



Western Road Community Primary School

Attendance Policy

*This policy was **adopted in July 2017.***

*This policy is **due for review in July 2018.***

Introduction

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Western Road Community Primary School by:

- Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience so that all children reach their full potential.
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable causes.
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:
 - Parents 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

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Education Authority. The EWO will also try to resolve the situation 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. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Guidelines

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips, etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

1) Monitoring of School Attendance:

Monitoring of Attendance:

- Attendance will be reviewed every half term by the Headteacher / School Office.
 - a) For overall attendance at 100%
 - b) For overall attendance between 95% - 99%
 - b) For overall attendance below 90%
- The caseload will be prioritised by the Headteacher / School Office with Year 2 & 6 at the top, then children with Social Care / family support involvement.
- The school will celebrate good attendance and a reward system will be in place, as determined by the Senior Leadership Team.
- Any unexplained absence or lateness will be followed up by the School Office.
- Letters for poor attendance will be sent out as and when appropriate throughout the later part of the school year. The person with the responsibility for School Attendance will contact and liaise with parents / carers throughout the beginning part of the year to offer support and guidance to improve any concerning attendance.

2) Legal Requirements:

The law requires that all schools record the attendance of each pupil at the start of both the morning and afternoons sessions. Schools should follow up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorized or unauthorized.

The Government expects:

- Parents / carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly and arrive to school on time.
- Schools and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.
 - Recognise the possible links between low levels of attendance and child protection concerns.

3) Attendance Codes:

- Present in school during registration: / = am \ = pm
- Late arrival before the register has closed: L = Late
- Morning registration will open at 8.55am and closes at 9.05am. Children between 9.05am and 9.15am will be recorded as L (Late).
- Children arriving after the registers have closed will be marked absent with code U (see table).
- Attendance Registers (SIMS attendance saved and closed) to be sent to the School Office by 9.15am.

4) Morning Procedures:

1. 8.55am: Registers Open: Children marked as / = am (\ for the afternoon session)
2. 9.05 - 9.15am: Children marked as L = Late by the class teacher
3. 9.15am: Class Registers sent to the School Office (SIMS attendance saved and closed)
4. Any children arriving after this time must be sent to the school office.
5. 9.15am: Children arriving after this time will be recorded as U = Arrived in school after registration closed. The time the child arrived will be recorded, and entered in SIMS. All children arriving after 9.15am must report to the school office and be signed in by a parents / carer.

5) Authorised Absence:

- School Attendance and Statutory Guidance and Advice states: *'Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.'*
- Only the school can authorise an absence. An absence is not automatically classed as 'authorised' because it is covered by a written note from a parent / carer. This may be a joint decision between the Headteacher and the parent /

carer. Examples of authorised absence are:

- Illness
- Religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs
- Absences allowed by the school. These might include:
 - Medical appointment
 - Exclusions
 - Extreme family emergencies / occasions (bereavements, house fires, close family wedding, etc.)
- Each request will be considered by the Headteacher on a case-by-case basis.

6) Unauthorised Absence:

- School Attendance and Statutory Guidance and Advice states: 'Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.'
- Examples of unauthorised absences include:
 - Parents / carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
 - Truancy.
 - Unexplained absences.
 - Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after registers have closed).
 - Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
 - Day trips or holidays in term time not authorized by the school.

7) Late Attendance:

The School will actively discourage late arrival, and be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek explanation from parents / carers.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss classwork and not receive vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

The school day officially starts at 8.55am and the School expects all children to be in class and ready to start work by this time. The class registers will officially close at 9.15am each morning.

8) Notifying Absences:

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. Parents / carers should notify the school before 9.15am on the first school day of his/her child's absence from school.

If the reason for absence is sickness that continues - or is likely to continue - for more than a week, medical evidence should be obtained and submitted to the school. If any child is absent and the school has not been notified, the attendance officer will send a text to the child's parent/carer. This will be followed up by a telephone call when necessary.

In the event that contact could not be made, the attendance officer will record this on the register. If there are any child welfare / safety concerns, then the matter may be referred to the Local Authority Access to Education service, Children Missing Education Officer, and/or Social Services. In the case of children in care or children in need, the school will contact the family's social worker. We will follow the Local Authority procedures for children missing from education if a child is absent from school for 10 consecutive school days and no reasonable explanation has been provided.

9) Holidays in Term Time:

In April 2013, the government issued amendments to '*The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006*'. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that 'headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.' Therefore our school will only authorise holidays in line with these regulations. Exceptional circumstance will only be agreed very rarely.

Parents should apply in writing using the documentation provided by the school if they are considering a holiday in term time at least two weeks before the holiday is planned. The school will consider the request and let parents know in writing whether it has been authorised.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.