

Whitby Heath Primary School

Excellence in a Caring Community



Attendance Policy 2020 -2021 (inc COVID 19)

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| Policy written | August 2020 |
| Approved by Governors Signed | September 2020 |
| To be reviewed annually | ANNUALLY or sooner in response to DfE updates. |

Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

'Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free.

Secondary education must be available for every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Introduction

At Whitby Heath Primary School we expect children to attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Excellent attendance and punctuality is important if children are to benefit from everything school has to offer. Whitby Heath believes that regular attendance at school is vital for children to be successful.

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life and research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance, punctuality and educational progress and attainment.

Parents/carers and the school staff are partners in making this a success and this partnership is very important to the school. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that your child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

As parents/carers, it is your responsibility to ensure your child/children arrive at school and return home safely.

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Guidance from DfE update 07.08.20

In March 2019, when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for **all children** to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual school rules as outlined in this policy on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) so in future, there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).

- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. **Schools should monitor engagement with this activity (as set out in the section below).**

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- ✓ support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ✓ ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- ✓ enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- ✓ make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ✓ ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

Expectations

We expect that all children will:

- ✓ attend school every day as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so
- ✓ attend school punctually
- ✓ attend appropriately prepared for the day
- ✓ discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents and carers will:

- ✓ ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ✓ ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- ✓ ensure that they contact the school daily of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school
- ✓ contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- ✓ notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- ✓ notify school immediately of any changes to contact details

School will:

- ✓ provide a welcoming atmosphere
- ✓ provide a safe learning environment
- ✓ provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's/carer's concerns
- ✓ keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality
- ✓ contact parents on the first day of absence when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- ✓ follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the Headteacher can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- ✓ regularly inform parents/carers of the % attendance of all children
- ✓ make initial enquiries regarding children who are not attending regularly

- ✓ refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare
- ✓ notify the EWO after 10 days unexplained absence

Definitions

Everyday counts as two sessions. Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

Regular attendance means that your child must attend school every day, unless there are justified reasons, and arrive at school on time.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. The Headteacher authorises the absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which 'no authorisation' has been given.

Examples

| Authorised absences: | Unauthorised absences: |
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| *genuine illness of the pupil; *hospital/dental/doctors appointment for the pupil; *major religious observances; *visits to prospective new schools; *external exams or educational assessments | *shopping / day trip / visit to a theme park; *a birthday treat; *oversleeping due to a late night; *looking after other children / other family member; *appointments for other family members; *holidays which have not been agreed. |

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 96% + | Good – Well done! This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. Your child's attendance is at, or above, the school target. |
| 93% – 95% | Below expected – Strive to build on this. Your child's attendance is below expected and will be monitored. A letter may be sent to you to inform you of your child's attendance. |
| 90% - 92% | Poor – Absence is now significantly affecting your child's attainment and progress. This is a cause for concern. School will request that you come in and discuss your child's absences. |
| 90% & below | Unacceptable – Absence is seriously affecting attainment and progress and disrupting your child's development. Your child's attendance is now a major concern. It is probable that a referral to Education Welfare Officer will be made and a meeting will be convened at school to put in place strategies to improve attendance rapidly. Legal proceedings may follow. |

The school and our Education Welfare Officer work closely together and regularly monitor both attendance and punctuality. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated

seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents

All children of compulsory school age should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, **parents have the primary statutory responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.** In addition to statutory obligations parents have all signed the Home-School agreement that details the parents' responsibilities.

To help fulfil their important role in their child's education, and to be as informed as possible in any communications or discussions with teachers, parents are requested:

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- To notify the School if their child cannot attend for any reason each day of their child's absence before 9.30am
- To work with the School and education welfare service to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence;
- To ensure they obtain 'leave of absence' for their child if required during term time.

Pupils

It is important that children take on some responsibility and understand the importance and impact of good attendance and punctuality on their learning.

- Pupils are actively encouraged to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school and at the start of lessons after break.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, racism, etc.
- Pupils should use their best endeavours to pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher and to pass school correspondence to their parents.

Head Teacher

- To monitor the attendance throughout the school
- To communicate to parents /carers the attendance policy through newsletters, website etc
- To communicate and liaise with parents /carers of those children whose attendance and or punctuality is causing concern
- To monitor and support the welfare of the children in the school
- To raise the level of attendance of those pupils identified at being at risk / persistent absence
- To Liaise with the EWO

Class Teachers, Learning Mentors, Admin Team

- To monitor the attendance throughout the school
- To inform the Head Teacher of any child causing concern
- To communicate and liaise with parents /carers of those children whose attendance and or punctuality is causing concern
- To monitor and support the welfare of the children in their care
- To monitor and support those children whose attendance or punctuality is causing a concern.

Governors

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The governing body is legally responsible for the attendance register and so is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the Headteacher will manage the day-to-day running of the School and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

- To monitor and keep a general check on the situation

Educational Welfare Officers (EWO)

- To support the school in achieving its objectives by following the LA guidelines

INFORMING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Parents / carers will be advised of this policy

- When their child first starts at Whitby Heath
- Through newsletters
- In the school prospectus
- Parent teacher meetings
- Annual report to parents record of whole year
- Attendance certificates to outline patterns of absence (when required)

Children will be advised through

- As part of daily registration
- Assemblies – including class attendance weekly awards, 100% certificates each term & badge award Bronze 100% one term silver 100% two terms gold 100% three terms, prize for the best class attendance record over the year.
- Displays in corridors linked to awards outlined above
- Through curriculum areas as appropriate

When to Report Absence to the School

It is expected that parents / carers will provide an explanation if their child is absent on every day the absence occurs before 9.30 am, a telephone message is acceptable

All absences must be reported on a daily basis. In all cases of absence the parents/carers should:

- ✓ only keep your child away from school if really necessary. The school will always call and send home an unwell child;
- ✓ telephone the school at the earliest opportunity to let them know why your child is going to be absent. Please try and phone by 9.30am at the very latest. The office has an answer machine and messages can be left on here;
- ✓ please call daily and keep the school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary;
- ✓ send a note to school explaining the reason for absence;
- ✓ if medical appointments are absolutely necessary, please bring your child to school for the rest of the school day.

If your child fails to register or is absent and we have not received notification by 9.30am

a call will be made to you. This only applies on the first day of absence. It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to call the school each day their child is off school and explain the reason why.

If a child is absent from school with no explanation offered by the parents/carers within two weeks, it becomes an unauthorised absence.

Registers

Registers provide the twice daily record of attendance of all pupils, they are **legal documents** and may be required in a court of law, e.g. as evidence in prosecution for non attendance at school

The register should be marked using the codes advised by Cheshire West and Chester and will be located at the front of the register

Pupils Present At Registration –BLACK PEN must be used

An oblique stroke (forward) **IN BLACK PEN** records a pupil's personal presence at morning registration, with a backward stroke being used for the afternoon.

Pupils **must always** be registered before following any other instructions or activities out of the classroom.

Morning registration opens at 8:55am and will be closed by 9:00am (playground doors and gates are closed at this time) after which a pupil **will be marked absent 0**.

At 9:00am the register must be closed and sent immediately to the school office (register box in the corridor for admin/ Learning Mentor to collect)

A child arriving in school **after 9:00am MUST sign in at the School Office**, a late mark will be added, by the Learning Mentor or Admin Team, on receipt of the class register at the office of a pupil who arrives between 9:00am and 9:20am.

Any child NOT IN SCHOOL AFTER 9:20am will be considered absent without authorisation 'U' unless contact is made by parents / carers giving a reasonable explanation before 9.30am of the day of absence when it will be authorised.

If there has been continued concern over the level of absence of a child, – absences will be marked as unauthorised –parents/ carers **will be informed in writing that this will occur**. The exception will be the provision of medical evidence which will be explained in the letter.

Annotation for Absences – RED PEN will be used

The School records authorised absence a **RED COLOURED 'O'**, with a supplementary code inside to record the reason. Unauthorised absence is recorded using a **RED COLOURED 'O'** but with no additional code inside it.

Attendance codes (all recorded inside the red coloured 'O'). These codes are outlined inside of the register for staff to refer to.

Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. Pupils who are late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others.

School begins at 9:00am but children may enter from 8:45am, the register will be open between 8:45 to 9:00am, after which a late mark will be entered.

If your child arrives after this time they must enter via the school office where they will be signed in.

After 9:20am the register officially closes and a pupil will be coded as 'U' which statistically counts as unauthorised absence.

DID YOU KNOW

5 minutes late each day = 3 school days lost
10 minutes late each day = 6.5 school days lost
15 minutes late each day = 10 school days lost
20 minutes late each day = 13 school days lost
30 minutes late each day = 19 school days lost

Where persistent lateness or absence gives cause for concern further sanctions may be taken.

Where a pupil incurs 10 unauthorised absence marks, a fixed penalty notice may be issued.

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

Parents / carers are encouraged to make general appointments out of school hours.

A pupil receiving medical treatment on site will be marked 'present'.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the School and the EWOs can consult the School Health Service, or the pupil's GP.

If there are concerns over the amount of absence of a pupil due to illness a meeting will be arranged with parents/ carers by the Head Teacher to seek ways to support the situation, this may include the involvement of the EWO, School Health Advisor or School Paediatrician if deemed appropriate.

The HT may request medical evidence for each absence if a high level of illness absence occurs, parents / carers will be informed of this in writing.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

During school hours, the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day. Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.

Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.

Parents/carers are requested to **confirm in writing**, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, and the expected return time. Children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return. Where a child is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.

If a child leaves the school site without permission, their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the child as a missing person.

Identification and Referral

Identification is made by the Class Teacher, Learning Mentor or Admin Team for concern over attendance or punctuality. School will make every effort to ensure that the root cause of any lateness is made apparent and appropriate support is sourced. School will be flexible with late attendance due to a young carer's caring role

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(where this is a regular occurrence provision will be put into place but will not mean lateness is accepted without challenge.)

1. High level concerns (e.g. persistent absence or lateness, or an absence with no contact or reason offered by parents) are passed to the Head Teacher. Concerns will be shared with parents either via Class Teacher, Learning Mentor or Head Teacher depending on the level.
2. Learning Mentor and Head Teacher meet regularly to review whole school attendance and punctuality and identify any actions required.
3. Conversation between parents/ carers and the Class Teacher or Learning Mentor to encourage good attendance and or punctuality.
4. Class Teacher or Learning Mentor sharing attendance certificate with parents at parent carer meeting or earlier if necessary, or using the SPTO attendance overview on pupil's record.
5. If concerns continue a letter from the HT outlining the concern.
6. If there is insufficient improvement then a meeting with HT to discuss concerns and possible support needs to ensure parents / carers in ensuring good attendance and or punctuality, reinforcing the parental responsibility of this.
7. If appropriate a 'Panel' meeting with the Learning Mentor and HT to reinforce the importance of good attendance / punctuality.
8. If no improvements the HT may request medical evidence for each absence if a high level of illness absence occurs, if there is no improvement.
9. Formal proceedings if deemed appropriate.

If deemed appropriate then stages may be omitted in order to safeguard child.

Pupil Exclusion

A pupil excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence will be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the School - this includes the period whilst any review or appeal is in progress and must continue until the pupil is removed from the school roll. (See Exclusion Policy)

Temporary School Closures

Where a school has to close due to exceptional circumstances e.g. pandemics, severe weather conditions, fire or other structural damage, unexpected additional polling days no attendance registers are needed. School will inform parents via the school comms texting service, web site and if time appropriate a letter.

No attendance register is needed for in-service training days which will be published through the web site, newsletters and holiday dates (subject to change), with reminders usually sent via a parent text.

REQUEST FOR EXTENDED ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any absence must be requested as far in advance as possible. A form (Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time) will need to be collected from the office and completed.

The guidance from Cheshire West and Chester Council states that if a parent/carer takes their child out of school e.g. on holiday or other unauthorised leave of absence, for 5 days (10 sessions) or more, without the authority of the Headteacher, each parent/carer may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent.

The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any applications for leave of absence must be in exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be
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satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. Parents can be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES may include:

- Service leave
- Family Crisis – bereavement
- Religious Events
- Examinations
- Approved sporting activities (including competitions if agreed first with the Head Teacher)
- Urgent medical appointments (**Routine appointments should be made outside of school hours**)

Holidays will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances and both schools and Local Authorities are expected to ensure that such circumstances are not that holidays are cheaper during term time.

Any request must be made via the request for absence form available from the School Office.
A request will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and is at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

Parents and Carers are strongly urged to avoid arranging a family holiday during term time. Parents / Carers DO NOT HAVE ANY ENTITLEMENT to take their child out of school for a holiday and will be subject to a fixed term penalty notice if taken.

Leave of Absence Fixed Penalty Notices

Under existing legislation, each parent/carer commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as 'unauthorised' (those absences for which the Headteacher has not given permission). Depending on circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in the following circumstances where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Unauthorised leave of absence during term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more).
- Where it is judged that a parent/carer is failing to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance at school and is failing to engage with any supportive measures proposed by the school or the Education Welfare Service. This may be considered if a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous 12 school weeks.
- Unauthorised absence may include a child arriving late after close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised 'leave of absence' taken in term time, parents/carers will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

The government has a persistence absence threshold of 10%. The absence threshold of 10% means that if a pupil is absent for 38 sessions (19 days) of school, they are classified as persistently absent. Schools are urged to inform parents of this threshold and to advise parents that fines will be made for persistent absence, unless there is evidence of a justifiable reason for such absence, for example, significant illness. Failure to make payment will result in legal action for failure to ensure regular attendance at school under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996.

| Timeline | Penalty Charges |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Paid within 21 days | £60 per parent per child |

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| After 21 days and before 28 days | £120 per parent per child |
| After 28 days | The parent will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrate's Court on the grounds of having failed to secure their child/ children's regular attendance |

If the fine isn't paid within 21 days, it doubles. Although it is the school that serves the fine, it is Cheshire West & Chester council, and their solicitors, who enforce the fine. If there is non payment of the fine after 28 days legal proceedings will be undertaken resulting in possible court proceedings.

A pupil who is absent for longer than 5 days after an agreed return date can be legally removed from the school roll and the parent may be liable to prosecution.

A pupil who is absent longer than 20 days after the agreed return date can be legally removed from the school roll and will no longer have a place at this school.

If parents / carers choose to take their child out of school for 5 days or more without approval of the Head Teacher may be issued with a Fixed Penalty.

Missing In Education

If a child has not been located after 5 days the school will begin to undertake the missing in education procedures.

1. Initially following up on the first unexplained day of absence with a text message to the parent.
2. If no contact is made a verbal telephone conversation will be attempted to the priority contact
3. If this fails contact to the emergency contacts will be attempted. At the discretion of the Head Teacher two member of staff may seek to contact with the family by attending at the known address, if unable to raise a response, a note will be left on a compliment slip to contact school as a matter of urgency.
4. If no contact is made the EWO will be contacted and a letter written and posted first class to attempt contact.
5. If no contact is made stage 2 of CME will be undertaken
6. If after 20 days the child will be removed from roll and CME 3 will be passed to the lead EWO. This will be undertaken in consultation with the EWO.

Public Performances

The Local Authority must licence a pupil aged 5 - 16 to take part in a public performance. Licensed participation should therefore clearly be treated as authorised absence.

What can Parents / Carers do to help

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent **-before 9.30am on each day of absence**
- Reinforce to your child the importance of attending school
- Always be punctual
- Do not allow your child to have time off school **unless it is really necessary** – If an absence is required i.e. a family bereavement or wedding, religious event etc **ensure a request for absence is completed**
- Ensure family holidays are booked **during the school holidays** (see website for term time dates, newsletters) **these will NOT BE AUTHORISED and may result in a fine (see above)** exceptions at the Head Teachers discretion.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school what can you do?

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple
- Talk to the Class Teacher, Learning Mentor or Deputy or Head Teacher in school

The school aims to have ALL pupils attending regularly and punctually and parents / carers need to know that should their child fail to attend in this way then the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and may be subjected to a fixed term penalty notice.

In developing this Attendance Policy we have taken into account the fact that Cheshire West and Chester is an ethnically diverse community. The school has incorporated practice which guards against disadvantaging any sections of the community. Improving the performance of underachieving pupils is a key priority with the aim to improve the attainment of minority pupils across the authority. Schools are aware and take into account the need for all public authorities to re-examine and make changes to their practice in promoting genuine multi-racial partnership.

The school understands the need for on-going communication with parents / carers and pupils regarding this policy, particularly those new to the school.

The Law

By law, parents and carers must ensure that all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) receive a suitable, full-time education (Education Act, 1996). Cheshire West and Chester Council employs Education Welfare Officers to support both schools and parents/carers to ensure that every child attends school regularly. As a parent/carer, you may be committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice.

If leave is taken without authorisation by the school, it may be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare may be notified. A Penalty Notice may be issued.

This policy will continued be reviewed annually or sooner in response to DfE updates.