in place with the parents/carers and the pupil to resolve any difficulties, to provide appropriate support and to improve the attendance within a specified time limit. This would usually be no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents/carers that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

- Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all) the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

- Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. If they arrive late it is both very disruptive to their own education and to that of others within their class. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session

being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Reasons such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes will not be classed as a legitimate reason. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

Pupils who arrive late for school, but before the register closes, must report to the school office where their parents/carers must sign the pupil signing in/out book, record the time of arrival and inform office staff of the reason for their lateness.

For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building at any time. Pupils arriving late should therefore *report to the school office to allow staff to register pupils and ascertain their lunchtime requirements*. It is VITALLY important that all pupils & parents/carers arriving late follow this procedure.

For the same reason it is vitally important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment) and/or returning to school later in the day complete the required information in the pupil signing in/out book held in the main entrance.

- Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour means that the pupil will be potentially vulnerable to harm and will also not be receiving a full-time education. Great Whelnetham CEVC School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure that it does not happen. If however a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents/carers immediately, inform the local police and establish a search team to locate the pupil.

Requests for Leave of Absence

- Requests for leave of absence during term time must be made on the appropriate form by the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides. Any further evidence supporting the application may be attached to the form. The application must be made well in advance of the intended absence. Regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval therefore if parents/carers do not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. All requests will be considered on an individual basis.
- Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School will consider authorising absences for:
 - Parents/carers in the armed forces returning from an overseas placement.
 - Parents/carers who are employed by the public services such as Police, Fire and Health whose holiday is rostered and changes are unable to be made.
 - Parents/carers who are employed and subject to a strict and un-negotiable annual leave rota and where evidence is provided from a Senior Manager of the Company to this effect.
 - Cultural issues for families returning to their homeland.
 - Weddings of an immediate family member – for the journey out and return plus a day for the ceremony (3 days).

- Any other family circumstances that the Headteacher believes would necessitate a holiday in term time for the benefit of the whole family.

Please note that parents/carers who are self-employed will be assessed on an individual basis according to the nature of the self-employment.

- Requests for time off for the following reasons will not be authorised:
 - Cheaper cost of a holiday.
 - Availability of the desired accommodation for a holiday.
 - Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
 - Absent parent/grandparent taking the child on holiday.
 - A prolonged holiday overlapping with the beginning or end of term.
 - Holidays received as a gift.

This list is not exhaustive.

Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving their decision as to whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School will NOT authorise time off school during periods of national tests, i.e. SATS examinations.

Parents'/carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring that children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child). Parents/carers will be supported and encouraged by Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School.

Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School expects parents/carers:

- To ensure that their child attends the school every day the school is available.
 - To support their child's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum.
 - To understand that the school is unable to automatically agree requests for absence.
 - To not condone unjustified absence from school.
- Parents/carers will also be expected to:
 - Notify Great Whelnetham CEVC School on the first day of their child's absence using the school's number 01284 386203. This phone call should be made as soon as the decision to keep them at home has been made but no later than 9.30am. If however the illness continues that the school be contacted on each day of absence unless previously agreed. If the school does not receive a call, it will follow through with a contact call to the parents. Absences are recorded in our absence log book with the time of the call, who made the call and the nature of the illness.
 - Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day.

- Work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and evenings, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities.
- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's lives. Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.

Pupils' Responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of attending school every day the school is available. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from doing this, they should speak to their class teacher in the first instance.

Pupils should attend all of their lessons on time, ready to learn. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

Governors' responsibilities

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Conclusion

Attending school every day the school is available contributes to the health and safety of children and supports children in reaching their maximum potential. Being a member of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute and to be responsible for the well-being of others. Good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year.

Great Whelnetham CEVC Primary School

Attendance: A guide for Parents/Carers



When does my child need to be in school?

Your child should arrive at school in good time for registration. The morning register is called promptly at 9.05 am and the afternoon register is taken at 1.00pm. Children may come into school at 8.50am when the doors are open and should enter school by their designated door. External doors and gates are closed promptly at 9.05 am. If your child arrives after that time they must enter school via the main entrance and follow the procedure below.

What happens if my child is late?

- If your child arrives between 9.05 am and 9.15 am he/she will be marked late.
- If your child arrives after 9.15 am he/she will be marked as absent (unauthorised) unless an acceptable reason is given.
- Pupils who arrive after the start of registration should report to the school office, and parents/carers should sign the pupil signing in/out book and explain the reason for their lateness to the office staff. Where a child is late on more than one occasion in any four-week period the Local Authority, (Suffolk County Council) requires the school to write to the parents/carers of the child regarding their child's punctuality. If a pupil is consistently late a meeting will be arranged to discuss reasons/difficulties for lateness.

What should I do if my child cannot come to school?

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not contact us, we will try to telephone you. If however the illness continues we request that a further phone call is made to the school on each morning of absence unless previously agreed. Absences are recorded in our absence log book with the time of the call, who made the call and the nature of the illness.

School staff, the Senior Leadership Team, School Governors and the Education Welfare Officer all monitor absence.

Examples of reasons that the school will accept for absence include:

- Illness (unless there is a genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness).
- Emergency dental/medical appointment. Please make all routine appointments before or after school or during the school holidays.
- Day of religious observance.
- Family bereavement or other exceptional family circumstances.

Except in the case of illness, permission for your child to miss school should be requested well in advance, giving full details of the proposed absence. By giving sufficient advance notice you will ensure that there is time available for the school to make any necessary further enquiries and for written notification of whether the absence will be authorised/unauthorised to be sent. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate or other medical evidence or to provide details of medical personnel to enable the school to make direct contact.

Can we take family holidays during term-time?

In line with government legislation, the school policy and Local Education Authority policy, all family holidays should be taken in school closure periods. A 'Leave of Absence' from school may be granted in exceptional circumstances where an application has been made by the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides on the relevant form. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence if they consider there to be exceptional reasons for absence from school during term time. Applications must always be made in advance and evidence may be requested to support any application. Where an absence has been unauthorised by the school and the time off school is taken, the school has a duty to notify the Local Authority's Education Service.

What is a Penalty Notice and when would one be issued?

The law says that parents/carers are committing an offence where their children (of compulsory school age) are absent from school without good reason.

A Penalty Notice is a financial penalty issued by the Local Authority for unauthorised absences from school. The school has a duty to share their attendance data with the Education Attendance Service and to notify them when unauthorised absence has been taken in term time. Penalty Notices are also issued where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school. From 1st September 2014 there will no longer be a warning letter prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice. Suffolk County Council will issue each parent/carer with a Penalty Notice fine where there have been 8 sessions (4 days) of unauthorised absence within a school year. Where the penalty is not paid in full and/or within the prescribed time limit the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against the parents/carers in the Magistrates Court.

I am thinking about taking my child on a trip overseas to visit relatives, what should I do?

The school recognises that such trips help children keep in touch with their extended family although parents would always be encouraged to make such trips during school holiday periods. We appreciate that due to the long distances often involved there may however be some overlap with term time. Should you be considering such an absence you will need to put your request in writing to the Headteacher explaining the reasons and family circumstances for this visit. We may request evidence that this is not just a holiday.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure that your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped for the school day. Show your child that you value his/her learning by asking them about their school day. Follow your home-school agreement and attend Parents Evenings and other information sessions at school to enable you to support your child's learning and progress.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school, what should I do?

Contact your child's teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems, bullying or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem looking at all appropriate support available. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The Service is based at: West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. IP33 3YU.

What will happen if my child's attendance level falls?

The school monitors the attendance rate of all children as requested by the Local Authority, Suffolk County Council. Where a child's attendance rate is considered too low Suffolk County Council requires the school to take intervention action. The following actions will therefore be taken in accordance with Local Authority guidelines.

- Attendance rate falls below 95% - A letter may be sent home from the school to inform the parent(s)/carer(s) that their child's attendance level requires improvement and the child's attendance will continue to be closely monitored.
- Attendance rate falls to 93% - A letter may be sent home from the school to inform the parent(s)/carer(s) that the school are unable to authorise any further absences unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to the school.
- Attendance rate falls to 90% – A meeting may be arranged with the parent(s)/carer(s) at the school to discuss attendance and the support that the school can offer.

Where attendance does not improve the Educational Welfare Officer will be contacted by the school.

Details of Siblings:

If you have other children currently attending school please complete their details below.

Child's Name	Child's Age	Name of Child's School

I understand that:

- The Headteacher will consider this application based solely on the information provided on this form and on any further evidence that I have attached.
- I may be requested to provide further information to the school.
- I will be notified in writing whether this proposed absence would be recorded as authorised or unauthorised on my child's attendance record.

I confirm that I am the parent/carer of the child detailed above and that my child normally resides with me.

Signed:

Print Name:

Date: